

**Acupuncture as a New Cultural Tourism Product
in Greater Bay Area – Stakeholders’ Perspectives**
针灸作为一种新的文化旅游产品：大湾区利益相关者视角

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Abstract

Qi is a body network other than blood, nerve and lymph network being recognized by western medication and is identified by Chinese in thousand years ago. However, Qi network still remains relatively vague in the eyes of many scientists and people nowadays, despite the fact that Americans are adopting acupuncture as one of the medical treatments. Presently, a growing number of international tourists were found to be interested in learning more about the Chinese culture, particularly the Qi and acupuncture. It is conceivable that a combination of Qi knowledge and therapy devices can turn into an additional tourism attraction in China for international tourists. Interviews with specialists were conducted to receive valuable stakeholders’ viewpoints about the barriers and alternatives to develop the proposed tourism product.

Keywords: acupuncture, cultural tourism, tourism product development, Greater Bay Area and health tourism.

气是除血液，神经和淋巴网络以外的一种身体网络，被西方医学界所识别，早在数千年前气就被中国人识别。然而，尽管美国人正在采用针灸作为一种医学治疗方法，但在当今许多科学家和人们眼中，气网络仍然相对模糊。当下，发现越来越多的国际游客非常在旅途中，对学习中国文化感兴趣，尤其是对气和针灸的了解。可以想象，将气的知识和疗法相结合，可以使中国成为国际游客的另一个旅游胜地。本文通过专家访谈，深入探讨利益相

关者对开发这一文化旅游产品的机遇和挑战，为大湾区发展针灸文化旅游提供了有效方案。

关键词: 针灸, 文化旅游, 旅游产品开发, 大湾区, 健康旅游

1. INTRODUCTION

Qi is a body network which, other than blood, nerve and lymph network being recognized by western medication, is identified by Chinese in thousand years ago. According to Chinese medicine philosophy, Qi is frequently described as the life force or vital energy of human. And general health depends on the quality of inherited Qi (Hopwood, 2004). While Qi network remains relatively grey or vague in the eyes of many scientists, health treatment using Qi network has been applied to emperors and ordinary citizens for thousands years up to present. The first written record about Qi, the Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor, can be traced back to about 200 BC and has evolved as part of the traditional Chinese medicine paradigm together with Chinese herbal medicine (Hopwood, 2004). Franglen (2001) acknowledged that Qi system of medicine has a long history and is still being used today. Thus, the history of Qi cannot be divorced from the history of Chinese culture itself. This valuable and relatively unexplored culture has remained strange and unveiled to many people. Curiosity and desire to understand this cultural aspect may form the basis to attract foreign tourists (Douglas and Derrett, 2001). In fact, international tourists started to travel to China for learning traditional Chinese medicine which contain Qi network including acupuncture in the early 1980s (Chan, 1989).

Treatment of Qi may include a number of approaches such as acupuncture therapy, cupping therapy, Aijiu therapy (Moxa cones and tubes), foot reflexology, massage, Tai Chi Quan(a yoga-like internal martial art), Qi Gong (a slow motion exercise) as well as Chinese herbal cuisine and medicine. Amongst these approaches, acupuncture has become a popular medicine treatment in

the USA as an alternative method to healing patients (Eisenberg, et al., 2002). Only the former three therapies require some unique therapy devices including needles, cups and boxes which are new and attractive to most overseas tourists who want to learn more about Chinese culture. These kinds of pops (treatment devices) together with the distinctive Qi knowledge after properly packaged and set could likely become an additional tourism attraction in major cities of Greater Bay Area in China. Initially, the proposed Qi product may include video display, model, knowledge, short lecture and a real show to demonstrate the treatment devices for Qi network. To materialize this new tourism product concept, there is a need to solicit synergetic view of various stakeholders and subsequently draw up a product plan. Against this background, the study solicits the stakeholder's views about this likely potential tourism product development.

In light of this development, the objectives of the study are set to collect the views of tourism stakeholders about the proposed product. Specifically, the research aims

- 1) to identify the potential barriers of the proposed product development,
- 2) to ascertain alternative in overcoming the barriers mentioned in 1) above,
- 3) to suggest action that can positively make the ascertained alternative in 2) more feasible.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

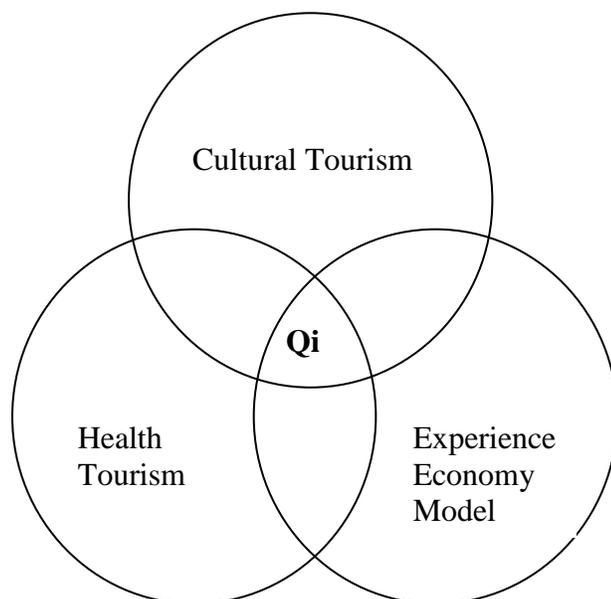


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

Qi tourism concept is, by name, interwoven with three tourism domains and or theories – cultural tourism, health tourism and experience economy, Figure 1 depicts these theoretical domains of the study - performance based Qi tourism product-that is built on a combination of health tourism thrust, cultural tourism knowledge, and experiential marketing concept.

Health tourism is a broad concept that encompasses both wellness tourism and medical tourism. Bennet et al. (2004) suggested that health-related travel, such as pilgrimages to major rivers for physical and spiritual cleansing; traveling to warmer climates; government encouragement of local healthcare services to visitors; sea-water treatments; hospitals offering services not only for the patients but also for the accompanying family members; and visiting a center for health related activities or medical treatments should also be considered in the scope of health tourism. Mueller and Kaufmann (2001) defined wellness tourism as a division of health tourism given that health tourism can include situations of physical and/or mental illness whereas wellness tourism generally deals with healthy people. Sheldon and Bushell (2009) defined wellness tourism as a holistic mode of travel that integrates physical health, beauty, longevity, and spiritual awareness, and a connection with community, nature, or the divine mystery.

With the rise of international health tourism, many scholars suggested that China should aim to develop Traditional Chinese Medicine tourism (Zhang & Yang, 2008; Dong & Zhang, 2011). More recently, a survey of about 131 wellness tourism professionals indicate that a lack of trained personnel, facilities and attraction were major obstacles in the China sector (Kucukusta and Heung, 2012). The authors further suggest that future study should be conducted using in-

depth interviews to gain deeper understanding of the barriers and develop solutions for overcoming the obstacles. This suggestion will be adopted in this study.

Goodrich and Goodrich (1987) defined the broad category of healthcare tourism as “the attempt on the part of a tourist facility or destination to attract tourists by deliberately promoting its health-care services and facilities, in addition to its regular tourist amenities”. The definition also shed the light that relevant facility provision and supply side are important to the development of the proposed Qi tourism product. Thus discussion about facility and site for staging this conceptual product will be addressed in the interview.

From another perspective, culture and heritage is a popular phrase in today’s tourism. In the past decades, the term cultural tourism is chiefly associated with the consumption of cultural manifestations like heritage, art, folklore and many others by tourists. McIntosh and Goeldner (1986) defined cultural tourism “including all aspects of travel, whereby travelers become familiar with the heritage and history of others or their contemporary ways of life or thought”. Richards (1999) added that the consumption of cultural tourism by tourists may extend to the elements of daily life of locals.

In other words, other than products, the processes of other cultures are the key features of cultural tourism. Thus, “process” or “way of life” embodied in culture has become more visible in the growing interest of tourists in experiencing lifestyle, customs and everyday life of people in different destinations. Pereiro, (2002) elaborated that cultural tourism can be defined in a different way as “a process of commodification, a nostalgia for heritage and the past, a psychological experience, process of learning and curiosity, a modern form of pilgrimage, plus as an industry which represents cultural values and as a specific way of cultural consumption”.

Since the qi-related treatment has traceable record for thousands of years in China and has evolved as a kind of semi-medical support or relaxing leisure activities as mirrored by the provision of related treatment services in many centers with hybrid health and social functions in local communities. The processes, way of life and commodification of the activities in these centers are a reflection of modern culture and has been appealing to local market. Thus, it is initially envisaged that the to-be-commodified acupuncture may offer a new sense of experiential feeling, different knowledge of learning and a meet of the curiosity to international tourists.

For cultural tourism, the cultural differences between visitors and destinations are the key factors to attract people to a destination (McKercher & du Cros, 2002; Bao & McKercher, 2008). Furthermore, recent national directive of developing cultural tourism plus real estate giants' support have prompted the establishment of cultural tourism destinations with comparable development scale and capital investment as theme parks or villages (Wen Wei Po, 2018). Domestic HengDa, WanDa, HuaQiaoCheng, YaJuLE, LanGuang, ZhongHong etc , real estate giants have been actively developing cultural tourism. Given this opportunistic moment, the close relationship between Qi and Chinese culture plus the curiosity from foreign visitors would be able to create a new form of attraction to overseas tourists.

On the other hand, customer perceived experience has played an increasingly substantial role in developing product and creates a new arena for experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Tourism involves the consumption of experiences (Urry, 2002). Experience is highly a personal phenomenon (Li, 2000; O'Dell, 2007). "Heritage is essentially whatever the visitors perceived as heritages" (Poria et al, 2003). Making the experience personally significance can increase the quality of experience, deepen the understanding of heritages and formulate sustainable competitive advantages (Timothy, 1997; Culter & Carmichael, 2010). Pine and Gilmore (1999)

combined participation and connection together to form a model in Figure 2. They argued that entertainment, education, escape and estheticism are mutually compatible and often come together to form uniquely personal encounters.



Figure 2: the four realms of an experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999:30)

Similarly, McKercher and du Cros (2002) argued that cultural tourists when they travel to the destination, they want to learn the cultural things and at the same time be entertained. From this sense, edutainment become an important factor in cultural tourism. Qi tourism interprets both intangible and tangible aspects of Chinese medicine culture; a properly organized Qi show may deliver a participatory experience to visitors. This new type of tourism may focus on making intangible heritages accessible by conveying its meaning to tourists on the one hand. And on the other, simple Qi show may provide tourists with “uniquely personal encounters”. Hence, the cultural experience derived from the proposed concept and theories can become more memorable.

3. METHOD

To achieve the objectives, a qualitative method is selected due to the exploratory nature of the investigation. The study aims to understand the tourism stakeholders' views about the proposed tourism product in clusters of cities in China's Greater Bay Area where has recently and partly been designated as area for developing leisure and cultural tourism under a new strategic development plan formulated by central government (GOSC,2019; Chan 2019).

There is no previous effort made to combine health tourism, cultural tourism and the theory of experience in tourist consumption. As such, an inductive approach utilizing qualitative research method is deemed to be more suitable than quantitative research (Maxwell, 2005). Furthermore, as Veal (2006) suggested when a topic was to be explored as a preliminary stage in planning a larger study, it was more appropriate to use in-depth interview.

As compared with quantitative method, qualitative method is more process-oriented. The qualitative approach helps people see the world in terms of people, situations, events, processes, and more importantly, an analysis of how situations/events influence others (Maxwell, 2011). In addition, qualitative method is argued to be far stronger than solely quantified approaches at identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), developing causal explanations (Maxwell, 2004, 2013), and examining in detail sensitive issues (such as health issues) and studying complex issues (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). These factors are some of the key elements the present study tends to find out. Furthermore, this topic involves various factors, which in-depth interview can provoke contentions of such a complex topic and provide rich and complete data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002).

The interviews are unstructured and aim to discuss particular questions and gain comprehensive information from specialists. This allows investigators to analyze the thoughts

and ideas of specialists about the problem. As the interview questions are designed to be open-ended and not so directive, interviewees have the opportunity to express their opinion freely and widely according to their points of interest (Patton, 1987). Also, interviews allow the researcher to ask a combination of probing, exploring and follow-up questions to obtain a deeper and fuller understanding of the respondents meaning (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), so that the breadth and depth of desired perspectives on the concerned topic could be achieved.

In total, 33 interviews were conducted in the investigation. The interviewees included 11 industry people, one congressman in tourism, **three tourism professors**, two consultants for import labor, one immigration officer, three tourism officers, one curator, two theme park operator, six therapists using qi devices, two TCM practitioners and one student majoring in TCM at PhD level. Tourism industry people includes tourism leader, ex-chairman of listed travel corporation, managers of travel agents, tour operators and guides. The interview lasts 25 to 35 minutes.

As shown in the Table 1, seven groups of interviewees with superscript * is classified as direct stakeholders who are obviously associated with the conceptualized tourism product. The selection rationale is also reinforced by earlier assertion that cultural tourism can be generally viewed as a sociocultural relationship between people which is promoted, moderated and mediated by a range of various actors including, planners, politicians, researchers, marketing professionals, travel agencies and so on (Smith, 1992).

Table 1: Profiles and Experience of Interviewees

Interviewees' professions	Number	Total Experience (more than n years)
Tourism industry people*	11	82
Tourism professors*	3	38
Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)practitioners*	2	54
TCM student*	1	3

Therapists*	6	53
Tourism officers*	3	25
Curator*	1	11
Congressman*	1	4
Theme park operator**	2	38
Consultants of import labour**	2	21
Immigration officer**	1	28

Note:

* denotes direct stakeholders who are obviously associated with the acupuncture-related tourism product.

** refers to classification of stakeholders as potential group that is likely associated with the proposed acupuncture-related tourism product.

The remaining three groups with superscript ** are classified as potential stakeholders with the following justification.

Among the 11 cities in the GBA, there are two special administrative regions including Macau and Hong Kong where local youngsters are relatively not quite interested in participating the service industry. Nevertheless, it is envisaged a need to hire labour overseas to supplement workforce for the service operations of the proposed tourism-oriented acupuncture centre. In this regard, the hiring agent and immigration department play an important role in the process. Thus, this study extends interviews with these two offices' professional and officer.

Apart from the provision of labour and expertise, the availability of suitable venue for operating and demonstrating the acupuncture are also significant for the realization of the conceptualized tourism product - acupuncture.

In recent years, more and more theme parks have been established in China. To compete with each other, some parks have allocated space for the special and unique theme as new business driver. For instance, the Overseas Chinese Eastern Park purposely built some dedicated premises and stages for show about janna – meditation abstraction originated from Buddhism.

Given such a clue, the researchers interviewed the operators of the theme parks about the investigated tourism product.

The chosen interviewees must have over eight years' experience in relevant field except the TCM student and congressman All interviewees are referred by industry people and research team members.

The whole interview process was audio recorded if permitted and was transcribed as verbatim. Memos were made during data collection and analysis. These serves as reminders for the researcher on observations, comments, and reflections made. The jotted record allows researcher to pursue a new direction of questioning with the data or used to record a new finding or insight (Jennings 2001). With the help of memos and audio tapes, all of the transcripts were written within 24 hours after the interviews. Then scripts' content was analyzed in a systematic and iterative manner (Turner 1981; Miles and Huberman 1994; Jennings 2001).

Content analysis was chiefly used to process the collected qualitative data. Patton (1987) identified content analysis as dividing data into "coherent categories and themes" by labeling them. Therefore, the audio tapes and transcripts from the in-depth interviews was reviewed repeatedly, coded, and summarized into categories based on the objectives of this research. After data reduction, the study presented the collected information under organized subtitles according to the research objectives and then finally draw conclusions based on inductive reasoning (Lincoln and Guba 1986) and comparative methods (Martin and Turner 1986).

4. CHALLENGES AND ALTERNATIVES

The dialogue with interviewees reflected that almost all share the view that the major barrier is the lack of expertise and specialists, even though there are some proposed alternatives which still

face some foreseeable hurdles. A chart illustrating the flow of challenge and alternative is shown in Figure 3.

Specifically, a travel agent manager commented as below:

“.....Travel agencies do not have strong enough reason to organize acupuncture-related activities. First of all, very few people from this industry understands acupuncture well – the two fields are too far from each other. Second, the result of this treatment is slow (can hardly be seen/felt immediately) and it poses a potential risk to companies which organize general tourists to experience it. Korea is very well known for its cosmetic/plastic surgery, while few travel agency ‘dare’ to organize tourists to visit Korea for these purposes due to the great risks and their lack of professional knowledge of the industry”.

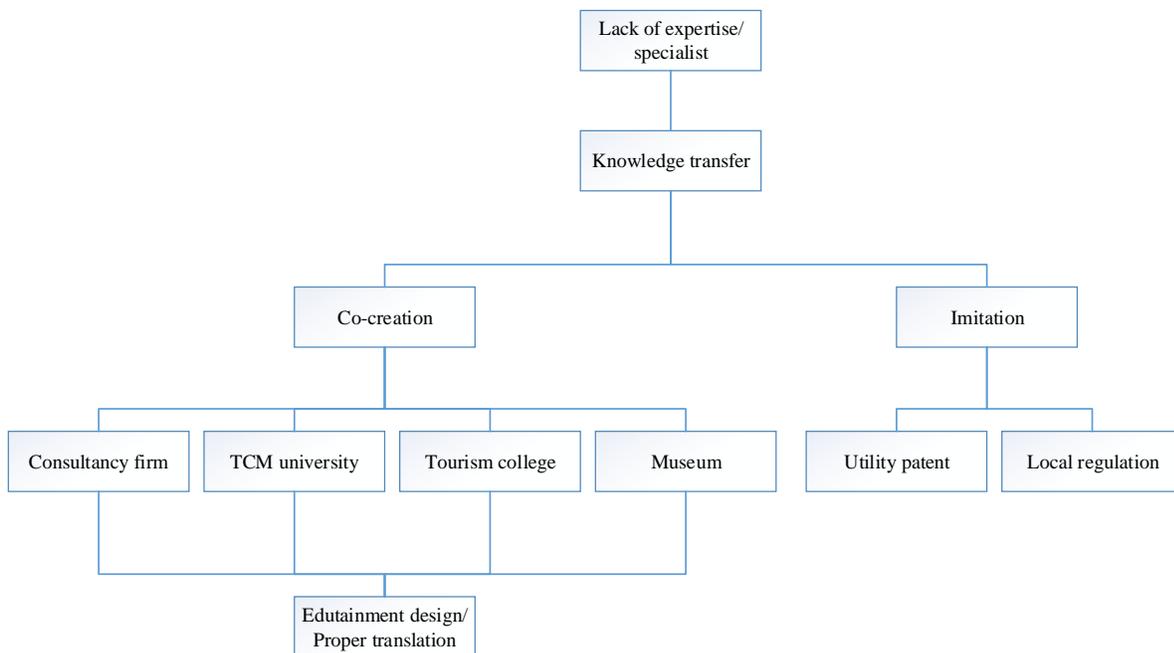


Figure 3: Flowchart of identified challenges and alternatives

5. Lack of expertise as bottleneck

Regarding the shortage of specialists to lead, develop, design and implement the conceptual acupuncture tourism product, greater than 80% of interviewees expressed more or less the same view. Especially because that there is no precedent nor experience of developing similar kind of tourism product and associated facilities, more information and input from stakeholders is needed so as to make the any conception and plan more realistic, practical and professional. Thus, it is deemed that multi-field co-operation is a must. Benur and Bramewell (2015) has also asserted the “tourism product experience is co-produced or co-created by the tourism staff and the host community”. Knowledge transfer can be easier to be achieved with the co-producers.

5.1 Co-creation opportunities

In the initial interviewing stage, one interviewed tourism operator posed a challenge and expressed the reservation about co-creation. He/she viewed that the co-creation of win-win situations for several industries or stakeholders to make this product to materialize was difficult. He remarked that, at the moment, there is no identification of the required players, nor mentioning about the seeking of suitable entity for leading the development and coordinating with multi stakeholders.

However, the study’s analysis identified four potential co-creation partners or stakeholders including museums, consultancy firms that specialize in tourism, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) colleges and tourism colleges. But stakeholders have diversified views on the co-creation with these partners.

5.2 Tourism consultancy firms

An interviewee (Tourism officer) shared the experience that the usual practice of government tourism office is to hire consultant firms to help the tourism development. By allocating working funds for this proposed product, it may help to accelerate the realization of the proposed product. Another interviewee (professor) held a contradictory view that there was no tourism project's consultancy firms with the internally equipped knowledge and expertise for developing such product in the market, it was difficult to assign one capable entity to be responsible for the development of this product. Every design has to be started from scratch, no similar job reference. Thus the implementation from conceptualization to the launch of tourism product is relatively difficult. However, another interviewee argues that consultancy firm may team up and co-ordinate with professionals in various field to offer service. Yet, the cost will be relatively higher than other projects.

5.3 Museum

Specifically, two interviewed tourism scholars expressed that there are some museums with funds, resources and venues to house the development. What these museums lack is the people with knowledge in the area. Knowledge transfer is one of the key bottleneck to develop the product. Their view echoed other scholars' claim that the provision of exhibitions, shows and trial experiences of acupuncture in museums could be unique attractions for western tourists (Chan et al., 2015).

5.4 Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) schools

In terms of technical skill transfer, three interviewed professors and travel operators suggested to seek some consultants who can be individuals or division in TCM schools, especially those with

clinical experience, relevant facilities and physical establishment to assist the product development and implementation. They also, besides knowledge transfer, added that such an idea may hasten the provision of a semi-laboratory for the experimental work and the formulation of prototype or beta plan for establishing the demonstrative venue for tourists.

However, the interviewees (TCM practitioner, PhD student in TCM) shared their insight about the proposed idea. They thought that

“It will be very difficult to ‘transfer’ the acupuncture skill to people from the travel industry – the cost of time is the major problem.....If the travel industry is really keen to promote acupuncture to their guests, they could consider to set up connection with universities with acupuncture programmes, such as HKBU or CUHK in Hong Kong, or universities specializing in Chinese Medicine, especially those in Guangzhou. These programmes usually have a good combination of theory and practice and should be happy to share them with visitors with strong interest in acupuncture, particularly those youngsters..... By giving this kind of visitors an introductory presentation/lecture of acupuncture, some of the young visitors might even go further to come back to Hong Kong or Guangdong to study acupuncture in future”.

The interviewees (Immigration Officers) shared that the Hong Kong government have at least two scheme for importing skilled labor and professionals. One can apply work visa through one’s prospective employer. Or one may apply the entry to the territory to work via the talent and professional scheme.

However, another interviewee (TCM practitioner) commented

“In practice, a Chinese Medicine Hospital is most likely an ideal place for such an operation. However, in mainland China, such hospitals are usually very busy in dealing with both outpatients and inpatients, lacking additional capacity/intention to deal with general tourists. While in Hong Kong, there are not yet such specialist clinics at all”.

Nonetheless, an interviewee (PhD student in TCM) added that to obtain the qualification, an acupuncturist usually has to spend 5 years studying a comprehensive programme including acupuncture, moxibustio and Tuina intensively. So it is extremely hard, if not impossible, to get their assistance to help a tourism practitioner to carry out this operation.

5.5 Tourism Colleges

On the other hand, an interviewee (travel agent operator) suggested that students in the acupuncture college or division in TCM can be explored as demonstrators in the show venue and as trainers for students from the tourism college, respectively. The latter is stronger in presentation in English. However, some training for acupuncture knowledge and operating

procedure should be catered. Even, college's training venue could be converted as testing site for demonstration if funding available.

6. Correct Translation

Assuming that the TCM university and their students agreed to offer service or help for the project, there is still one more challenge has to face. An interviewed tourism officer remarked that the acupuncture-related knowledge is largely in Chinese, whereas the target market is overseas tourists. There is a need to translate the knowledge from Chinese into English or other language. This subsequently implies the huge demand for translators or interpreters. But native English translators are generally deemed to have no knowledge about acupuncture; so deviation from the original meaning may appear and damage to health may occur, especially the live show. To bridge the gap, it is necessary to add one middle agent who may communicate with both Chinese consultant and interpreter in the translation process.

7. Edutainment Design

Besides correct translation of acupuncture knowledge, seven interviewed travel operators, tourism managers and scholar raised that the tourist expectation on edutainment features and wow experience which are critical part for a successful tourism product design. Thus, it is necessary to employ the show consultant to tailor the translation and whole activities for tourism purpose.

8. Imitation

While the realization of the product could be regarded as a kind of innovation, competition is strong and imitation is fashionable in the country. Some interviewees (professor, curator, ex-congressman, TCM practitioners) are worry about the market appeal of the new product may bring the uncontrolled imitation that will create undisciplined competition. Eventually, potential health hazard may happen when real live show of applying acupuncture is carried out by different service providers in unregulated environment. So, they foresee a lack of mechanism or plan to protect the intellectual property and to regulate the market at the moment.

8.1 Regulatory Mechanism

However, interviewee (tourism officer) had mentioned that it is necessary to consult the Hygiene and Health officers who have own professional and official perspectives about this demonstrative type of tourism product - insertion of needle to human body, based on their traditional training using western medicine perspective. Anyway, it is likely that accident or mishap may happen during the demonstration. To overcome this likely barrier, interviewee suggested the setup of an office to regulate and monitor the operator for real live demonstrate real show or use of tailored mannequin as props and sets in the demonstration process.

8.2 Intellectual Property Protection

A founder of listed travel corporation suggested that it is necessary to arrange the transfer of the relevant knowledge and modify the main stream practice of acupuncture to fit for tourism purpose. The new technical skills or knowledge derived from the new tourism product development is needed so to ensure a healthy continuity of the new product line. However, the knowledge and skill transfer is easier said and done.

Regarding the protection of intellectual property in the product development process, one interviewee (theme park operator) highlighted that there is a kind of patent available in recent market. It is called utility patent which is lower cost for application and registration and is usually associated with original design. Cultural village developer has been keen to register their innovative design in the area of utility patent as the intellectual properties. This may offer legal protection for their effort in innovative or modifying design.

9. CONCLUSION

The investigation has identified a diversified range of views on developing acupuncture as new and original tourism product. Nevertheless, the study finds that stakeholders' worries about hurdles in knowledge transfer, co-creation process and imitation problems. Suggestions on the partnership with traditional Chinese medicine universities, the use of edutainment design and application of utility patent may somehow be possible alternative to tackle the barrier for development. Thus, the proposed product could be a promising and innovative one. The materialization depends on the dedication of the product development team and the support of government and private resources.

In the past decades, the cultural and tourism planning and design focused on single product or service like folklore, architectural landscape, handicraft, and food. It is seldom to see the use of local medical practice as a kind of tourism product. This study takes the lead to initiate such an idea in tourism product design.

On the other hand, the academic research fashion about medical tourism has chiefly related to the western medical check or treatment accompanied by tourism activities. Even the latest taxonomy of tourism product, medical/wellness and cultural learning under personal quest group

has no place for the proposed product (McKercher, 2016). Nevertheless, this study has shed new light on the planning and design of medical tourism using one of the traditional medical treatment in oriental culture.

In this exploratory studying process, the study has encountered some theoretical domains that is linked with conception for this unique tourism product. These, at least, include the tourist's experiential experience, the theories related to innovation and co-creation plus framework of new product development. Future research may consider deeper investigation about this topic, capitalizing these associated academic components and interest.

Due to the many attributes associated with tourism products, the development of primary tourism products is very complex. Smith (1994) stressed that tourism products development embrace a sophisticated array of elements including physical plant, natural features and weather, services provisions, hospitality, choices for tourists, tourist involvement in the delivery of services, and also experiences. Among these elements, both tangible and intangible are mixed together. The intangible elements, for instance, may comprise the representations and images of primary tourism products that the tourism sector may promote, as well as the cultural meanings that tourists associate with these products (Morgan, 2014; Murphy, Pritchard, & Smith, 2000). Also scholars hold that "tourism products are fundamentally experiences" and these experiences has been seen as central to tourist choice and satisfaction (Smith, 1994, p. 582; Xu, 2010). Thus, future research may follow the above mentioned attribute and preferred experience to understand the planning and design of the tourism product based on acupuncture.

To make the conceptual product into realization, funding is the paramount factor. As the proposed tourism product is new and unique, different funding originators may have different views on the anticipated return, expectation on duration of the product cycle and perception of

social benefits. Thus, examination of funding opportunities – venture funds, government or institutional funds and entrepreneurial funds may bring tourism stakeholders’ broader and deeper understanding about the subject before their decision making for developing such product.

In seeking the fund, it is necessary to have some seed funds to set up some incubator type of program as being done by most innovation programs. This may bring a synergetic effect on the future master program. Subsequent fund can be allocated for knowledge transfer, co-creation and collaboration so as to attract industry people and various parties.

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APPENDIX 1

Questions being raised in the semi-structured interview

Question 1: According to your experience and knowledge, what will be the barriers or difficulties hinder the development of acupuncture tourism product for international visitors (in a live show format) ?

Question 2: What will be the alternatives to overcome the barriers or to mitigating the difficulties (in Question 1) to develop the acupuncture tourism product for international visitors (that is in live show format) ?

Question 3: Any suggestion that can positively help the mentioned alternatives (in Question 2) to become more effective ?

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