

My life matters here: Assessing the adjusted identity of domestic migrant workers at intangible cultural heritage tourism businesses in China

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we explore and assess the nature of the double guests and host roles of tourism migrant workers (TMWs), and their effects on the TWs' adjusted person-place relationships and local identities by employing a systematic modeling approach in the context of the TMWs working in the intangible cultural tourism (ICH) businesses. The research site is fittingly set in Suzhou of east China, a destination whose rich historical and cultural heritages are now co-expressed and co-presented by a migrant workforce that has already outsized the locals. Research findings have shown that the socio-cultural adjustments availed by working in the ICH tourism businesses positively influence the local identities of TMWs, as mediated by their place attachment. This study advances a theoretical understanding of the mechanism of migrant integration in the particular context of cultural tourism development, and shows how tourism can contribute towards healthy, rather than stigmatizing, dialogues pertaining to migrant integration in the society at large.

1. Introduction

The cornerstone of any globalized economy rests on there being a free and accelerated access to mobility on both the demand and supply ends (King, 2012; Kou & Bailey, 2014). As one of the biggest beneficiaries of globalization and the accompanying technological advancements, the tourism industry owes its sustained prosperity in the recent decades to the migrant workforces (Janta, 2011; Shen & Huang, 2012; Szivas & Riley, 1999). Migrant workers and professionals are indispensable to the development of tourism of developed and developing countries, and have come to be deeply embedded in these countries' local economic, social, and cultural fabrics (Taylor & Finley, 2010). Hence, it is imperative that the prism of tourism is constructively engaged in the current debates concerning migrant workers, which often tend to be politicized, polarized, and even stigmatizing (Koopmans, Lancee, & Schaeffer, 2016). This means that the discourses pertaining to tourism migrant employment extend far beyond the objectification and de-personalization of migrant workers merely as the instruments that maximize the economic or financial gains of the host places or corporations, and how the tourism industry could facilitate the acknowledgement and acceptance of migrant workers by the broader host

society, thereby contributing towards positive social changes, including harmony and integration at large.

Particularly, the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) tourism businesses, which are increasingly dependent upon the migrant workers to generate revenue from tourism, can serve as unique and significant avenues to explore and inquire the issue of migrant workers integration in the host society. On the one hand, ICH businesses feature rich local historical and cultural characteristics since their core products are attractive and favored by tourists (Tan, Tan, Kok, & Choon, 2018). On the other hand, the prevailing trend of building a cultural tourism industry with an emphasis on the commoditization and standardization of ICH has necessitated the concentration of migrant employment in such businesses, many of which report of migrant workers constituting a significant portion of their workforces (Su, Li, & Kang, 2019). It is not even uncommon that many ICH businesses are ventured and managed by migrant entrepreneurs (Sotiriadis, 2017). In this regard, the intangible cultural heritage businesses have become the nexus that witnesses the normalized cultural interactions of migrant employees with the tourists as well as the host society.

This study primarily aims to examine how the unique agency of domestic migrants working in the Chinese ICH businesses has influenced

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their integration in the host society in the form of sociocultural adjustment and cultural identities, and carried out their mediation based on their place attachment. By contextualizing the investigation of the cultural identities of migrant workers in ICH, the results of this study can enrich the theoretical understanding of migrant integration from the perspective of tourism, which has so far only been addressed tangentially in the current literature. In particular, the research value of this study lies in its fittingly set research location of Suzhou in east China, which is an intriguing socio-cultural landscape of distinguished preservation and expression of historical and cultural heritages for tourism development via a workforce that is predominantly dependent on non-locals. Lately, the destination has also become a subject of controversy with the local authorities attempting to monitor the “uncivilized behaviors” of non-locals via big data, and linking such records directly to their eligibility to hold immigration status in the destination (Sina.com, 2020). Thus, the implications derived from the study results, which investigate how the tourism migrant workers (TMWs) in heritage tourism businesses perceive and adjust their identities under the tourist gaze, can shed light on how the sustainable development of heritage tourism industry can facilitate a “softer” social integration of the TWS in the society and foster harmony. Secondly, this study empirically tests the relationships between the sociocultural adjustment, place attachment, and cultural identities of the Chinese domestic migrant workers in the ICH businesses, thereby extending the research scope of the applications of the above theoretical concepts. Thirdly, findings of this study can offer useful references to the ICH tourism businesses and local authorities for yielding sound and balanced social, cultural, and economic outcomes with regard to ICH protection and development.

2. Literature review

2.1. Two-way mobility of the contemporary tourism migrant workers (TMWs)

It has been argued to be a norm, rather than an exception, that the prosperity of modern tourism development is dependent on the migrant workforce, with TMWs accounting for nearly half of the staff of certain hospitality services in both the developed as well as developing countries (Baum, 2012). The TMWs are such a significance force with regard to economic and social stakes that the term Diaspora tourism has been formulated to describe the phenomenon of TMWs visiting their native countries, or receiving native family members and friends in the host country (Hall & Williams, 2002; Huang, Hung, & Chen, 2018). The factors that make the tourism industry so congenial to migrant employment have been traditionally underpinned by the production-based elaborations aiming towards cost minimization and operation flexibility, such as the labor shortage of native or local workers, the out-selection of low-paying and unstable tourism-related jobs by migrant workers owing to the lack of human capital in knowledge, skills, or social networks, and the globalized redistribution of the human resources of the tourism industry catering towards a growing internationalized clientele (Janta, Ladkin, Brown, & Lugosi, 2011; Lugosi, Janta, & Wilczek, 2017; Zhang, Luo, Xiao, & Guillet, 2013). Meanwhile, in comparison to the other sectors that have been increasingly overshadowed by the protectionist ethos that are currently prevailing in various developed countries, the tourism industry often enjoys favorable regulatory treatment and is constantly engaged in endorsing the TMWs (Kim, Choi, & Li, 2016).

That said, the depiction of the migrant workers of the tourism industry should not be simplified and stereotyped as an unequal and a dehumanizing exploitation, as a growing number of them, particularly the millennium generations, are mainly attracted towards a working environment of young vibe, flexible working schedules, and amicable social networks that are availed by the tourism industry (McDowell, Batnitzky, & Dyer, 2008). TMWs have been generally welcomed by the employers for their better working ethics and more positive attitudes.

Many TMWs regard their current jobs in tourism as the stopover options to develop their language, skills, and networks, and thus, help them get ready for further career and entrepreneur aspirations (Riley, Ladkin, & Szivas, 2002). Some of the TMWs prefer doing temporary jobs in order to accommodate their leisure life experiences of the host country (Bianchi, 2000). Within the shifting socio-economic contexts, the TMWs are believed to demonstrate work-related attitudes and behaviors that are not much different from their native or local counterparts (MacKenzie & Forde, 2009).

At the same time, in the recent decades, a reverse flow of the TMWs from the developed countries to developing ones, or from the urban areas to rural ones has been observed. Some of these TMWs are professionals or common employees dispatched by internationalized tourism enterprises such as brand hotels or resort management companies. In this sense, the nobilities of the demand and supply ends of the contemporary tourism industry are concomitant. The other cohort of the TMWs following the urban-rural movement can be accounted for by the lifestyle-led migration since they are primarily driven by the physical amenities and psychological fulfillment that the new self-selected milieu provides (Bobek, 2020; Matarrita-Cascante & Stocks, 2013; Salazar & Zhang, 2013). For them, the economic considerations accompanying such voluntary relocations, mostly in the form of self-employment or entrepreneurship, usually occupy second place to the actively sought lifestyle changes and redefinition (Matarrita-Cascante, 2017). The lifestyle-led TMWs can be quite detached from the host society, with the tourism businesses competing, rather than complementing, the businesses of the locals. The co-existence of production- and lifestyle-led migrations could pretty much reflect the diverging, if not the conflicting, meanings and functions of the tourism industry that are recognized and constructed by the concerned parties with polarizing socio-economic backgrounds.

2.2. The double and adjusted roles of the guest and host of the TMWs

Janta et al. (2011) semantically proposed that the TMWs assume the double identities of guests as perceived by the local residents, and hosts as perceived by the tourists, with the interrelationships of the two identities and their implications on the TMWs as well as the local social and cultural fabrics still underexamined by the extant literature. On the guest side of the TMWs' identity, the concept of migrant integration has been put forward by various scholars to explain the assimilation and acculturation structure of the TMWs in the host society. Integration can be defined as the long-lasting process through which migrants are included and accepted in the core social and cultural structures such as institutions, relations and statuses, which are emblematic of the receiving society (Heckmann, 2005). There are two areas of institutional and normative spheres that have been formulated to identify the width and depth of migrant integration (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003). The institutional spheres concern the formalized and customary regulatory frameworks, civil activities, and ceremonies of the host society. However, the influences of the institutional spheres on the process and outcomes of migrant integration can be counteracted by the capital portfolios that are brought forth and accumulated by migrants (Benson, 2010; Lundstrom, 2014).

Meanwhile, the normative spheres are related to the psychological internalization and orientation of migrants, which can result from the interactions between the migrants and local residents on multiple autonomous and interdependent occasions. Particularly, the elaborations of the acculturation theory recognized that an integration can be achieved when the migrant workers are highly oriented towards the dominant host culture as well as their heritage culture at the same time through the strategic adjustment efforts and willingness they demonstrate (Taylor & Finley, 2010). Thus, a migrant integration is a two-way process, that is interactive as well as multidimensional, with the spectrum ranging from assimilation to multi-culturalism depending on the capital, power, and prestige interrelationships that exist between a host

society and its migrants (Osbaldiston, 2012). For instance, the influx of the TMWs can noticeably diversify the traditionally homogenous rural communities (Woods, 2007).

For the TMWs, the construct of sociocultural adjustment (SCA) can be utilized as the measure of behavioral competence in the host society, which covers the general, interaction, and work adjustments (Black, 1988; Huang, Chi, & Lawler, 2005; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004). General adjustment refers to the general miscellaneous factors and conditions of living and support in the host society, including the costs incurred. The TMWs are also required to adjust themselves to the interactions and social relationships that exist with both the co-workers as well as the local residents in general. The adjustment to work depends on the TMW's psychological acceptance and comfort with the various job aspects that operate at the workplace, such as what should, can, and is expected to be done. Bayl-Smith and Griffin (2015) further suggested that the workplace can adjust to the worker at the same time to enhance the job satisfaction and attachment levels. Thus, the SCA reflects the extent to which the TMWs have learned the local culture and acquired the social skills (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

In the meantime, on the host side of the TMW identity, the cohort of the TMWs are clearly distinguished from the migrant workers in the other primary or manufacturing sectors who are detached from the customers or local society at the workplace (Hall & Williams, 2002; Janta et al., 2011; Lai & Hitchcock, 2017). This is because the TMWs are characterized by their embedded affinity towards tourists during work, which is a result of the service-intensive features of the tourism and hospitality industry (Hall & Williams, 2002; Janta et al., 2011; Lai & Hitchcock, 2017). The close interactions between the tourists and TMWs have been further accentuated and reinforced by the current trend of the experience economy, which emphasizes on the involvement and engagement of employees in facilitating and consolidating the memorable consuming experiences of the customers (Jin, Lee, & Lee, 2015). In this sense, the bar has been set remarkably high to ensure that the TMWs serve as authentic and credible hosts when interacting with the tourists.

In the context of the intangible cultural heritages (ICH) tourism businesses, on which the relevant research is still scarce by far, it can be postulated that the host identities of the TMWs in such businesses are accentuated and reinforced by the unique features of the ICH tourism products that are provided to the tourists, with emphases on the authentic experiences of the core embodiments of local historical and cultural traditions, active consumer involvement and immersion, and lasting self-reflections and mental catharsis (Tan et al., 2018). Through the interactions of the TMWs and the ICH tourists, the host identity of the TMWs is constructed and consolidated as an interactional achievement with processual fluidity in subjectivities (Lawless & Silva, 2017). At the same time, in comparison to the general tourism businesses, the host identities of the TMWs can be more embedded into the expected social identities or imputed on them by the employers or local authorities, which can interplay with their felt personal identities so that the interconnectedness between the two is established (Osbaldiston, 2012). Moreover, with ICH tourism functioning as a unique form of cultural tourism and extending to and integrating with other forms of tourism development like urban and rural tourism, pro-poor tourism, and meetings and conventions, the multiple identities imputed on and felt by the TMWs working in this areas would become more salient.

2.3. Local identity

The concept of identity has been quite contentious among various social discourses in the recent decades. Identity has been canonically defined by Warf (2006) as "simultaneously a deeply personal phenomenon and a social phenomenon that reflects, and in turn shapes, individual and collective behavior" (239). In this sense, identity is characterized by its multifaceted conceptualizations concerning individual, collective, as well as cultural articulations (Rivera, 2008). As identity is a simultaneous product of the internalization of the external

milieu by the entity concerned and the externalization process of the entity to the environment and vice versa, the fluidity and bidirectionality of identity is also well recognized (Chaney, 2015). Meanwhile, identity is closely linked to physical habitats such as place, space, landscape, and social world. Therefore, the socio-cultural as well as spatial perspectives are incorporated into the discussions on identity (Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2012). In terms of the capacity of identity to regulate the attitude and behavior of an entity, the cognitive, evaluative, and emotional components of identity have been identified, accentuating the engagement of both rationality as well as sensibility in the functioning of identity (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999).

Characterized by an adjusted and transformed mobility in temporal and spatial relationships, and the inherent cultural exchanges, tourism has profoundly affected the identity discourses of all the stakeholders concerned, such as visitors, local residents, and employees of tourism-related businesses (Chaney, 2015). In particular, both the positive effects of tourism in the representation, construction, consolidation and redemption of local social identities, as well as the negative effects of revising, corroding, and dismantling of them have been discussed and empirically examined by relevant literature. For instance, Yang, French, Lee, and Watabe (2020) elaborated on how the outbound tourism experiences helped in the expression and affirmation of the national identities of Chinese tourists. Palmer, Koenig-Lewis, and Jones (2013) found the cognitive components of identity to have directly affected the identity of local residents and their advocacy for incoming tourism. The changes in the rural identities of residents in the construction and disruption directions as a result of their experiences with tourism development were observed by Xue, Kerstetter, and Hunt (2017).

2.4. Place attachment

Place attachment refers to the extent to which individuals value a given place; it is the power of association between individuals and their residential milieu, as well as individuals' emotional/symbolic and functional feelings about and their relationship with a given place (Warzecha & Lime, 2001). As the integral components of the local environments, people residing there usually hold established values and perceptions of the natural and social settings around them to such an extent that place identities and place dependences can be constructed (Scannell & Robert, 2010). Coupled by the discourses on nativism, the conceptualization of place attachment extends beyond the functional associations necessary to incorporate the targeted emotional resonances (Trentelman, 2009).

Originally applied to understand how the local residents view and internalize with the native place, place attachment in the context of tourism has been expanded to be regarded as a critical determinant of successful coexistence and harmony between the development of tourism and various stakeholders with diverse residence features in the local place, including the tourists and TMWs (Girish & Craig, 2018). On the one hand, attachment can be measured either via benefit accumulation or risk aversion. This is because the stakeholders who are more economically dependent on tourism for such forms of income, employment, or stock yields tend to be more favorable in their perceptions, while negative perceptions are reported by those who sense the potential risks in both economic and social terms to be a result of tourism development. Meanwhile, the level of attachment can moderate the more direct and tangible perceptions made by stakeholders, as is evidenced by the fact that the sense of control perceived by them is positively associated with their impressions of the place as embodied in tourism development. In this sense, the level of attachment complements the cultural dimensions of social representations that cannot be afforded to be neglected when it comes to the peculiarities of the TMWs. This is because the TMWs continuously experience the expected and inadvertent cultural interactions as well as the conflicts with the host society.

It can be learned from the above review of literature that the current

research efforts on the TMWs have mostly addressed the singular role of the TMWs as a cohort of human resources who realize the corporate objectives of the businesses employing them (Benson, 2010; Janta et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2016). The host identity inherent within the TMWs as well as the interrelationships between their guest and host identities are still underexamined. The research topic merits attention that cannot be timelier, taking cognizance of the currently heated and often polarized debates on host-migrant relationships all across the world, all of which are amplified by the internet social media. While the implications of identity on heritage tourism development and promotion are concentrated on the groups of local residents and heritage tourists covered by the existing studies (Su et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2018), the role of ICH tourism businesses in contextualizing, influencing, and adjusting the identities of the TMWs is still under-researched.

This study attempts to fill out the current research paucity by exploring and evaluating how the Chinese domestic migrants working in the ICH tourism businesses adjust and construct their identities. Estimated to amount to over 300 million by 2019, and with there being heterogeneous features from their urban counterparts that are no less prominent than those of the foreigners (China National Bureau of Statistics, 2019), the Chinese domestic migrants from rural areas, who have been long shackled to the HuKou System, have become the backbone of China's rapid economic growth since the reform and opening up of economy, contributing to over one third of the GDP of cities such as Beijing and Shanghai (Shen & Huang, 2012). Previously concentrated in the manufacturing, construction, and front-line service sectors, the Chinese domestic migrants have benefited from the recent urbanization strategies initiated by the Chinese authorities in terms of greater mobility and access to all walks of urban life (Zhang et al., 2013). With regard to the ICH tourism businesses in China, while the local policies stipulate that the officially recognized heritage inheritors are required to be native for three generations, the migrant employment in other positions or at businesses not officially credited has already been widespread owing to the emphasis on the commercialization of ICH as cultural tourism and the funding of protection and inheritance via development (Su et al., 2019).

3. Hypotheses and methodology

3.1. Hypotheses

The conceptual framework of this study and the postulated interrelationships among the research variables is delineated in Fig. 1, with the construct of the sociocultural adjustment (SCA) of the TMWs working in the ICH tourism businesses conceptualized as the antecedent variable. While the local identity of the TMWs is formulated as the consequence, their place attachment is formulated as the mediator. Previous studies, while mostly in the context of hospitality sector, have established the positive relationships between the SCA of the TMWs and their level of social and cultural integration in the host society (Choi, Kim, & McGinley, 2017; Kim et al., 2016). Meanwhile, the construct of place attachment has been probed and confirmed by the existing

academic efforts to affect the touristic representations of the local identities and the social changes initiated by the guest-host interactions (Girish & Craig, 2018; Matarrita-Cascante & Suess, 2020; Sun, Ling, & Huang, 2020). By attempting to fill the current research gap and explore the interrelationships that exist between the SCA, place attachment, and local identity in the unique context of the TMWs working in the ICH tourism businesses that are located at a successful destination, wherein the relevant research is still rare, this study postulated the following two hypotheses:

- H1.** . The Sociocultural Adjustment (SCA) of the TMWs working in the ICH tourism businesses has a positive effect on the TMWs' local identity.
- H2.** . The effect of the Sociocultural Adjustment (SCA) of the TMWs working in the ICH tourism businesses on the TMWs' local identity is mediated by their place attachment.

3.2. Measurement

A combined approach utilizing both qualitative induction as well as quantitative modeling is adopted by this study to construct and consolidate the reliability and validity of the proposed measurement of the research variables. A preliminary scale of the measurement items was firstly derived from literature review, paying special attention to the characteristics of ICH tourism and the identities of the TMWs (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004; Lawless & Silva, 2017; Su, 2018; Tan et al., 2018). In the second stage, four TMWs already holding managerial positions in the local ICH tourism businesses were invited to offer their advices and suggestions on refining the scale. The refinement process, in accordance with the protocols raised by Lee and Crompton (1992), highlighted the relevance of the items to the research issue, the extent of the representation of the items with regard to the research objectives, the social and cultural peculiarities of the research subjects, and the appropriateness of the wording of the items.

The finalized measurement scale for the survey included a five-dimensional 23-item SCA of the TMWs working in the ICH tourism businesses, concerning with the adjustments of the TMWs in the learning, economic, authenticity, social, and status aspects. The variable of place attachment was represented by the 4 items modified from formulation made by Girish and Craig (2018). The measurement of local identity was composed of 6 items in references to the official scale adopted by the Chinese central authorities on migrant monitoring and the peculiarities of the TMWs (Hou & Yao, 2016). All the measurement items in this study were evaluated with using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

3.3. Data collection and analysis

Suzhou was selected as the research site for this study. It is a historical and a culturally rich city located in Jiangsu Province, east China, about 200 km to the east of the provincial capital of Nanjing and 100 km to the west of the metropolis of Shanghai (Fig. 2). Credited as the "Venice of the Orient" and "the heaven on earth," Suzhou is a renowned destination both at home and abroad because of its long history of over 2500 years imbued in local architecture and buildings, beautiful landscapes, waterways, and charming folklores. The city is the home to six world intangible cultural heritages and over twenty categories recognized at the national and provincial levels, together with there being a designated museum for local intangible cultural heritages (Visitsz.com, 2020). At the same time, the city is the face of China's modern industrialization, claiming 3 of the 10 most developed counties in China in 2019 (China National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). With a total population of approximately 11 million in 2019, Suzhou is also the second largest migrant city in China after Shenzhen, with non-local residents already outnumbering the residents having a local HuKou (identification for a local resident status) (Suzhou Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2020). It has been a norm, rather than an exception, in the destination

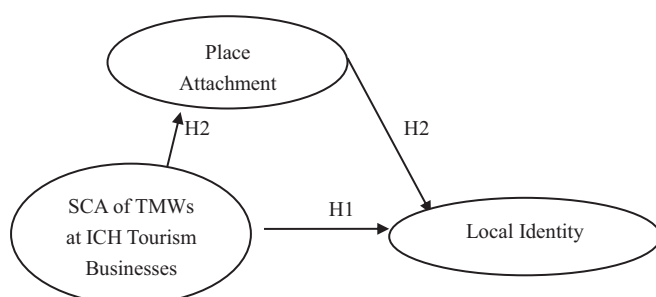


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.



Fig. 2. Location of Suzhou in China. Source: chinahighlights.com

that the local heritage businesses employ a substantial size of the migrant workforce, as is depicted in Fig. 3, of the local intangible cultural heritage businesses, which is co-presented by the local Inheritor (fluter) and migrant worker (peddler).

A total of 260 questionnaires were dispatched in November 2020

after the partial reopening of tourism at the destination to the TMWs in the 8 ICH tourism businesses located at Suzhou in east China. To be precise, 100 copies were distributed in the three stores of an ICH branded restaurant, 60 copies in a local historical and a culturally rich street displaying ICHs such as local handicrafts, embroideries, drawings,



Fig. 3. Intangible Cultural Heritage Co-presented in Suzhou. Source: China.com

sculptures, and folk dances, and 50 copies each in the two night boat tour services with folklore, oral history, and music performances, and the one tourist attraction with traditional opera shows. In particular, the research access to the TMWs was availed by the first author invited to be the guest lecturer at the annual ICH workshops organized by the local tourism and cultural authorities. The workshop was attended by the employees of the local ICH tourism businesses.

In view of the nature of the study, only the individuals over 18 years were deemed eligible to participate in the survey. The questionnaire was in an electronic form and sent through the social media platform to each of the respondents, thereby attending to their privacy and sensitivity concerns. The respondents who successfully completed and returned the survey would receive a prize of a top-up fee of 20 RMB (around 3 USD) sent to their mobile phones. The questions raised by the tourists during completion were answered by trained research assistants on social media in a timely fashion, and further clarifications and guidance were provided if needed. Of the total 260 questionnaires returned, 229 were deemed ready for further analysis after the execution of an initial screening for missing data and incomplete information.

The data analysis was conducted by applying the statistical analytical software of SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 23.0. The analysis was conducted to compare the differences between the certain demographic sub-groups of respondents with regard to the research objectives, test the tenability of the proposed scales of the variables, and validate the hypothesized interrelationships between them. In addition to the analysis of the dimensionality as well as the convergent and discriminant validity of the propose scales, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed to evaluate the internal validity and reliability of the proposed scales. Finally, the overall structural model was tested by using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to assess the fitness and congruity of the hierarchy comprising the hypothesized interrelationships between the variables in the conceptual framework.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Table 1 presents the details of the demographics of the respondents as well as the information relevant to the research objectives of this study. Among them, the females accounted for 57.7%. The age groups of

Table 1
Demographic profile of the respondents.

Variable		n	%
Gender	Male	97	42.3
	Female	132	57.7
Age	18–24	67	29.3
	25–34	82	35.8
	35–44	55	24.0
	45–54	25	10.9
	55 and above	69	26.7
Region of origin	Within the province	125	54.6
	Within east China	48	21.0
	Other parts of China	56	24.4
Education	Less than high school	51	22.3
	High school diploma	124	54.1
	University diploma	33	14.4
	Bachelor's degree or above	21	9.2
Personal monthly income at the ICH tourism business	5000 RMB and under	105	45.9
	5001–8000 RMB	79	34.5
	More than 8001RMB	45	19.6
Work length at the ICH tourism business	Less than six months	47	20.5
	Six months to two years	132	57.6
	More than two years	50	21.9
Residence length in the city	Less than one year	65	28.4
	1 to 3 years	97	42.4
	Over 3 years	67	29.2

18–24 years and 25–34 years together made up the majority of over 64%, which were followed by the 35–44 years and over 45 years divisions. When it comes to the region of the origin of the TMWs, it was reported that 54.6% of the respondents came from the locales of the same province as that of the researched city, generally within a distance of 300 km radius. While most of the respondents held a high school diploma (54.1%), those finishing university diploma and above claimed 23.6%, highlighting the growing educational backgrounds of the TMWs. Personal monthly incomes of the respondents were concentrated under 8000 RMB, consistent with the common situation of the migrant workers found in other service sectors in the city. In terms of the duration of time spent working in the ICH tourism businesses and residing in the city, trends of stable working periods (six to two years) and living periods (1 to 3 years) could be observed.

One-way ANOVA analysis was conducted to explore the differences between the various demographic divisions of the respondents with regard to the research variables. The variances in local identities were reported to be non-significant among the groups of respondents of different ages ($F = 1.420; p = 0.185$), educational levels ($F = 1.324; p = 0.245$), or durations of work in the ICH tourism business ($F = 1.504; p = 0.303$). Respondents between the 35 and 44 years age bar reported a slightly higher level of local identity than the younger and older age groups. Meanwhile, the highest level of local identity was yielded by the TMWs with university diplomas, followed by those with high school, bachelors and above, and less than high school educational qualifications. The consistent results of local identity among the respondents with a diverse length of working experiences in the ICH tourism businesses may demonstrate the prevailing influences exerted by such businesses on the adjusted identities of the TMWs.

With regard to place attachment, there were no significant differences based on the categories of age ($F = 1.902; p = 0.217$) and educational levels ($F = 1.386; p = 0.185$). The respondents of over 45 years and holding high school diploma reported the highest level of place attachment. This may be accounted for by the more open minded and flattened fluidity of the millennial generations of the TMWs in contacts with and their perceptions of the host society. Meanwhile, the differences among the respondents in the category of the duration of work in the ICH tourism businesses were found to be significant ($F = 1.723, p < 0.05$), indicating a positive relationship between the length of work, the extent and depth of the interactions with and understanding of the host society hereafter, and the level of place attachment.

4.2. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

The internal validity and reliability of the proposed dimensionality of the SCA of the TMWs working in the local ICH tourism businesses were tested by conducting a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). It can be learned from Table 2 that the internal consistency within the five postulated dimensions of the SCA of the TMWs was satisfactory, with there being composite measures of reliability over the 0.70 benchmark. Hence, the examined items could be confirmed to represent their corresponding dimensions. Meanwhile, in accordance with the criteria of the SEM specified by Byrne (2010), we designated the discarding of the measurement items with standardized factor loadings of less than 0.5 as insignificant, and subjected them to the possibility of cross-loading. The measurement scale was refined to the five dimensions carrying 18 items. The variables of place attachment and local identity were adjusted to be accounted for by 3 and 5 items, respectively.

The measurement model fit indices were reported at $\chi^2 = 573.520, df = 175, p < 0.001, GFI = 0.920, CFI = 0.908, \text{ and } RMR = 0.073$, which conform to the acceptable fit of goodness in line with the relevant criteria (Hu & Bentler, 1998). It could be concluded that the items of the refined scale were uniquely related to their respective proposed dimensions with the confirmation of their convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was also examined during the CFA to ascertain the validation of the scale through the analysis of the Average Variance

Table 2
Measurement model results.

Construct	Composite reliability	Standardized factor loadings
<i>SCA of TMWs—Learning adjustment</i>	0.79	
This job gives me the chance to learn about local history and culture.		0.824
I expand my knowledge and understanding of local history and culture.		0.762
Here I can experience local culture closely.		0.779
Here I learn different things about local people.		0.831
<i>SCA of TMWs—Economic adjustment</i>	0.84	
It is good for me to work here.		0.892
I have a stable job here.		0.814
I benefit from the ICH business subsidy provided by local government.		0.837
<i>SCA of TMWs—Social adjustment</i>	0.85	
I cooperate closely with local colleagues during work.		0.878
I feel like a local when tourists interact with me.		0.835
I have extensive local interpersonal relations.		0.854
I feel comfortable when I am with tourists and local colleagues.		0.884
<i>SCA of TMWs—Authenticity adjustment</i>	0.91	
During work I help preserve local history and culture.		0.895
I present tourists the true portrayal of local history and culture.		0.923
I am qualified to introduce local history and culture to tourists.		0.909
This work arouses my feeling of authentic local history and culture.		0.887
<i>SCA of TMWs—Status adjustment</i>	0.80	
This work makes me feel more respected.		0.832
This work makes me feel more recognized.		0.814
This work gives me a higher social status and reputation.		0.784
<i>Place attachment</i>	0.76	
I feel like this community is part of me.		0.781
I am very attached to the local community.		0.746
This city means a lot to me.		0.752
<i>Local identity</i>	0.78	
My life matters here.		0.781
I am willing to join the locals and become one of them.		0.822
The locals are willing to accept me as one of them.		0.803
Compared with home, I feel happier working and living here.		0.756
I plan to stay here for the next five years.		0.721

Extracted (AVE) (Byrne, 2010). A greater AVE was yielded for each of the proposed dimensions than the squared correlation coefficients of any of the two correlated dimensions, which established a tenable level of discriminant validity for the proposed scale.

4.3. SEM results

The SEM test results revealed that a sound level of goodness-of-fit was achieved for the external validity of the four-factor confirmatory model ($\chi^2 = 405.902, df = 211, p < 0.001, NFI = 0.92, CFI = 0.90, IFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.08$). Thus, it could be concluded that the SCA of the TMWs working in the local ICH tourism businesses was positively related to their local identities, supporting H1.

With regard to the mediating role of the place attachment of the

TMWs found between their SCA and local identities, the Chi-square statistic for the structural model was found at 61.75, and a tenable model fit for all of the indices was reported ($\chi^2 = 405.902, df = 211, p < 0.001, CFI = 0.90, NFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.08$). This demonstrated that there was no direct effect of the SCA of the TMWs on their local identities. Nonetheless, the indirect effect of the SCA of the TMWs on their local identities via place attachment, reported at the level of 0.170, was higher than the direct effect at 0.11. This result established the place attachment of the TMWs as a full mediator on the relationships that exist between their SCA and local identities, as shown in Fig. 4 and Table 3.

The SCA of the TMWs in the local ICH tourism businesses, which was mediated by their place attachment to the city, has a positive effect on their local identities ($\beta = 0.31, t = 5.972, p < 0.001$). Particularly, 61.5% of the variances in the local identities could be explained by the test scale. Thus, the SCA of the TMWs, as mediated by their place attachment, is found to be a reliable predictor of their local identities.

Lastly, multiple regression analyses were conducted to further examine the respective effects of the individual dimensions of the SCA of the TMWs on their local identities that are mediated by place attachment. It could be found from the regression results that there was a sound level of predictability for all of the five dimensions of the TMWs' SCA (at 0.001). In particular, the dimensions of authenticity and social adjustments were found to have the most significant impacts, accounting for 57.4% of TMWs' local identities, thereby unveiling the salient agency of the unique working experiences in the ICH tourism businesses responsible for constructing their local identities.

5. Discussion

Amplified by the internet-based social media, the contemporary world has come to overwhelmed by the controversies around person-place relationships, as inherent in the collective identity issues. Such emblematic redemptions and reparations were clamored for as a Black Barbie or a Hispanic Captain America. This study, in view of the current heated and often tilted discourses on tourism migrant workers (TMWs) in the academic as well as industrial realms, employs a systematic modeling approach to articulate and assess how the TMWs adjusted their identities as guests as well as hosts in the context of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) tourism. The proposed and examined comprehensive hierarchy for the positive interrelationships found among the significant constructs of sociocultural adjustment (SCA), place attachment, and local identities can contribute towards a better theoretical understanding of the mechanism of the TMW integration in the host society, from which in turn tenable practical implications can be derived. In particular, the salient agency of the ICH tourism development, as highlighted by the research results of this study of facilitating enhanced and refined perceptions and interactions of the person-place relationships, can shed light on the unique functions of the targeted and balanced cultural tourism development in building a common social and cultural ground for the community members with diverse person-place relationships. At the same time, the confirmation of place

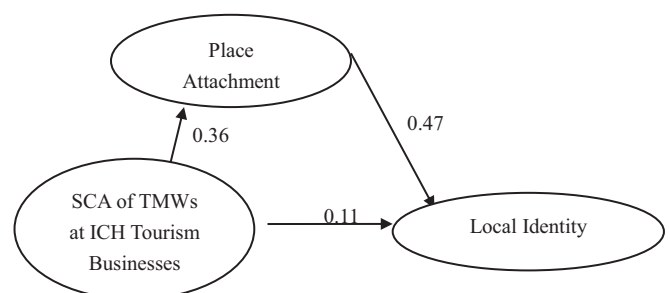


Fig. 4. Structural equation models with parameter estimates.

Table 3

Regression results.

Hypothesized path	Path estimate	t-value	Results
SCA → 0.11	0.405***		Not supported
Local identity			
SCA → 0.36	4.014***		Supported
Place attachment			
Place attachment → 0.47	4.849***		Supported
Local identity			
R^2 (Local identity)	0.678		

Note: *** $p < 0.001$.

attachment in mediating the TMWs' local identities consolidates the complexities of the identity adjustment of the TMWs as they engage in wide and in-depth interactions with the other aspects of the host society as well as the members of their separate spaces beyond their workplace.

The findings of this study firstly contribute towards knowledge enrichment by revealing the unique mechanisms necessitated by the peculiarities of cultural tourism to contextualize, construct, recognize, engage, reinforce and, finally, if not preferably, consolidate the concomitant host identity of the TMWs. Thus, this study can be credited as a timely and valuable complement to the extant literature concentrating on the guest aspects of the TMWs flowing either in or out of the less developed regions (Kim et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2013). Since the work and social interactions availed by the ICH tourism businesses are rich in symbolic iterations, and may have precipitated the incubation and cultivation of the host identities of the TMWs, the results of this study also conform to the interactionist paradigm of identity formulation and substantiation (Su, 2018). The economic adjustment dimension of the TMWs, as verified by the research findings, echoes the stressed significance of attending to the fundamental economic considerations of the TMWs to facilitate their integration process in the host society (Shen & Huang, 2012). In addition, as can be observed from the confirmed dimensions of learning and status adjustments experienced by the TMWs working in the ICH tourism businesses, such working opportunities and experiences have granted closer, wider, and embedded access to the TMWs to learn about the social and cultural norms of the host society, its traditional customs that are still reflected in the contemporary times, and its folklores and lifestyles together with the value systems and lifestyles of the local residents. In other words, the ICH tourism businesses have functioned as an apt occasion for the proactive adjustment and *acculturalization* of the person-place relationships

of the TMWs. This is duly reflected in Fig. 5, which illustrates the two gold medalists in the professional skills competitions related to the local hospitality heritage. While one of the medalists was a native gentleman, the other was a lady who migrated with her family to Suzhou during her teenage years, and is now on a solid career path to becoming a local intangible heritage inheritor.

Further, this study has highlighted the positive roles of the cultural tourists experiencing and consuming the intangible heritage tourism products in contributing towards and maintaining the host identity of the TMWs in the ICH tourism businesses, which would not have been realized in the other migrant labor-intensive service sectors or the more general categories of tourism products like sightseeing or entertainment (Tan et al., 2018). The tourists would experience the ICH as an integral whole, of which the TMWs have become the indispensable components in assuming the core or auxiliary roles in the production and presentation of the ICH tourism products and experiences. In particular, this study has focused on the dimension of authenticity adjustment made on the part of the TMWs, which, after being readily experienced and appreciated by the tourists, helps in building the host identity of the TMWs, and in turn exerts positive effects on their local identity. Such a catharsis process can be further validated by the dimension of social adjustment, with the tourists assisting in the felt self-identification process of the TMWs during their interactions. In this sense, the TMWs have been incorporated into the tourist gaze as the authentic embodiment of local history and culture, which serve as the dynamic outcome of the making and remaking of values, meanings, and identities by the present-day people, including the TMWs, and consequently arousing their self-reflections and identifications (Osbaldiston, 2012). In the meantime, recent emerging trends of enhancing cultural tourism experiences like greater extent of involvement, immersion, and engagement on the part of the cultural tourists may have further consolidated their interactions with the TMWs on site and facilitated the roles that help in constructing the local identity of the TMWs (Lawless & Silva, 2017).

That said, working in the ICH tourism businesses alone is not enough for the TMWs to establish a sound person-place fit in the host society without the mediation of their place attachment, as has been found out by this study. This can be accounted for by the fact that, beyond their work in the ICH tourism businesses, TMWs are in constant social exchanges with the various aspects of the host society in their daily lives, which may layer up on their perceptions and recognitions of the local identity (MacKenzie & Forde, 2009). Therefore, the social and cultural fabrics of the host society need to be effectively engaged in order to



Fig. 5. Mr. Chase Gu, left, and a Suzhou native, together with Ms. Suyi Zhang, migrant to the destination in her youth. Source: Courtesy of Chase and Suyi.

facilitate the integration of the TMWs. To refer to Bobek (2020), while working in the host society, many migrant workers or professionals actively maintain close social networks with their family members or others from the same origin, depending upon the specific social and economic capital brought to the host place. This, usually leads to their sticking to and in many cases, enhancing their original identities while undergoing the psychological process of attachment to the local place. The interactions between the competing and sometimes conflicting identities would influence their place attachment to the host society in either gluing or deviating directions.

Practically, with the identification and confirmation made by this study of the unique agency of the ICH tourism businesses in positively adjusting the local identities of the TMWs, corresponding strategies and programs can be planned and initiated by local authorities and community organizations to integrate local ICH tourism for the assistance of both the TMWs as well as the migrant workers in the other sectors to ensure their smooth adjustment and transition in the working and daily life of the host society. With the financial subsidy from local authorities, ICH tourism businesses can expand the employment and training efforts of the migrant workers, and even become the first stop of employment and knowledge for them in the society. Meanwhile, the specific experiential or training activities in the ICH tourism businesses can be offered to a broader base of migrant workers on a regular basis to ensure that they have the opportunities to learn about and cultivate the essentials of local cultural customs and social norms. With the official endorsement of cultural tourism development and emphasis on the preservation and utilization of the ICH in China, such activities can be institutionalized as an integral part of the public education and awareness programs on local ICH. Such softer approaches of social integration, as availed by ICH, deserve serious attention and articulation. This is because they are much more socially inclusive and effective than the other measures that easily fall into the big accusations of discriminating and antagonizing the disadvantaged groups. This is duly reflected in the recent controversial release made by the city of Suzhou of a so-called “code of civilization” that monitors and records the “uncivilized behaviors” of the non-local residents and link their records directly to the local social welfare that they are entitled to through big data (Sina.com, 2020).

As one of the first academic attempts to explore and analyze the agency of the ICH tourism businesses in adjusting and constructing the local identities of the TMWs, this study inherently invites further and more in-depth research on the person-place relationships of the TMWs and the various clusters and actors of the tourism industry. Future research can refine and enhance the current structural model proposed and examined by this study by incorporating the other significant constructs pertaining to the structural and normative aspects of the TMWs working in the ICH tourism businesses, such as their cultural and social capital, work contacts between the migrants and the inheritors, and person-organization fit, as well as the more tenable conceptualizations of the mediating and consequence variables. Moreover, by investigating the specific area of the TMWs in the ICH tourism businesses, this study may be limited in the generalizability of its research results. This can be addressed by having the future research cross-examining the migrant integration issues found in the other categories of cultural tourism embedding context-relevant research variables in such categories to ensure that a more in-depth understanding of the contribution of cultural tourism development to social harmony and cohesion is yielded. Lastly, in view of the growing diversity among the TMWs and the corresponding differences in their mobility pattern, predilections, and psychological features, different sub-groups of the TMWs should be distinguished and evaluated accordingly to capture the trajectory of their adjusted identities in a better fashion. In particular, one outstanding sub-group with rich research implications seems to be the migrant entrepreneurs holding cultural tourism businesses in the host locale.

6. Conclusion

To recapitulate, the introduction and promotion of the sustained localized employment has been long recognized as one of the non-hidden gems of tourism development. In a globalized supply chain that grasps the service industries to an extent that they are no less profound than that of the manufacturing sectors, the tourism industry has been embracing migratory talents and workforces in both the directions between the developed countries and regions, and the less developed ones. Furthermore, the industry has been embracing migratory talents and workforce for nearly all the levels of managerial and frontline positions. By revealing the mechanism of the social integration of the TMWs working in the special sector of the intangible cultural heritage tourism businesses, this study contributes towards a theoretical understanding of migrant integration in the tourism industry. As can be demonstrated through the measurements of the socio-cultural adjustments of the TMWs, working in the ICH tourism businesses has not only availed the access to learn and interact with the local culture and residents, but has also offered contextualized perspectives of the ICH tourists that initiate and consolidate the adjustment and assertion of the local identities of the TMWs. Such an outstanding agency for promoting social integration, which is unparalleled in the other economic and social sectors, and more resonating and profound than the tokenism gestures such as black Barbie or Hispanic Captain America, further recognizes the indispensable function of tourism in providing reasonable and tenable answers to the polarized debates on the migrant populations of many societies all across the world. In particular, due credit should be given to the heritage tourists whose authenticating gazes helped in constructing and reinforcing the socio-cultural adjustment, and thereby the local identity of the TMWs in their expression and presentation of the local heritage. At the same time, the mediating role of place attachment in the construction of the local identity of the TMWs highlights the necessity to attend the underlining general social and cultural support infrastructures to facilitate the transition of the social integration of the TMWs. In short, this study provides an intriguing research angle on exploring how the sustainable development of tourism can strengthen the general social harmony and is filled with profound implication to the contemporary societies.

Credited Author Statement

Qi Yan, York contributes to conceptualization, empirical study and data analysis.

Libo Yan contributes to literature review, conceptual framework and discussion.

Haobin Ye, Ben contributes to draft refinement and English editing.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

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