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Master Thesis

*Sustainability of Badaling Great Wall heritage site  
in Beijing, China: from a tourist perspective*



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## **Abstract**

Heritage tourism and the concept of sustainability have some certain intrinsic associations between each other. They both possess the characteristics of inheritance and continuance. In 2015, World Heritage Convention has stated that it is critical to consider present and future needs from economic, societal and environmental aspects when conserving the heritage resources. The Great Wall is one of the most popular and well-known heritage tourism destinations throughout the world, which was designated on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1987. Badaling Great Wall, as the study case in the thesis, is one of the eight sections of the Great Wall being located in Beijing. Based on the review of previous literature, there are a lot of research studying on heritage tourism within the context of sustainability from the aspect of local resident. However, there is little research studying from the perspective of tourist, who are the major consumers, financial support and a key group of stakeholders in heritage tourism.

Hence, this thesis puts emphasis on exploring the current challenges to sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site, through investigating its current situation of sustainability from a tourist perspective. The research findings are that Badaling Great Wall site has confront several management-related challenges. Lack of commercial appeal and promotion, absence of cooperation between stakeholders, the negative effects caused by excessive visitors, lack of efficient energy, water and waste management, and absence of a sound scheme for monitoring the situation of heritage conservation and supervising negative tourist behaviors.

**Keywords:** heritage tourism; sustainability; tourist perspective; challenge; Badaling Great Wall site

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# **1.Introduction**

*In this chapter, it is going to present the background of the thesis topic, interpret the research problem, introduce the study case: Badaling Great Wall in Beijing, China, state the research purpose and research questions, and then present the significance and contribution of this research. The last part is going to provide a clear overview of the structure of the thesis.*

## **1.1 Background and problem statement**

Heritage tourism has occupied a larger market and expanded in a faster way than most other sections of tourism, especially in the developing countries (Timothy and Nyaupane, 2009; Aas et al., 2005). These countries can be regarded as “newly industrializing countries”, according to Hobbs (2009, p.44), and they have common features of development level from social and economic aspects, such as those in Latin America, Asia, Middle East and North Africa. UNWTO (2016) estimated that heritage tourism took up nearly 40% of whole international tourist arrivals. Orbasli and Woodward (2009) note that while the definition of heritage tourism is extensive, wide-ranging and hard to unify, however, it usually includes physical and spiritual components of culture and refers to make the tangible and intangible previous materials become a kind of tourism resource (Timothy and Nyaupane, 2009). In terms of heritage, it also has a variety of explanations and descriptions, but its focal point is what present-day society picks out from the past to conserve and continue for the future generation (Graham et al., 2000; Ashworth, 2003; Timothy and Boyd, 2006).

World Heritage Sites (WHS) are one special group of heritage tourism destinations, which were first proposed at World Heritage Convention by UNESCO in 1972. The purpose of WHS is to identify and preserve natural and cultural heritage places of

great values for present and future generations. (World Heritage Center, 2016) In order to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, decided by UNESCO World Heritage Committee, sites should be required to have “outstanding universal values” and satisfy at least one set of ten selection criteria, explained in the document “*Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*” (WHC, 2016). By being designated a World Heritage Site, destinations are able to attract more domestic and international tourists, enhance the value and identity of these historic places, and guarantee the quality of tourist experience. (Li, et al., 2008; Van der Aa et al., 2004)

In 2002 Budapest Declaration, UNESCO World Heritage Committee advocated to enhance actual preservation of heritage assets which were inscribed on the World Heritage List, as well as to make a balance among sustainability, preservation and development of these heritage sites from social, cultural and economical perspectives (Gullino, Beccaro & Larcher, 2015). The notion of sustainable development has been taken into consideration in the Operational Guidelines in 2015, and it is indicated that preserving cultural and natural heritage is conducive to sustainable development from ecological and cultural perspectives (WHC, 2015). The document “*Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the Convention, 2012-2022*” (18th General Assembly, 2011) has called for World Heritage Convention to link protection and preservation to communities, as well as considering present and future needs from economic, societal and environmental aspects when conserving the heritage resources.

Sustainable development and the concept of sustainability have aroused large attention of the public and academic scholars since the end of last century (Hall, 2011; Liu, 2003). Heritage tourism and the notion of sustainability have some certain intrinsic associations between each other to some extent, because they both possess the characteristics of inheritance and continuance (Garrod & Fyall, 2000). The former



focuses on what we have inherited from our ancestors, both tangible and intangible resources, while the latter is centered on what we pass on to the future generation, regardless of capital, natural or cultural assets. Associated with the sustainable development goals in *the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, goal 11.4 aims to reinforce to “protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage”, and goal 12.b aims to promote “local cultural and products” to ensure sustainable tourism (UN General Assembly, 2015, p.22). It is becoming significant to preserve the values of non-renewable heritage sites for the future generations (Du Cros, 2001).

Nevertheless, in recent years, with the advancement of tourism industry and globalization, many issues have been caused by the large number of tourists and their impacts (Su, 2009), which is not conducive to the sustainable development of heritage tourism. Even though tourism has the capability of financial support and to make people recognize the significance of conserving World Heritage sites, it also causes the excessive visitation, which does not conform to the original goal of conservation and will have negative effects on the heritage sites. (Li, Wu and Cai, 2008). Consequently, there are many challenges on the way to achieve sustainability of tourism at heritage places, as well as to compromise between conservation goals and the impacts caused by tourism, regardless of positive or negative.

So far, there are a lot of research studying on community perspective, such as Li and Hunter (2014), Jaafar et al. (2015) and Chen and Chen (2010), or different stakeholders in heritage tourism planning, such as Aas et al. (2005), Landorf (2008) and Jones and Shaw (2012), while there is relatively little research studying from the perspective of tourists. Visitors are the major consumers, the main financial support and a main group of stakeholders in heritage tourism (Su and Wall, 2012), so it is essential to know and incorporate their opinions and concerns towards sustainability of tourism in the heritage sites, in order to improve the resorts’ planning.

## **1.2 Study case**

The study area in this thesis research is the Great Wall in Beijing, China. It is one of the most popular, famous, and appealing tourism destinations, as well as heritage sites in China and throughout the world, which was designated on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1987. As a splendid dragon lies on the mountains, the Great Wall is regarded as a visible symbol of Chinese culture, history and nationality. It started to be established during Spring and Autumn Periods (722 BC to 481 BC) for the purpose of military considerations, to prevent and defense the enemy intruders from the northern wall. After that, there are totally eight dynasties which reconstructed, reinforced and repaired the former one with bricks and stones substituting the soil, as well as continued to built the walls at different states, in order to improve the national defensive system.

The total length of the Great Wall is about 6,700 kilometers (Su, 2009), and its part in Beijing alone is over 700 kilometers. (Su and Wall, 2014) Since the Great Wall has a history over 2000 years, some parts, made up of the earth, have been already disappeared, some segments have been in ruins under the force of nature, and some sections have been damaged by human beings. There remains a few parts of the Great Wall which are in a good condition. Tourists who want to visit the Great Wall are due to its architectural grandness, cultural and historical significance, and its positions in Beijing, constructed in Ming dynasty, are regarded as the best choice for tourist destinations.

There are eight sections of the Great Wall being located in Beijing, and Badaling Great Wall is selected to be used as a case in this thesis research. In addition, the Great Wall in the following paragraphs all refers to Badaling Great Wall. The reasons why this thesis research choose Badaling Great Wall are that this part of the Great Wall is the first one which was officially allowed to open to visitors in 1958 by

National Administration of Cultural Heritage in China (Li, 2008), which could be seen as a turning point in the history of the function of the Great Wall. It is the most visited and widely known section throughout the world, ranking AAAAA tourism destination in China which is the top level. In 1991, UNESCO chose Badaling Great Wall to stand for the whole Great Wall in China and issued it the certificate of human cultural heritage. Furthermore, it has good reputation, significant military meaning, and well geographical position, which is much easier to get access to this section, compared with the Great Wall in other locations.

### **1.3 Research purpose and Research questions**

The purpose of this thesis research is to explore the current challenges to sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site in Beijing, China, through investigating its current situation of sustainability from a tourist perspective. In order to achieve the purpose of this thesis research, it is going to:

- Establish a conceptual framework which establishes the relationship between the key concepts and becomes a guidance for this thesis research.

- Conduct a literature review of heritage tourism, sustainable heritage tourism and its challenges, as well as tourist perspective to this topic, through mapping the previous research in this field and finding out the knowledge gap.

- Collect empirical materials about the situation of tourism sustainability at Badaling Great Wall heritage site in China from both domestic and international tourists.

- Discuss the collected empirical materials and identify current site-specific challenges to tourism sustainability at Badaling Great Wall heritage site .

- Make a conclusion of this thesis study, summarize its research findings and state its contribution and suggestion for future research.

Thus, from what has been mentioned above, the following research questions can be

addressed:

*(1). What is the current situation of tourism sustainability at the Great Wall in Beijing, China from a tourist perspective?*

*(2). What current challenges to sustainability of tourism can be identified at the Great Wall in Beijing, China?*

#### **1.4 Research significance**

This study makes a significant contribution to heritage tourism planning in the light of tourism sustainability in the case of the Great Wall in Beijing, China, as well as at other World Heritage Sites, from both theoretical and practical perspectives. With regard to theoretical aspect, this study is conducive to the understanding of operationalization of sustainability in relation to tourism at World Heritage Sites, and the application of heritage conservation in the context of sustainable tourism development. In addition, this study provides a new conceptual framework for exploring the situation and challenges of tourism sustainability, which can also be used in other research of World Heritage sites. Moreover, it also has reviewed the previous literature which is concerned with sustainable heritage tourism and its challenges, as well as tourism sustainability from visitor perspective. In relation to practical perspective, the results, analysis and findings in this thesis study, through interviews of both domestic and international tourists (who have been to the Great Wall within five years), are conducive for tourism planners and managers to knowing the current situation and challenges of tourism sustainability at the Great Wall in Beijing, as well as to making decisions which are more applicable and appropriate for sustainable heritage tourism development.

#### **1.5 Disposition of the thesis**

The thesis is made up of six chapters, guided by research purpose and research

questions, involving: Introduction; Conceptual framework; Literature review; Methods; Discussion of the results; Conclusion. The first and foremost section introduces and describes the background of this thesis topic, research interests and research problems. Then, the background and information about the study area, the Great Wall in Beijing, China, will be introduced and interpreted. Based on what has been talked about above, research purpose and research questions is going to be stated, and then followed by the significance and structure of this thesis research. The second section, conceptual framework, identifies, explains and operationalizes the key concepts related to the targeted phenomenon, and also discusses the relationship among them. In the third part, a holistic and critical literature review is conducted so as to have an overview of the existing body of knowledge and find out the knowledge gap, in the field of tourism and sustainability on World Heritage Sites. The fourth section, method, interprets and discusses different traditions of philosophy in social science which are applicable to this thesis research. Furthermore, it also describes and explains the method of collecting data and its limitations and ethical considerations during the process of implementation, , as well as the method of analyzing data. Next section, discussion of the results, explicates and analyzes the collected empirical materials from the interviews. It interprets and discusses the current situation of sustainability at Badaling Great Wall heritage site from economic, environmental and socio-cultural perspectives. Based on the current situation, it also identifies and discusses the current challenges to sustainability at Badaling Great Wall heritage site. At the end, the last section provides an overview of the whole thesis research, involving the topic relevance, research purpose, research questions, the employed method, summary of the research findings, as well as states the limitations of this thesis research and the suggestions for future studies.

## **2. Conceptual Framework**

*This chapter is going to interpret the conceptual framework employed in this thesis research, which is built on the foundation of research purpose and research questions. At first, it is going to introduce the main framework, three pillars of sustainability. Next, the concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism will be explained. Then, the guidelines of sustainable tourism is going to be interpreted from economic, environmental and socio-cultural perspectives, which also acts as the theoretical basis for identifying the following sustainable tourism indicators at heritage sites. Next part, it is going to explain and discuss these indicators and their relationships in detail.*

According to Veal (2011) and Miles and Huberman (1994), conceptual framework can be regarded as a kind of structure which identifies, explains, operationalizes the key concepts, factors or variables in relation to the targeted phenomenon, as well as discusses the relationship among them. Although the process of determining conceptual framework is very hard, it still plays a significant role when doing a research (Brotherton, 2015). On one hand, conceptual framework lays a coherent and reasonable groundwork for the research. On the other hand, it is conducive to connecting the previous body of knowledge with the new one which is going to be generated.

### **2.1 Three pillars of sustainability**

Based on research purpose and research questions, it is necessary to know the situation of sustainability of tourism at Badaling Great Wall before finding out its challenges to achieve tourism sustainability at the destinations. Three pillars of sustainability are considered as the cornerstone of constructing and understanding the concept of sustainability. According to 2005 World Summit on Social Development, the term sustainability is identified as an integration of economic, environmental and socio-cultural dimensions, which are interdependent and can be mutually interfered and reinforced by each other (United Nations, 2006). They are considered as a system, which would become unsustainable if these three pillars could not achieve in a

balance status. Every pillar is supposed to be put same emphasis on by planners during the process of decision making, otherwise this system would be broken and it is hard to achieve the goal of sustainability (Harris and Goodwin, 2001; Huang, 2011).

The concept of sustainable development is contested and complex, there is still no one certain definition which is clear, uncontroversial and accepted by everyone (Landorf, 2009). Nevertheless, the definition of sustainable development, which has been agreed and used universally, is from the Brundtland Report of World Commission on Environment and Development, “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED,1987, p. 37). On one hand, it focuses on the needs and well-being of people, particularly, those who are in poverty. On the other hand, it puts emphasis on the limitations of the environment and the non-renewable resources on Earth (Hardy and Beeton, 2001; Bosselmann, 2008). Instead of a stationary status in harmony, sustainable development is regarded as a dynamic process which is full of changes (Liu, 2003).

In the context of tourism, the concept of sustainable tourism is established on the foundation of the principles of sustainable development. It has nothing to do with the scale or type of tourism, what it matters is that the development and management of the sites is continuable and can be maintained in a long term. According to the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2005), it provides a simple explanation of sustainable tourism, that is, tourism which is able to thoroughly consider its present and future impacts from economic, social and environmental aspects, as well as taking the needs of the environment, industries, local residents and tourists into account. Therefore, according to UNWTO (2005, p.11-12), the guidelines of sustainable tourism has been addressed from three dimensions of sustainability, which are explained in the following table.

Table 1. Guidelines of sustainable tourism

Three pillars of sustainability	Explanation
Economic	It has the capability to ensure viable and long-term economic

sustainability	operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.
Environmental sustainability	It has the capability to make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
Socio-cultural sustainability	It has the capability to respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

*Source: Adapted from UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p.11-12*

## **2.2 Sustainable tourism indicators**

In order to explore tourists' perceptions and opinions on sustainability of tourism at World Heritage sites, despite the intrinsic meaning of sustainability, their knowing and awareness of sustainability from these three dimensions are of importance as well. Sustainable tourism indicators refer to "variables which summarize or simplify relevant information; make visible or perceptible phenomenon of interest; are amenable to management; and quantify, assess, monitor, measure and communicate relevant information" (Roberts and Tribe, 2008, p.577). They are applied to measure the process of sustainable development in tourism sector, and reinforce the understanding of tourism sustainability from three dimensions, as well as the understanding of the association among tourism's impacts, the cultural and natural surroundings (Miller and Twining-Ward, 2005; Reed et al., 2006). They are also conducive to finding out the problems and challenges on the way to sustainable development and identifying proper strategies for planning and management (Schianetz and Kavanagh, 2008).



Therefore, below is the framework depicting the variables of sustainable tourism in the case of the Great Wall, on the basis of three pillars of sustainability, and their relationships are also shown in the following figure 1. The WTO guidelines of sustainable tourism (as shown in Table 1) are part of the framework and criteria for developing the groups of indicators which are suitable in heritage tourism. These sustainable indicators are identified and gonig to be explained and discussed in the following part.

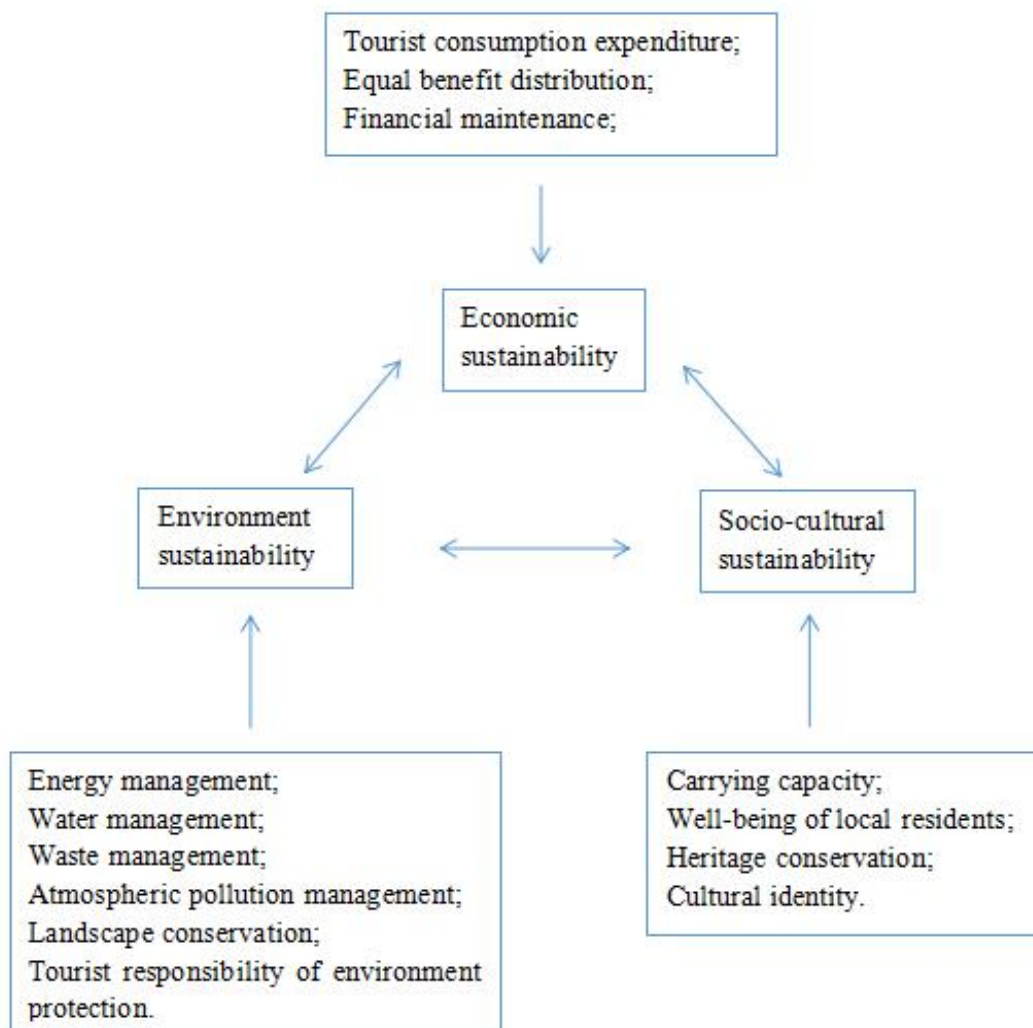


Figure 1. Conceptual framework in this thesis study

As indicated in the figure 1, visitor consumption expenditure, equal benefit distribution and financial maintenance are the three indicators to show the situation of

economic sustainability at tourism resorts, in accordance with the guidelines of sustainable tourism. Visitor consumption expenditure refers to “the total consumption expenditure made by a visitor or on behalf of a visitor during his/her trip and stay at destination” (Laimer and Weib, 2006). It is used to reflect the ability of the heritage site to generate economic profits and its viability of tourism activities and business. Equal benefit distribution and financial maintenance here are developed from the definition of economic sustainability, and are regarded as the indicators to reflect the situation of the heritage site, so as to find out the problems or threats to achieve the sustainability.

In terms of environmental dimension, it is supposed to be sustain the natural resources and reduce the impacts by human activities on them (Sutton, 2004). The indicators of environment sustainability are energy management, water management, waste management, Atmospheric pollution management (including noise pollution and pollutant emissions), landscape conservation and tourist responsibility of environment protection, which are adapted from Durovic and Loverentjev (2014). The focal point of these indicators is to reflect the situation of protection of natural ecosystem in the heritage sites. Through investigating the circumstance of these aspects, it is conducive to finding out the threats and challenges to reach the goal of environmental sustainability.

When it comes to the social pillar, it is related to maintain the social values for the future generation, such as human rights, transparency, fairness, health, safety and so forth (Widok, 2009). Cultural dimension of sustainability focuses on not only preserving cultural identities, but also promoting cultural industries (Nurse, 2006). Its focal point is to maintain the value of cultural diversities. In the context of heritage tourism, social dimension is required to guarantee the benefits for the local residents, as well as the local heritage assets and culture (Durovic and Loverentjev, 2014). In

order to investigate the situation of socio-cultural sustainability, the indicators are identified as carrying capacity, well-being of local residents, heritage conservation and cultural identity.

The concept of carrying capacity is defined as “the maximum number of people who can use a site without any unacceptable alteration in the physical environment and without any unacceptable decline in the quality of the experience gained by tourists”. (Mathieson and Wall, 1982:21, in Saarinen, 2006) If the number of tourists exceeds the carrying capacity, their impacts will be harmful to the destinations and destroy the balance of surrounding ecological status. With regard to well-being of local residents, it can be demonstrated from their quality of daily life, their attitudes and interaction with the visitors (Durovic and Lovrentjev, 2014). With these two indicators, it is helpful to investigate the situation of social sustainability at heritage site, as well as to find out its threats and challenges.

The concept of heritage conservation is defined as “the process of understanding, safeguarding” historical resources in order to preserve its cultural identity, values and significance. (Orbasli and Woodward, 2009, p.316) It is also considered as a kind of manipulation of change, and it needs to deliberate not only architectural concerns but also social and economic issues. It includes making fair and equitable judgments and sound consideration about the “historic evidence, present day needs and resources available”, as well as “future sustainability”. (Orbasli, 2008). As the indicator of cultural sustainability, it also involves heritage use intensity, which can reflect the situation of the heritage protection to some extent. The concept of cultural identity is related to “a culturally defined community and the development of this community is rooted in the specific values and institutions of this culture” ( Nurse, 2006, p.38). This indicator also includes the expression of cultural heritage, which indicates the cultural identity of local community.

### **3. Literature review**

*In accordance with the research purpose and research questions about the situation and challenges to sustainability of tourism on World Heritage site, this chapter is going to identify, review and map the relevant previous literature, in order to provide an informative foundation of understanding this topic field. First and foremost, I will demonstrate the method and criteria of searching the literature. Next, it is going to present and explain the results of the existing body of literature, from the aspects of heritage and heritage tourism, sustainable heritage tourism and its challenges, and tourist perspective. At the end, the knowledge gap will be addressed.*

#### **3.1 Method and criteria of searching the literature**

Literature review in a specific field is considered as a significant part in the process of doing a research, because it is conducive for the researcher to becoming familiar with and offering he/she an insight into what has been conducted before, as well as contributes to finding out what kind of knowledge is supposed to be researched in future studies (Veal, 2011; Long, 2007).

In order to search the existing body of literature and identify a knowledge gap in current tourism studies, this thesis research has used electronic databases, and articles are selected from EBSCO, Science Direct and Linnaeus University OneSearch online library. The reasons why the author chose these electronic databases are (1) all these databases can provide a large amount of academic journal articles. (2) Linnaeus University provides the access to Science Direct and Web of Science, so the author can download all the academic journal articles, which are needed, for free through the Internet. (3) all these databases have the following limitations for literature search scope: language, publication year, subject, journal's name and content type. (4) all these databases can search the key terms through title, abstract and keyword.

In accordance with the research purpose and research questions, the search terms which have been identified and used can be seen in Table 1 as follows:

Table 2. Literature review search terms

Level	Search term
1	Heritage tourism; heritage tourism destination
2	Sustainability; sustainable development
3	Challenges to tourism sustainability
4	Tourist; visitor; tourist perspective; visitor perspective
5	The Great Wall; Badaling Great Wall

As presented above, at the first step, I have searched the key terms “heritage tourism” and “heritage tourism destination” in all three databases to narrow down the search scope. Secondly, the key terms “sustainability” and “sustainable development” have been searched, and the limitation of heritage tourism has been added to reduce the search scope. Next, on the previous search basis, the key term “challenges to tourism sustainability” has been searched. Then, the key terms “tourist”, “visitor”, “tourist perspective” and “visitor perspective” have been searched to find out the academic articles related to sustainable heritage tourism. Last, the key terms “The Great Wall” and “Badaling Great Wall” have been searched, within the subject of tourism studies.

According to Randolph (2009), the purpose of the criteria for inclusion and exclusion is to decide which articles can be included/excluded in the literature review, and it is affected by the review’s focus, goals, and coverage. For further filtering the relevant articles on the search result list, the following criteria are used:

- (1) Articles should be written in English.
- (2) The publication date of articles should be between 2000 and 2017.

(3) Articles which are repeated on the search result list should be excluded.

(4) Articles which are published in the academic journals of tourism subject should be included.

(5) Articles which talk about the situation and challenges of sustainability of tourism at heritage sites and tourist perspectives in this field.

After selecting the targeted academic articles, it is going to read through these articles with a critical attitude and angle. Next, notes should be written while reading in order to keep in right track. At the end, it is going to arrange and categorize the findings into themes. There are a large number of relevant articles having been found, which meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria mentioned above. The following part is going to discuss and analyze the results of the literature review.

## **3.2 Results**

### **3.2.1 Heritage and heritage tourism**

As a wide-ranging concept, there are many different ways to understand the term of heritage in existing literature. According to World Heritage Convention, it classifies heritage into three types, cultural, natural and mixed heritage. It can be categorized as built, natural, and living heritage (Leask, Fyall & Garrod, 2002), or tangible and intangible one (Timothy and Nyaupane, 2009). Tangible heritage can be regarded as a material expression (UNESCO, 2009), such as museums, historic buildings, castles, monuments, archaeological remnants and so forth. While intangible heritage can be considered as a non-material or cultural presentation, such as folkways, languages, festivals, religions, cuisines and foodways, music and dance and so forth (Timothy and Boyd, 2006). With regard to the scale of heritage sites, they can be classified into local, national, continental and global levels (Graham and Fyall, 2000; Potter, 2003). In this thesis research, the study case, the Great Wall in China, belongs to the global level, as one of the World Heritage sites.

With regard to understanding the term heritage, Graham and Fyall (2000) consider it as what present-day society picks out to protect and to carry on, while others hold that heritage is regarded as a product of modern society, including and illustrating the past as a kind of tourism resource (Hewison, 1987; Timothy and Boyd, 2003, in Orbasli and Woodward, 2009). Heritage is not just what inherited from the past, but also what had been formed and represented by the present and past society. (Graham and Fyall, 2000; Lowenthal 1997; Timothy and Nyaupane, 2009) From economic perspective, Dalmas et al. (2015) state that heritage can be regarded as a kind of capital, incorporating different assets, whose value in use can compensate for its unknown one via the profits generated by the products and services of every asset.

When it comes to answer the question what heritage tourism is, Timothy and Boyd (2003) state that there are two main ways to understand this notion. The first one puts emphasis on that people should present at the places where display historic assets or at the places which are regarded as heritage resources. (Garrod and Fyall, 2000). While Silberberg (1995, p.361) defined heritage tourism in this way: “visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in historical, artistic, scientific, lifestyle, or cultural offerings of a community, region, group, or institution”. This point of view focuses on the associations between people and the exhibited heritage, that is to say, people perceive the heritage or heritage sites from their own background, culture, identity or other social perspectives (Poria, Butler and Airey, 2000; Poria, Reichel and Biran, 2006).

### **3.2.3 Sustainable heritage tourism and its challenges**

Tourism development at heritage sites is conducive to improving the quality of daily life for local communities, increasing their opportunities of employment and establishing sound infrastructures (Madden and Shipley, 2012). However, in spite of the economic perspective, it causes negative effects on environmental, social and cultural aspects. Aas, Ladkin and Fletcher (2005) state that heritage has the capital to attract tourists, and tourism can provide public and economic support for heritage

conservation, however, if tourism development exceeds the carrying capacity of the heritage sites, it will make heritage protection into a danger status. The development of heritage tourism possesses the potential of degrading and damaging the heritage resources, which will lead to destroy the cultural integrity of local communities and in turn reduce the profits of tourism (Nasser, 2003).

Maksin (2010) addresses his opinion from a new viewpoint, he argues that with the globalization, tourists' expectations of destinations are prone to be same owing to the similar quality of services. Unique cultural heritage and authentic local experiences possess great destination attractiveness, which indicates that the potentials of tourism development at the heritage sites are huge. Therefore, it is necessary for tourism industry to support the conservation and management of cultural heritage in an efficient way.

Consequently, there are many researchers emphasizing on solving the controversial problems between the development of heritage tourism and the conservation of cultural heritage, such as Garrod and Fyall (2000), Nasser (2003), Landorf (2009). This addressed the significance of sustainable heritage tourism, whose purpose is to diminish the negative effects of tourism on the local society and environment as much as possible, and try to increase the economic profits to local communities and heritage conservation (Ghanem and Saad, 2015).

In order to decrease the negative impacts of heritage tourism and increase the positive ones, sustainable management is considered as a good solution, but the process is complicated and difficult to design and implement in practice (Leask and Fyall, 2012; Pedersen, 2002). There are many challenges to achieve tourism sustainability at heritage sites.

According to Supriharjo et al. (2016), they have investigated the factors which affect sustainability in community-based heritage destination, with the case of Kampung Kemasan in Java, and the results show that economic viability and challenges of policy implementation are the two obstacles for local communities to achieve sustainability goals.



Timothy, Wu, and Luvsandavaajav (2009) state that many challenges are attributed to the lack of funding in developing countries, which causes the problems of heritage preservation. In addition, Timothy and Nyaupane (2009) claim that another common challenge of sustainable tourism in developing countries is that the issues of sustainability have not been included in the relevant policies. According to Ghanem and Saad (2015), in their case study of Egypt, they find that challenges to the development of sustainable heritage tourism have direct impacts on the degradation of heritage. They classify the challenges into two groups: community-related and management-related. The former includes thefts of antiquities and environmental pollution due to urbanization, and the latter involves conflicts among governmental authorities and their absence of cooperation, lack of awareness, proper knowledge and skills about sustainable practices among stakeholders.

Li, Wu and Cai (2008) have explored the main threats to the sustainability of tourism development at World Heritage sites in China, via using Geo-mathematics and Geographic Information Systems, and the results show that population pressure and lack of effective relevant policies, management strategies and financial support make a negative impact on the values of heritage sites.

Gu et al. (2013) have identified several major challenges which threaten the tourism sustainability in the case of Jiuzhaigou, a World Heritage site in China. One problem is that rapid increase in the number of tourists has caused the deterioration of the environment. Another challenge is the conflict between the development of the local economy and the preservation of the natural landscape.

Lusetyowati (2015) states that heritage tourism aims to save culture and heritage resources and share them with tourists, as well as for the local communities to gain economic benefits in the tourism industry. Within the case of Palembang, he argues that there are three strategic ways to promote heritage tourism to become sustainable, that is, collaboration and finding the balance among each stakeholder, maintaining the

authenticity and quality of historic assets, and protecting and keeping the perpetuation of heritage resources.

#### **3.2.4 Tourist perspectives**

Tourist usually plays a negative role in the prior literature of sustainable tourism, concentrating on economic, environmental and social impacts caused by their activities and behaviors (Nicholas and Thapa, 2010). However, it is necessary to put more emphasis on the role of tourist when doing the research of the development of sustainable tourism. Because if tourists are interested in the sustainability of tourism, recognize their responsibilities, and have more knowledge about the principles of sustainability, it is more likely to achieve the goals of sustainability at tourism resorts (Swarbrooke 1999). In the previous literature, there are many studies focusing on tourist number, behavior and impacts at heritage places in the context of sustainability, such as Timothy and Boyd (2006), Li et al. (2008), Mason and Kuo (2006), Jamieson (2003) and so forth.

Eagles et al. (2002) have studied the complex and adversarial relationship between protected areas and tourists. It is stated that the guidelines of governments and legislation were important to regulated tourists' behavior, and on the other hand, tourists' perceptions on sustainable tourism will promote the success of management to a great extent. According to Huang et al. (2012), they analyzed Panel data of the tourist flows in Macau from 1999 to 2009, and it was concluded that the contemporary developments of heritage sites can indirectly influence tourists' perceptions of sustainable tourism.

When it comes to the sustainable heritage tourism and its management, most of previous research put emphasis on local communities' perceptions and attitudes, such as Li et al. (2014), Jaafar et al. (2015), Chen et al. (2010) and so forth. There is still a

lack for research from the view of tourists' perceptions and opinions. It is traditionally seen that tourist is always the cause of problems and negative impacts in tourism industry, while some researchers argue that tourist can also bring profits and responsibilities (Hunter and Green, 1995; Swarbrooke, 1999). It is vital that raising awareness among tourist can significantly influence the development of sustainable tourism (Huang, 2011). Moreover, Weaver and Lawton (2004) state that visitors' perceptions and attitudes play an important role in the development of three pillars of sustainability. Tourist expenditure is considered as a dominant factor of economic viability in tourism sector. Their perceptions toward environmental sustainability will affect their behaviors at the sites. In addition, through visitors' interaction with the local residents, it is supposed to know the social sustainability to some extent (Nicholas and Thapa, 2010).

### **3.3 Identification of knowledge gap**

From what has been mentioned above, the relationship between tourism development and heritage conservation is interacted and interdependent. (Tunbridge, 2007) In order to achieve the goals of sustainability of tourism, there are many challenges for heritage sites. Most of prior studies investigate the sustainable heritage tourism development from the perspectives of local residents, however, there is little research talking about tourist, which is also identified as a major group of stakeholder in tourism sector. Therefore, this thesis research is going to explore the situation of sustainability of tourism from a tourist perspective, in order to identify the challenges at the heritage site.

## **4. Method**

*In this chapter, at first, different traditions of philosophy in social science which are relevant to this thesis research will be explained and discussed, from the notions of ontology, epistemology and methodology to two specific traditions of philosophy: pragmatism and constructivism. Next, it is going to interpret the research design of this thesis, using qualitative research method and inductive research approach. Then, the method of collecting materials will be presented and explained from interview method, sampling method, question framing, interview recording and transcribing. After that, it is going to evaluate the methods of data collection in a critical way. Then, the method of analyzing materials is going to be interpreted and discussed in details, employing the method of qualitative content analysis. Last but not least, it is going to talk about the ethical considerations during this thesis research.*

### **4.1 Philosophy of social science**

When it comes to the philosophy of social science, it is mainly concerned with the interpretation and understanding about the conception of the nature and the source of knowledge. Ontology, epistemology and methodology are the primary foundation when people design and conduct academic research.

#### **4.1.1 Ontology, epistemology and methodology**

The notion ontology is concerned with the nature of reality, a science study of being and what composes a fact (Blaikie, 2010). There are debates between different researchers and scholars, some hold that there exists universal truths which we need to find out, others believe that reality is dynamic, complicate and affected by the social context and human action (Brotherton, 2015). So, in this thesis, the researchers' views of the real world are contextually led truths.

The term epistemology is concerned with the science of knowledge, the approach how we know things. The key point of epistemology is on “knowing”, and “the relationship between the knower and the knowable” (Long, 2007). That is, the relationship between researchers and the process of developing knowledge of the world (Brotherton, 2015). In this thesis, the researcher seeing what compose the knowledge is from subjective stance.

In relation to the term methodology, it is concerned with “the ways of acquiring knowledge” (Brotherton, 2015, p.43). Methodology is regarded as a philosophical framework that possesses a specific set of paradigmatic assumptions which will be employed during the research process (O’Leary, 2004, p.85). In this thesis, methodology includes methods for data collection and methods for data analysis, which is going to be interpreted and discussed afterwards.

#### **4.1.2 Relevant traditions of philosophy in social science in this thesis research**

There are a lot of different traditions within the philosophy of social science, such as positivism, post-positivism, phenomenology, constructivism, critical theory and so forth (Brotherton, 2015; Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). Among them, there are two traditions of philosophy in social science which are related to my research: pragmatism and constructivism.

##### *Pragmatism*

When it comes to the tradition of pragmatism philosophy, it argues that the approaches to interpreting the world and conducting the research are full of variety, it is impossible to know the whole world from a single point of view and there maybe exists multiple realities (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). Pragmatism also holds that it is not correct that there exists a unitary ideology or to view the world just from ontological or epistemological aspect (Brotherton, 2015). Therefore, pragmatism

philosophy is concerned with employing more than one research strategies and approaches, different from positivism philosophy and phenomenology philosophy, which can only use one type of research strategy and approach.

Moreover, the focal point of pragmatism philosophy, which plays the dominant and driven role in the whole research, is the research question (Brotherton, 2015). The nature of the research question is the decisive factor which determines what type of research approach and strategy would be employed during the research process. For instance, whether to choose inductive or deductive research approach, objective or subjective stance, qualitative or quantitative research strategy, or a mixed research method.

When associated with my research, the purpose is to explore the current challenges to sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site, through investigating its current situation of sustainability from a tourist perspective. The ways to view the tourists' perceptions and opinions of sustainability are full of variety. However, since I choose to explore and describe them, qualitative research is the most proper strategy in my research. One of the disadvantages of this tradition of philosophy is that "it often makes the research process more complex, time-consuming and difficult to design and put into practice" (Brotherton, 2015, p.42). Since there is only 10 weeks for conducting the research, time is not enough to use the pragmatism philosophy.

### *Constructivism*

With regard to the tradition of constructivism philosophy, it is originated from the thoughts of ancient Greek philosophers and defined as "the recognition that reality is a product of human intelligence interacting with experience in the real world" (Elkind, 2005, p.334). That is, reality is considered as a form of construction or display of human mind. So, constructivism views realities from subjective stance, because they

are determined by people “who hold them and their form” (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004, p.76).

Furthermore, Positivism maintains that scientific knowledge is generated from a scientific method, on the contrary, constructivism holds that scientific knowledge is constructed by community or scientists, and the method of generating knowledge is more than one (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). The relationship between researchers and the inquired object is interacted. Therefore, constructivism advocates a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative one when conducting a research. In addition, the distinction between constructivism and interpretivism is that the former focuses on the epistemological position, while the latter puts emphasis on the ontological stance (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004; Brotherton, 2015).

When related to my research, constructivism conforms to the research purpose, to explore the current challenges to sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site, through investigating its current situation of sustainability from a tourist perspective. Knowledge is generated from social construction through researcher and tourists, as well as tourists’ traveling experience at the Great Wall, which could be regarded as an interaction between human and the real world. Results and findings are supposed to be gained after the data collection, interviews, with tourists who have been to Badaling Great Wall in China.

## **4.2 Qualitative method**

Based on the worldview of constructivism, it is normally regarded as an approach to qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). This thesis research is supposed to find out information and meanings from the opinions of participants, thus, it employs qualitative research method and inductive approach. It is regarded as collecting data about people and phenomena in real life, and being capable to figure out behaviors

and understand the connotative meanings under the behaviors (de Vaus, 2002, p.6). On the contrary, quantitative method is considered as collecting data of numbers, calculating and show the relationship in the objective world (Bryman and Bell, 2005, p.154). Given that the purpose of this research is to explore the current challenges to sustainability of tourism at the Great Wall in Beijing, through investigating its current situation from a tourist perspective, thus, the data, which need to be collected, is about tourists' opinions and to find out the connotative meanings under that.

### **4.3 Method of Data Collection**

#### **4.3.1 Interview method**

When doing a qualitative research, there are several types of techniques which are used commonly in tourism research, such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation and so forth (Veal, 2011:197). The method for constructing material employed in this research is interview. According to Brotherton (2015), in general, interviewing is considered as a technique which demands qualitative data and needs to explore things to a deep extent. It is conducive to conducting the investigation which aims to obtain data about the questions related to why and how from a small number of people (Bryman et al., 2005).

The styles and forms of the interview are different and full of variety. Some researchers may prefer to conducting a highly structured, well-ordered, step-by-step interview, while others may like to use more flexible, casual and open-ended interview, just like having a chat with friends (Long, 2007). In addition, the ways of conducting an interview are also in a variety. Researchers are able to do an interview face to face or with the aid of technology, such as telephone, video call, or internet, which also can make researchers and respondents interact and communicate in real time (Brotherton, 2015). Given that researcher's objective condition, it is suitable to do the interviews via mobile phone, and the type of interview is semi-structured and



open-ended. In order to achieve the research purpose and answer the research questions, phone interviews were used to explore the tourists' real perceptions, opinions, observations and experiences of their travels at the Great Wall in Beijing. The time required for the phone interviews ranged from 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the responses of the participants.

#### **4.3.2 Sampling**

There are several major forms of qualitative data sampling, such as convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowball and expert-choice sampling, and quota sampling. Snowball sampling will be adopted in this research, which is a sociological technique for exploratory research. According to Brotherton (2015, p.227), snowball approach is assisted to “identify potentially valuable sample subjects”, which is a kind of “referral mechanism”. That is to say, the original sample subjects are required to make the recommendations of other people who can provide the certain information.

Given that my research uses the case of the Great Wall, and the research purpose is to explore the current challenges to sustainability of the Great Wall in Beijing, China from a tourist perspective, snowball sampling is conducive to better understanding what tourists observe and know about the situation of tourism sustainability at this heritage site. The first step of sampling is to identify the population in the research (Creswell, 2013). The participants should meet the requirements that they have been to Badaling Great Wall site within five years so far, including both domestic and international visitors. There are totally eleven informants who have participated in the interviews in this thesis research, being made up of eight women and three men, who stay in Kalmar, Sweden. The first interviewee was recommended by researcher's friend, who was unfamiliar with the researcher. The second interviewee was recommended by the first one, and the rest were in accordance with this analogy. The method of contact between the author and the participants is through message on

mobile phone. With the recommendation from the former interviewee, the author will send a message to the potential participant, so as to know whether he/she is willing to participate in the phone interview.

### 4.3.3 Question framing

In terms of the step of framing questions, most researchers will prepare an interview schedule or checklist before they conduct the interview, which lists the focal topics and some relevant issues as a framework (Long, 2007). Related to my research, to frame questions is based on the research purpose and conceptual framework. Given the research purpose, it is about to explore the current challenges to sustainability of tourism on World Heritage Sites based on the case of the Great Wall in Beijing, China, through investigating its current situation from a tourist perspective. Considering the conceptual framework and previous literature, the main issues can be addressed from three dimensions of sustainability in tourism, thus, the follow-up questions are supposed to be framed in the light of economic, ecological and socio-cultural sustainability indicators. Since most of tourists do not clearly know what sustainability is, it is required to design and prepare the questions based on the items which they are able to understand and perceive (Cottrell et al., 2004). Question 1 to 5 are concerned with the personal information of the interviewees, including gender, age, occupation, educational level and nationality, except for their name. Question 6 is about the year and month when the participants visited the Great Wall. Question 7 is concerned with the total time they have spent at the heritage site. In addition, all the interview questions (Q1-Q24) have been listed in the appendix.

Table 3. Operationalization of sustainability indicators

Concept	Item	Question
Economic	Tourist consumption expenditure	Q8、 Q9

sustainability	Equal benefit distribution	
	Financial maintenance	
Environment sustainability	Usage of energy	Q10
	Usage of water	Q11
	Sanitation and waste treatment	Q12
	Noise and air quality	Q13
	Landscape conservation	Q14
	Traffic and access	Q15
	Tourists' responsibility of protecting environment	Q16
Socio-cultural sustainability	Tourist number	Q17
	Presentation of heritage	Q18
	Heritage use intensity	Q19
	Conservation of heritage	Q20
	Local residents' well-being	Q21
	Attitude of local residents to the visitors	Q22、 Q23
	Respect of different cultures and traditional values	Q24

#### 4.3.4 Recording and transcribing the interviews

The next step is to record the whole process of the interview, and tape-recording is the most common and frequently used way (Veal, 2011). This step is of great importance, because it is conducive for researchers to focusing on what the respondents are saying, as well as observing their emotion when they are answering the questions (Long, 2007). With the advancement of technology, in my research, I will choose digital devices, such as smart phone, to record the process of interview and write the transcript, because tape-recording is resource consuming and it is more convenient to use digital devices. After that, it is going to transcribe the empirical collected materials manually according to the recording and notes.

#### **4.4 Evaluation of the methods**

As what has been mentioned above, most are the good aspects of the methods used to collect empirical data, however, there are still some limitations in these methods. In terms of phone interview, it is much more convenient to implement, saves a lot of time, doesn't have the problem of distance and has a higher rate of response than other types of interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In addition, during the phone interview, since interviewees are anonymous and don't have overlap of social network with the researcher, it is unnecessary for them to disguise themselves and they are more likely to express and present their genuine ideas and opinions (Sullivan, 2013).

Nevertheless, the method of phone interview also has some disadvantages. According to Bryman and Bell (2015), phone interview is supposed to have a less degree of trust among interviewees than face-to-face interview, and it is also easier to be affected by the objective factors, such as signal, noise and so forth. Moreover, it has the limitation that the researcher cannot observe interviewees' facial expressions and body gestures, just gaining the information from their words (Veal, 2011). On the other hand, using semi-structure interview, this form is more likely for the researcher to influence interviewees' responses consciously or unintentionally, and lead their answers towards the researcher's expectation (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004).

When it comes to the method of sampling, snowball approach has both advantage and disadvantage. On one hand, it contributes to find out and gain access to the targeted informants who are the researcher did not know before, and it is also conducive to saving time, effort and money for the researcher to collect sample (Voicu and Babonea, 2007). On the other hand, according to Phillimore and Goodson (2004), snowball sampling has the limitation that the participants may have similar experience, knowledge and background to some extent. Thus, the interviewees may not be on behalf of the whole targeted population. In addition, if using the snowball sampling,

the researcher will have a little control on the domain of the sample population, because it depends on the initial participant's social class and social networks (Given, 2008).

#### **4.5 Method of Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is a process of ordering, organizing, and making sense of the raw data, which is gathered from the transcript of interview (Long, 2007). The first step in the process of qualitative data analysis is to be familiar with the data, and the next one is to organize data, via unitizing and coding the unorganized data. The former means to divide materials into different units in terms of different emphases, in order to offer a clear and explicit view of what kind of materials are going to be analyzed. In addition, the latter is considered as a process of “ordering, reducing and summarizing the data”, and to add conceptual meanings into the data (Brotherton, 2015, p.272). That is, to organize raw data and segment the text into categories, then, using a word or term to represent these categories (Creswell, 2013).

According to Veal (2011), in general, there are two means for analyzing the qualitative data, one is manual method and another is computer-aided method. In relation to my research, manual method was adopted to manage the qualitative data. When it comes to the techniques of qualitative data analysis, this thesis research is going to adopt qualitative content analysis as a kind of method to examine and discuss the collected materials from interviews. According to Bryman (2004), qualitative content analysis can be defined as a kind of research technique which focuses on constructing and categorizing raw materials, being conscious of the role of researcher, and understanding the latent meanings of text materials. It is also emphasized on different ways to interpret the empirical data (Kohlbacher, 2006).

In this thesis research, the purpose is to explore the current challenges to sustainability of tourism on World Heritage Sites based on the case of the Great Wall in Beijing, China. Materials being analyzed are collected through the interviews from domestic and international tourists who have been to Beijing Great Wall within 6 years up to now (from 2012 to 2017). In order to know the current situation of tourism sustainability at Beijing Great Wall and further find out its current challenges, interviews are conducted to collect what visitors noticed and their opinions from their traveling experience. Therefore, it is necessary to understand their denotative and connotative meanings, notice things which do not unfold in the context, as well as organize the messy empirical data into orders and categories and arrange them into different themes.

#### **4.6 Ethical considerations**

When it comes to the ethical considerations during the thesis research, it is concerned with moral principles, such as integrity, responsibility, transparency, trust and so forth, which should be considered throughout the whole process of the research (Brotherton, 2015). Regarding my research, it is my duty to ensure that interviewees will not be harmful, regardless of physical or mental, during the whole process of the research. In addition, it is also necessary to protect the privacy of the interviewees, who have participated in the interviews. When I collect data, as a researcher, I will not ask for their name information, will take their timetable or schedule into consideration when making an appointment, will respect their willingness of whether they would like to participate in the interview, and will inform them about this thesis research purpose, methods, and what the role and contribution of their participation are in the whole thesis research. Furthermore, When I arrange and analyze the collected empirical materials, I will respect the information which interviewees provide and keep the confidentiality of the data.

## 5. Discussion of the results

*In this chapter, it is going to present, analyze and discuss the collected empirical data from the interviews. At first, the information of interviewees will be displayed in table 3 and sorted into six columns: gender, age, nationality, occupation, education level and the year when they traveled to the Great Wall. After that, it is going to analyze and discuss the empirical data by means of three dimensions of sustainability: economic, environmental and socio-cultural. Among these three pillars, the structure of the discussion is established according to the research questions. That is, it is going to explore and interpret the current situation and challenges of sustainability at the Great Wall heritage site in each dimension of sustainability.*

Table 3. Information of interviewees

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Nationality	Occupation	Education level	Year of traveling to the Great Wall
1	Female	24	Chinese	Architectural Assistant	Undergraduate	2014
2	Male	26	Chinese	Student	Graduate	2013
3	Female	26	Chinese	Student	Graduate	2013
4	Female	24	Chinese	Student	Graduate	2015
5	Female	23	Chinese	Student	Undergraduate	2015
6	Female	20	Chinese	Student	Undergraduate	2016
7	Female	29	Chinese	Freelance PR	Undergraduate	2016
8	Female	23	Swedish	Student	Graduate	2014
9	Male	21	Chinese	Student	Undergraduate	2013
10	Male	22	American	Student	Graduate	2015
11	Female	22	Czech	Student	Undergraduate	2015

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*Source: interviews conducted by the researcher*

## **5.1 Economic sustainability at Badaling Great Wall**

When it comes to economic sustainability in the context of tourism, the focal point is to strengthen the competitiveness and viability of tourism industry, which means to increase profits and decrease costs as much as possible, and it is also required to have the capability to generate prosperity and distribute benefits equally in a long term (Nicholas and Thapa, 2010; UNEP and UNWTO, 2005). In order to answer the research questions, the following sections are going to explicate and discuss the current situation and challenges of economic sustainability at Badaling Great Wall from a tourist perspective.

### **5.1.1 Current situation of economic sustainability from a tourist perspective**

Based on the chapter of conceptual framework (which has demonstrated the guidelines of sustainable tourism and sustainable tourism indicators at heritage sites) and from the view of tourist, the situation of economic sustainability is supposed to be illuminated and discussed from three aspects: tourist consumption expenditure, equal benefit distribution and financial maintenance.

Tourist consumption expenditure plays a significant role in the viability of economy in tourism section (Weaver and Lawton, 2004). It is one of the most important components of benefits for the local business and can reflect the ability of generating prosperity at the host heritage destination. From this point of view, it can be regarded as the indicator to investigate the situation of economic sustainability at Badaling Great Wall.

From the responses of the participants, with regard to their expenditures during their



traveling at Badaling Great Wall, a preponderance of participants revealed that they spent their money on entrance ticket, food, water and drinks. In spite of these things, it seemed that they preferred to purchasing goods which are indispensable during the traveling. For instance, Interviewee 10 stated, *“I paid for entrance ticket, food, drinks and a cap, because it was very very hot that day.”* Nevertheless, some participants articulated that they didn’t pay anything except for entrance ticket, because they prepared all the necessities by themselves before going to the site. Interviewee 6 said,

*“I have prepared and brought several bottles of water and snacks when I come to the Great Wall, because the price of food, drinks and commodities at tourist attractions are much higher than those in other places. I don’t have any interest and don’t think that it is necessary to take pictures in traditional clothing at the Great Wall site, as well as to buy souvenirs and goods.”*

In addition, interviewee 1, 2, and 4 have the similar opinions with interviewee 6. From this point of view, we can see that some participants do not have a strong motivation and impulse to buy things at Badaling Great Wall. However, from the descriptions of the interviewees, in spite of various restaurants and stores, there are a lot of other business units at the site, such as photo studio where visitors can take photos professionally within traditional Chinese clothing, shops which sell souvenirs, T-shirts, postcards, caps and models with the image of Badaling Great Wall. Except Interviewee 2 and 9 who visited Badaling Great Wall at relatively slack season for tourism, others noticed that there were still a lot of people consuming in different restaurants and purchasing goods in shops and stores during the peak tourist seasons.

Therefore, from what has been mentioned above, we can see that Badaling Great Wall site has the ability to ensure the economic viability of tourism related business. Tourist consumption expenditures on local products are conducive to the development

of local business, as well as promoting the investments from outside enterprises on the local communities (Swarbrooke 1999).

According to the meaning of economic sustainability (which has been mentioned at the beginning of section 5.1), the ability of equal benefit distribution among tourism relevant stakeholders is also considered as an indicator to reflect the economic dimension at destinations. From a tourist perspective, the participants paid more attention on the price setting, as their angle to perceive equal benefit distribution in the case of Badaling Great Wall. Interviewee 3 stated,

*“I think the economy at the Great Wall is supposed to be a kind of monopoly, because the ownership belongs to the government, who has the right to decide which company or merchant is able to do business affairs at the site. The relationship between different enterprises and different merchants is competitive. And once they have the power of operation, they are able to fix the price by themselves. So it is unlikely for them to distribute benefits equally.”*

This illustrates that one of the obstacles to distribute benefits equally is the conflicts and competitive relationship between various business operators. Government and business operations are both recognized as important stakeholders in tourism (Orbasli and Woodward, 2009). The governmental officials have little contact with business operators, because the government has the supreme power and business operators are just its subordinates at the site. Problems are attributed to the paucity of interaction and communication to some extent. With the lack of information of actual situation at the site, it is difficult to solve the problem of price setting and profits distribution. Therefore, it is essential to implement stakeholder collaboration in the management and planning of heritage tourism, in order to distribute benefits equally and achieve the goal of sustainability (Aas et al., 2005).

In addition, interviewee 4 stated,

*“The price of goods at the Great Wall site is various. Even the same commodity has different prices in different shops and stores. I have been to Wuzhen before. It is an ancient town in Southern China, and its economy grows rapidly during recent years. Because there is a private company which has undertaken the whole things related to tourism industry in Wuzhen. This company employed local residents, provided them uniforms and managed the business matters according to unified regulations. So the price of goods, even in different shops, is the same. Maybe the Great Wall can follow the example of Wuzhen in terms of the economy management.”*

This indicates that the unified price and regulations in Wuzhen can be regarded as the embodiment of collaboration between the business operators and local residents, and this instance demonstrates that stakeholder collaboration contributes to the equal benefit distribution. As for Badaling Great Wall site, negotiation and cooperation between business operators and local communities can be a good approach to solve the problem of pricing so as to allocate profits equally (Aas et al., 2005).

In terms of the possibility of financial maintenance at Badaling Great Wall, the interview participants have confidence that it is likely to maintain the viability of enterprises and tourism industry in a long term. Interviewee 7 stated,

*“I think Badaling Great Wall site has the ability to keep its economy prosperous and booming. And from the newspaper, magazines, Internet and so on, there are a lot of reports and articles talking about the increasing number of visitors to this site every year. So there is no need to worry about its economic development.”*

From the similar responses of other interviewees, they also believe that Badaling Great Wall, as a World Heritage site, has the capital of magnificence and its long history, and also has the potential to attract more and more tourists, which establishes the indispensable foundation and stimulate the economic development. This conforms to one of the aims of economic viability in sustainable tourism, that is, being capable to maintain the prosperity and deliver profits in a long term (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005).

### **5.1.2 Current challenges to economic sustainability**

On the foundation of the current situation of economic sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site, it is able to identify the challenges and threats of achieving the goals of sustainable tourism development. The main challenges in economic dimension are attributed to management-related issues, which can be refined into lack of commercial appeal and promotion, and absence of cooperation between relevant stakeholders: government, business operators and local community.

#### *Lack of commercial appeal and promotion*

Tourists' consumption on accommodation occupies a large proportion of the amount of expenditures in tourism industry, and it has a direct impact on the economic development of the destination (Portolan, 2012). Nonetheless, management officers and business operators revealed that the vast majority of visitors spent just several hours staying at Badaling Great Wall heritage site (Su and Wall, 2012). This has been corroborated by the results of the collected empirical data from the participants. In the sample of this thesis research, all the interviewees have not stayed near Badaling Great Wall site, and they prefer to living at the center of Beijing and picking one day to visit the Great Wall, because its location is in a remote and rural area. Interviewee 1 stated that, *“although there are some hostels near the heritage site, I prefer to coming back to the downtown for the night.”* In addition, other participants also have the

similar opinion, that is, they think several hours are enough for them to complete the tour at Badaling Great Wall, and it is unnecessary to spend an extra night at the site.

Consequently, this would result in that tourists just gain a shallow experience of Badaling Great Wall and their consumption expenditures are not very large. In order to achieve the economic component of sustainability, both the management office and business operators are required to encourage visitors to stay for more time and increase more their expenditures on the site (Su and Wall, 2012). Therefore, with the situation of tourist consumption expenditure, which has been mentioned in the previous section, most of visitors would like to purchase goods which are indispensable during the traveling. This indicated that it is necessary for the management office and business operators to enhance their commercial appeal and promotion to visitors, so as to boost the economic growth at Badaling Great Wall site.

#### *Absence of cooperation*

In order to achieve economic sustainability, based on its current situation, Badaling Great Wall site also confront the problem of unequal benefit distribution. Different enterprises and stores have different criteria for price setting, and the participants hold that it is not beneficial to deliver profits equally among tourism relevant stakeholders. Thus, it is attributed to the management-related challenges. The governmental officials, business operators and local community are lack of cooperation on the issue of pricing management. Different stakeholders have different concerns and opinions towards the economic profits caused by tourism, so their collaboration is supposed to be essential in reconciling the contradictions stemmed from different interests and facilitating to promote sustainable development (Hampton, 2005; McKercher and du Cros, 2012; Millar, 2012). In addition, Ghanem and Saad (2015) revealed the important role of including local community in tourism planning and management, because only then can the local community guarantee the achievements of appropriate

benefits from tourism industry for themselves. Therefore, stakeholder collaboration can be regarded as an applicable approach to solve the problem of unequal profit distribution.

## **5.2 Environmental sustainability at Badaling Great Wall**

When it comes to environmental sustainability, the emphasis is put on the promotion of protecting and managing the precious natural resources and biodiversity (Nicholas and Thapa, 2010; UNWTO, 2005). In the context of sustainable tourism development, it is also required to minimize the negative effects from the pollution of air, water and land, as well as the waste, created by tourism industry and tourists (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005). Nevertheless, the environmental component of sustainability is also considered as restrictions to human development (Tweed and Sutherland, 2007). The following two sections are going to present and interpret the current situation of environmental sustainability at Badaling Great Wall from a tourist perspective, as well as identify and discuss the current challenges to environmental sustainability at the site.

### **5.2.1 Current situation of environmental sustainability from a tourist perspective**

In order to explore the current situation of environmental sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site from the view of tourist, this thesis research is going to explicate and discuss it from six perspectives on the basis of conceptual framework: energy, water, waste, landscape conservation, atmospheric pollution (including noise pollution and pollutant emissions) and tourist responsibility of environment protection.

According to Giaoutzi, Dionelis and Stratigea (2009), in order to achieve the objectives of sustainability, it is essential to improve the management of energy, water and waste, increase its efficiency, as well as conform to reducing the effects from climate change. From the responses of participants, most of them articulated that they

paid a little attention to the energy management when they visited Badaling Great Wall. Interviewee 11, having a similar opinion with interviewee 6 and 10, stated,

*“When I traveled at Badaling Great Wall, actually, I was not concerned with its energy using very much. uh... I think the most energy-consuming facility at the site is the cable car, owing to its working hours. It uses electricity for fuel. But I think it is good, because those who are aged, disabled and inconvenient can be benefited from it.”*

Furthermore, interviewee 8 revealed that,

*“I have noticed that there are two lines of night-lights being equipped on both sides of the Great Wall, because I have been there until the sky is getting dark. It seems to be a little bit waste of energy. Actually, at that time, there were really few visitors at the site. I think if the regulation restricts opening time for visitors and closes the site at night, then there is no need to use night-lights. And it would be conducive to save energy at the site.”*

From this point of view, we can see that it is unclear of the general situation of energy management at Badaling Great Wall from tourists' perspective, because they were not very concerned with this matter when they traveled at the site. Darlow et al. (2012) found out that most of built heritage sites perform well at energy efficiency, owing to the thick walls and building structure, but some modest improvements can be put into effect so as to promote both heritage protection and sustainable development. From the participants' statements of specific situation, the most used energy at the site is electricity, and its management can be modified and improved so as to use energy in a sustainable way. It is necessary to consider the objective situations of visitors and the site into the planning and management of Badaling Great Wall site.

In terms of water resource, since in fact there is no river or lake surrounding Badaling Great Wall, the participants responded it from two aspects: the potable water and water in restroom. Interviewee 4 revealed that,

*“There are several places near the entrance, where provide drinking water for free, however, almost no one come to use them. They are just like a kind of decoration. I think one reason might be that people don’t trust that these places will supply clean water. These devices finally became dirty and damaged. And no one came to fix it”.*

These potable water supply devices were neglected by both tourists and management officers at the site. It is supposed to be a kind of resource waste and is not good for achieving the objectives of environmental sustainability. On the other hand, interviewee 3, having the similar opinion with interviewee 6, 10 and 11, stated that the sanitation in the restroom at the site is clean, there are several obvious signs to remind people to save water, and visitors used water in a proper way. It indicates that both management officers and tourists at Badaling Great Wall are aware of the necessity for saving water.

With regard to waste management, from the responses of interviewees, although the general sanitation at the site was good and clean, there still existed negative impacts at Badaling Great Wall. A preponderance of participants articulated that there were a lot of trash bins at the site, but there were only two categories of waste sorting: recyclable and non-recyclable waste. In addition, interviewee 1, 2 and 6 shared the similar opinion that many tourists didn’t throw garbage into the correct bins, and they almost ignored the words on the trash bins. Thus, from this point of view, the problem of waste treatment can be attributed to both tourists’ improper behaviors and the rough system of waste disposal from management office at the site. In order to achieve the



objectives of environmental sustainability, that is, to minimize the negative impacts of waste (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005), it is necessary to set up a sound system of waste sorting at the site, as well as raising visitors' awareness and reinforce their education of the right way to dispose waste.

In terms of landscape conservation, as interviewees indicated, the landscape at Badaling Great Wall was conserved in a good condition, including the mountains, forests, flora and fauna. Most of the participants were astonished and indulged in its picturesque scenery and magnificent construction. This is one of their original intentions of going to visit Badaling Great Wall. It also indicated that the both management office and tourists performed well on the preservation of the natural ecological system.

When it comes to atmospheric pollution, it is divided into two categories, noise pollution and pollutant emissions, according to the study of Durovic and Lovrentjev (2014). In relation to noises, with the objective fact that Badaling Great Wall site is located at a remote area without any industrial factories and other activities, and as indicated by interviewees, the source of noises is from tourists themselves. Interviewee 7 expressed that,

*“Since you know Badaling Great Wall is almost at the countryside of Beijing city, what I experienced was that noises were just from the visitors around me. But I think it is okay, I mean Badaling Great Wall is a famous and long-established tourist attraction throughout the world. There are so many people coming to visit it, so noises caused by them are inevitable. hm... These noises are not so annoying that make me feel uncomfortable.”*

From this point of view, we can see that there exists noises at Badaling Great Wall

site, but they are not to such an extent as to be a kind of pollution. These noises do not have a great influence on both people and the natural ecosystem.

Darlow et al. (2012) argued that climate change had negative impacts on heritage assets via destroying or damaging historic buildings and sites, so that the future generations were not able to appreciate the cultural heritage and understand its values. Pollutant emissions are regarded as one factors of climate change, and Tweed and Sutherland (2007) demonstrated that in order to solve the problems of conserving the fabric of historic constructions, the environmental emphasis had been shifted to the destruction from chemical pollutants. Considering the actual situation of Badaling Great Wall site, there is no industrial factory nearby, so chemical pollutant can be excluded in this respect. The main emissions to climate change at this site is from transportation. Among the participants, interviewee 1, 2, 3, 7, 8 and 11 went to Badaling Great Wall site by tourist bus, while interviewee 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 drove private car to the site. Interviewee 9 stated that,

*“There existed very heavy traffic congestion on the way from downtown to Badaling Great Wall site. The congestion part focuses on the roads near the city, but when you drove down the highway, the traffic became smooth. And the traffic condition is good at the heritage site. There were two specific roads for the private cars, one for up the hill and another for down the hill.”*

Interviewee 1 supplemented that,

*“ There was a collective departure station for tourist buses at the center of Beijing city and a large parking area at the foot of the mountain nearby Badaling Great Wall. Then visitors can choose walk or take cable car to the Great Wall.”*

Separating the private cars and tourist buses contributes to reducing traffic congestion and risks at the site. From this point of view, the public transportation provision at the site is supposed to be good, however, without using green energy, it still has created a certain amount of greenhouse gas emissions, which is not conducive to climate change. Furthermore, from the responses of interviewees, the majority indicated when they decided to choose the type of transportation, what they considered first is their convenience and preference rather than its effects to climate change.

Nevertheless, in terms of the responsibility to protect environment, all the participants articulated that tourists are supposed to have the duty to conserve the environment at Badaling Great Wall. Interviewee 6 argued that she would pick up the trash when she saw that, and interviewee 9 stated that he would carry a plastic bag with him to collect the garbage he produced and throw it into the trash bin after the trip. From this point of view, we can see that the awareness of protecting environment during the traveling is very high among the participants. Nicholas and Thapa (2010) illuminated that if tourists were more sensitive and aware of the significance of environmental protection, they would be more likely to support sustainable tourism development. In addition, tourists' attitudes and perceptions to environmental conservation plays a vital role not only in the ecological effects of tourism, but also in the management of heritage tourism destinations (Jurowski, 1994).

### **5.2.2 Current challenges to environmental sustainability**

On the basis of the current situation of environmental sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site, current challenges to achieve sustainable tourism development are identified and discussed in the following paragraphs. The empirical findings indicate that there are two main groups of challenges in environmental dimension: tourist-related and management-related.

### *Tourist-related challenges*

From the environmental perspective, Badaling Great Wall site has confronted the problems of reducing pollutant emissions from transportation, such as carbon dioxide emission, caused by the increasing visitor number. This has negative impacts on and aggravates climate change, which would damage the built heritage assets and the natural ecosystem to some extent (Tweed and Sutherland, 2007). Thus, it is necessary for the management office at the site to improve their rules and regulations for transportation and set up a limitation of tourist number, so as to minimize the negative effects to Badaling Great Wall and its surrounding environment. Furthermore, the empirical findings reveals that visitors are lack of awareness of climate change and sustainable practices when they make decisions on the type of transportation for traveling to Badaling Great Wall site. It is worth mentioning that tourists are supposed to raise their awareness of environmentally sustainable practices and pay more attention to consider whether their behaviors would cause negative impacts on the heritage site and the natural ecosystem before making decisions.

### *Management-related challenges*

Badaling Great Wall site also has faced the challenges to its management in terms of environmental dimension of sustainability. The empirical findings indicated that there exists a waste of resources in the management of energy and water at the site. As interviewee 4 revealed, potable water devices were almost not in use, which reflected that the site was lack of sustainable management on handling the water resource. With regard to energy, it is indicated that the use of night-lights on both sides of the Great Wall did not consider the scarce number of visitors at night. It is absence of sustainable management of energy at the site. In addition, with the situation that there are just two categories of waste sorting at the site, recyclable and non-recyclable, its management on handling the waste seems to be insufficient. Consequently, it is necessary to enhance and improve the management of energy, water and waste at

Badaling Great Wall site, which conforms to the study of Darlow et al. (2012). In their study, it also argued that there are conflicts between the management of energy, water, waste and “the integrity and authenticity of a heritage building” (ibid, p.220). Thus, the arrangement and planning of the cable cars, night-lights, potable water devices and trash bins at the site are also required to maintain the authenticity of the Great Wall.

### **5.3 Socio-cultural sustainability at Badaling Great Wall**

When it comes to socio-cultural sustainability, compared with environmental dimension, it has caused less attention in the discourse of sustainable tourism development, because its impacts are difficult to measure and assess, as well as it inclines to come up in a slow and subtle way (Swarbrooke, 1999). The emphasis of socio-cultural dimension is put on the need to promote the social equity and well-being for all people, respect and preserve the socio-cultural fabric of the host community, including both built and living heritage and values (Tweed and Sutherland, 2007; UNEP and UNWTO, 2005). It focuses on involving local communities into the tourism development and improving the quality of their lives through distributing the profits from tourism equitably (Nicholas and Thapa, 2010). In addition, Durovic and Lovrentjev (2014) indicated that socio-cultural component of sustainability in cultural heritage tourism was required to guarantee the benefits of local residents and local culture, both tangible and intangible. Thus, in the following sections, it is going to present and interpret the current situation of socio-cultural sustainability at Badaling Great Wall heritage site from a tourist perspective. Then it is about to identify and discuss the current challenges to socio-cultural sustainability at the site.

#### **5.3.1 Current situation of socio-cultural sustainability from a tourist perspective**

Based on the conceptual framework, the collected empirical data about socio-cultural

sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site from interviewees has been categorized into four main aspects: the carrying capacity at the site, well-being of local population, heritage conservation and cultural identity.

Carrying capacity refers to “the maximum number of people who can use a site without any unacceptable alteration in the physical environment and without any unacceptable decline in the quality of the experience gained by tourists” (Mathieson and Wall, 1982, p. 21, in Saarinen, 2006). At Badaling Great Wall site, the number of visitors has the characteristic of seasonality. From the responses of participants, there are a large number of people when coming to Badaling Great Wall site at weekends or during the holidays, which are regarded as the peak tourist season. While the number of tourist would not be so much, if people go to the site on weekdays or in the off season. Interviewee 6 expressed that,

*“There are a lot of people at that day. When I climbed the Great Wall, it just like taking the elevator. The road for up and down is the same one. I think it is very dangerous, since there are so many people. In particular, there are some children chasing and playing, if someone fall down, it is possible to become a kind of trampling accident. Very very dangerous!”*

In addition, Interviewee 10 stated that,

*“There are a lot of, a lot lot of people when I climbed the Great Wall, and I felt a little bit annoyed. But it’s okay, and I can endure it. I mean it might be the only once trip to Badaling Great Wall in my whole life.”*

From this point of view, once the number of tourists exceeds the carrying capacity, it has produced many problems and obstacles to achieve the goals of social

sustainability at the site. Tourism at this heritage site has exceeded the carrying capacity according to the definition of Mathieson and Wall (1982, in Saarinen, 2006). The excessive visitors posed negative impacts on the physical environment of the site and produced some potential dangers to other tourists. Moreover, they also affected and decreased the quality of other visitors' traveling experience and satisfactory at Badaling Great Wall site. These effects also impaired the social justice, which focused on human rights, equity and allocation of resources (Chettiparamb, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary for tourism planners and managers to set up a limitation on the number of visitors at the site within a certain time period (Gu et al., 2013; Logar, 2010.), in order to gain social component of sustainable tourism development.

When it comes to the situation of well-being of local population, most of the interviewees stated that they did not have direct contact with local residents when they traveled at Badaling Great Wall. On one hand, with the geographical condition, the local residents live in the villages which are far away from Badaling Great Wall heritage site, and most of tourists do not stay at the site overnight, or they just leave the site as soon as they finish their trip, so there is less opportunity for tourists to communicate and interact with local residents (Su and Wall, 2012). On the other hand, a preponderance of visitors put their emphasis on appreciating the landscape of Badaling Great Wall, and they do not really care about the local residents. This seems to be contrary to the study by Nicholas and Thapa (2010), which argued that tourists had positive attitudes towards social sustainability and they held that interacting with local residents was crucial. It depends on different heritage destinations.

In addition, interviewee 6 expressed that she had a short chat with the local residents when she bought some drinks, and what she found out was that local residents at Badaling Great Wall site were friendly to visitors and satisfied with their current livings. This has been in accord with the argument of Su and Wall (2012), which

demonstrated that local residents relied on tourism industry to a large extent through gaining the economic benefits.

With regard to heritage conservation, most of interviewees articulated that Badaling Great Wall site had presented its authenticity. Interviewee 10 held that if there were less people, the heritage presentation of Badaling Great Wall site would be more authentic. Interviewee 11 stated,

*“I think the recreational activities around Badaling Great Wall site will reduce or affect its authenticity to some extent. I mean, the Great Wall, itself, is already amazing. It is unnecessary to build other additional entertainment facilities.”*

The recreational activities and facilities has impaired the integrity and authenticity of Badaling Great Wall to some extent. The authenticity of the heritage site is considered as the attractiveness and competitiveness for the destination, which has the potential for its better development (Maksin, 2010). It is one of the principles in sustainable development to preserve and maintain the authentic cultural heritage, as well as the local traditions and values, and tourism is required to provide efficient management on both tourists and heritage conservation (ibid).

Furthermore, from the responses of interviewees, the usage of Badaling Great Wall heritage site was intensive. There is no rest day for the Great wall. Interviewee 6 revealed that even in the winter, there were many visitors going to the site, because of its wonderful snow landscape. Interviewee 4 stated that the site was suggested to limit the number of tourists at the peak tourist season, otherwise the Great Wall would have the possibility to be impaired and damaged. This finding is accord with the study of Garrod and Fyall (2000), which indicated that there exists conflicts between heritage conservation and its contemporary use. It revealed that the intensive use had



anthropogenic impacts on the heritage destinations, which would undermine the vulnerable heritage resources and decrease the interests of future tourists (Maksin, 2010). In order to achieve sustainable development, it is necessary to put heritage conservation in priority when planning and managing tourism at the site.

From the responses of interviewees, a preponderance of them expressed that it is necessary to respect local residents' culture and traditional values during their visit at Badaling Great Wall site. Interviewee 9 stated that,

*“When I traveled at Badaling Great Wall site, I have respected its local culture and traditional values. Because I think one of the reasons why I come to the site is to strengthen the understanding of the culture at the heritage site and to explore its real condition, whether it is different from the description in the books. If I don't respect the local culture and values, the local residents will have the feeling of being offended and they will not be happy, and I will also be unhappy about this. Then the quality of my experience at the site will be decrease. It is meaningless to make both sides uncomfortable.”*

From this point of view, the awareness of culture heritage is high among the tourists in this sample, and it seems to enhance their understanding of local culture and traditional values after their trip to the Great Wall. The research of Su and Wall (2012) supplemented that tourism development also contributed to strengthening the awareness and understanding of the culture among local residents at Badaling Great Wall site. Thus, this finding embodied a part of the meaning in socio-cultural sustainability, having the capability to respect and preserve the authenticity, culture and traditional values of local community, and facilitate the understanding of inter-culture between local residents and visitors (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005).

### **5.3.2 Current challenges to socio-cultural sustainability**

On the foundation of the exploration of the current situation of socio-cultural sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site from the tourist perspective, it is able to identify the challenges and threats of achieving the goals of sustainable tourism development. The main challenges in socio-cultural dimension are attributed to management-related issues.

The first and foremost challenges toward socio-cultural sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site is concerned with carrying capacity. The excessive visitors at the site had negative impacts on the conservation of heritage assets and the quality of other visitors' traveling experience, which impaired the social justice and was not conducive to the sustainable tourism development at the site. Therefore, it is necessary for the management office to control the number of visitors at Badaling Great Wall site. Considering its seasonal variation, it would be better to set up a limitation on daily number of visitors, which is in accord with the research findings by Gu et al. (2013). In order to manage this problem, there are several strategies recommended by Garrod and Fyall (2000), such as increasing the price of entrance ticket, restricting the time for visit, limiting the use of transportation and so forth.

Another challenge toward socio-cultural sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site is lack of efficient supervision and management of the heritage attraction. The usage of Badaling Great Wall heritage site was intensive, and the recreational activities around the site would influence the integrity and authenticity of the heritage site. As interviewee 3 stated, it would be better to set up more officers to supervise the visitors, keep order and tell them what can do and what cannot do. The officers are suggested to imitate the model of supervision at the heritage destinations which have done well in this aspect, such as the Louvre Museum in France, so that they are able to prevent tourists' negative behaviors on time, such as graffiti. In order to achieve the

objectives of socio-cultural dimension in sustainable tourism development, it is necessary for the management office to establish a sound scheme to monitor the situation of heritage conservation and supervise the negative behaviors of tourists.

## 6. Conclusions

*This chapter is going to provide an overview of the whole thesis research. At first, it is going to give a brief view of the topic, research purpose, research questions and the employed method. After that, research findings of current challenges to sustainability at Badaling Great Wall heritage site are going to be presented and summarized. Last but not least, it is going to interpret the limitations of this thesis research, as well as the suggestions for future studies in this field.*

Heritage tourism has occupied a large market and been the fastest-growing section of tourism in recent years, so it is essential to pay attention to its significance to tourism development (Aas et al., 2005). The concept of sustainability is contested for its definition and it has aroused increasing attention from both the public and scholars (Hall, 2011; Liu, 2003). As indicated by Garrod and Fyall (2000), there is little academic articles probing into the theme which connect heritage tourism with sustainability. Moreover, sustainability has been taken into consideration in the Operational Guidelines of WHC in 2015 and the document “Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the Convention, 2012-2022” (18th General Assembly, 2011), which states that it is critical to consider present and future needs from economic, societal and environmental aspects when conserving the heritage resources. Hence, this thesis research chooses to study in the field of sustainability at heritage tourism destination, applying the case of Badaling Great Wall site in Beijing, China.

The Great Wall is regarded as a visible symbol of Chinese culture, history and nationality, and it is one of the most popular, famous, and appealing tourism destinations, as well as heritage sites in China and throughout the world. It was designated on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1987. Since the total length of the Great Wall is about 6,700 kilometers, and there are eight sections of the

Great Wall being located in Beijing (Su, 2009). Badaling Great Wall site is selected as the study case in this thesis, owing to its significant military and history meanings, good reputation, and well geographical position.

Based on the review of previous literature, there are a lot of academic articles studying on heritage tourism planning and management within the context of sustainability from the perspective of local resident, such as Li et al. (2014), Jaafar et al. (2015) and Chen et al. (2010). However, there is little research studying from a tourist perspective in this field. Tourist plays a significant role in achieving sustainable development at heritage tourism destinations, because it has the possibility to attain sustainability only when tourists are really interested in and have certain knowledge about sustainability.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the current challenges to sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site in Beijing, China, through investigating its current situation of sustainability from a tourist perspective. Based on the philosophy of constructivism, this thesis choose qualitative method to explore people's opinions and the connotative meanings under their behaviors in real life (de Vaus, 2002). Thus, the method used to collect data is semi-structured and open-ended interviews through mobile phone. There are totally eleven interviewees participating in the phone interviews, who have been to Badaling Great Wall site within five years so far. Qualitative content analysis is selected to be the method of arranging and analyzing data.

Two research questions are formulated to achieve the research purpose, and they have been answered in chapter five, on the basis of conceptual framework, from economic, environmental and socio-cultural pillars of sustainability and their sustainable tourism indicators. As for the current situation of economic sustainability, from the view of

visitors, it can be concluded that Badaling Great Wall site has the ability to be economic viability and has the potential to maintain this status, but its capability to distribute benefits equally seems to be weak. In terms of the current situation of environmental sustainability, from the perspective of tourist, it can be summarized that the management of energy, water and waste is necessary to be improved, and it is required to restrict the transportation at the site so as to reduce the pollutant emissions. On the other hand, the landscape at the site is conserved in a good condition; there exists noises but not forms pollution; and tourists' awareness of protecting the environment at the site is high in the sample. With regard to the current situation of socio-cultural sustainability, from the aspect of visitors, it can be concluded that the excessive visitors make negative impacts on the heritage assets and the quality of other visitors' traveling experience; visitors has a little interaction with the local residents, but the locals benefit from the development of tourism industry; the authenticity of the Great Wall is affected by the surrounding recreational activities to some extent, and it is necessary for the management office to improve the system to monitor and supervise the situation of heritage conservation and tourists' negative behaviors. Moreover, compared with economic and environmental component of sustainability, visitors seems to know less about and pay less attention to socio-cultural sustainability of Badaling Great Wall site.

The second research question is concerned with the current challenges to sustainability at Badaling Great Wall site. In summary, from the empirical findings, the main challenges can be attributed to management-related issues. 1). Badaling Great Wall site is lack of commercial appeal and promotion. With the absence of most tourist expenditures on accommodation, it is necessary to find out ways to solve this problem so that the economy will grow faster at the site. 2). It is noticed that Badaling Great Wall site confronts the challenge of absence of cooperation among tourism relevant stakeholders. The governmental officials, business operators and local

community are lack of collaboration on the issue of pricing management, which results in the unequal benefit distribution. It is necessary to reconcile and balance the interests from different stakeholders, in order to achieve the sustainable tourism development on economy. 3). It is worth mentioning that the negative effects caused by excessive visitors are the most severe challenges at Badaling Great Wall site. These effects include the destruction on the natural ecosystem, built heritage assets and the quality of other visitors' traveling experience. Considering the seasonal variation of the number of tourist, it is suggested to set up a limitation on daily number of tourists, so as to control the emissions from transportation, conserve the integrity and authenticity of the Great Wall, and ensure every tourist's quality of traveling experience. 4). The management of energy and water is suggested to consider the real usage of tourist at the site, and the system of waste sorting is necessary to be improved. It is worth mentioning that the arrangement of energy, water and waste should be on the premise of maintaining the integrity and authenticity of the Great Wall. 5). Badaling Great Wall site is lack of a sound scheme for monitoring the situation of heritage conservation and supervising the negative tourist behaviors. More officers are suggested to be put at different spots on the Great Wall, so that they can prevent the improper tourist behaviors and check the latest situation of the conservation at the Great Wall.

#### *Limitations of this thesis*

There are four limitations existing in this thesis research. At first, the limitation is concerned with the size of the sample population. Since there are only eleven informants participating in the phone interviews, the empirical data collected from them cannot represent the general phenomenon of sustainability at Badaling Great Wall. It has relative restrictions on the research findings in this study. The second limitation is that this thesis research employed phone interview to collect materials. It would be better to use face-to-face interview, because you can observe the facial

expressions of the interviewees and gain more useful information. Thirdly, the interviews were conducted in Kalmar, Sweden with objective reasons, and the best place should be specifically at Badaling Great Wall site, which would be easier to seek targeted interviewees and obtain the latest information. Finally, the sustainable tourism indicators for heritage tourism destinations, which were selected in the conceptual framework and discussed in chapter five, perhaps are not the perfect ones, because the concept of sustainability is contested and hard to definite and the situation of Badaling Great Wall site is dynamic.

#### *Suggestions for future research*

As for the future research on the exploration of the sustainability at Badaling Great Wall heritage site, the author has several suggestions. On one hand, this thesis research has just studied the current situation and challenges of sustainability at the heritage site from the perspective of tourist. There are various other tourism relevant stakeholders, such as governmental officials, local business operators, management office, tourism enterprises and organizations, non-governmental organizations and so forth (Su and Wall, 2012). Their opinions and perceptions are also crucial to be explored and taken into considerations during the planning and management process of heritage tourism. On the other hand, the present study has identified the current challenges to sustainability at the site. It is suggested to focus on finding out the solutions which can handle these problems and threats of Badaling Great Wall in the future research.



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# Appendix

## Interview questions

1. What is your gender?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your occupation?
4. What is your highest educational level?
5. What is your nationality?
6. When did you visit the Great Wall in Beijing, China?
7. How long did you stay at the Great Wall in Beijing, China?
8. How many expenditures did you pay during the tourism of the Great Wall? And which aspects did you spend them on?
9. Based on your traveling experience,
  - Could you describe what you have noticed about the economic condition at the Great Wall?
  - Does it have the ability to generate prosperity and distribute benefits fairly to all the stakeholders?
  - And do you think it will maintain this status in a long term?
10. Could you describe your use of energy when you visited the Great Wall in Beijing? Is there any kind of renewable energy at the site?
11. Could you describe your use of water when you visited the Great Wall in Beijing?
12. Based on your traveling experience, what did you notice about the sanitation condition and waste treatment at the Great Wall in Beijing? Is there any opportunity for recycling the waste?
13. When you visited the Great Wall in Beijing, did noise and air quality influence your traveling experience?
14. What did you notice about the landscape conservation when you visited the Great Wall in Beijing?
15. What was your experience of traffic and access to the Great Wall in Beijing?

16. Do you think you have the responsibility to protect the environment when you visited the Great Wall in Beijing?

17. How do you feel about the number of visitors at the Great Wall in Beijing? And did you feel comfortable when you visited the site?

18. Could you describe your experience of the heritage presentation at the Great Wall in Beijing? And do you think it is authentic?

19. Based on your traveling experience, do you think the use of the Great Wall, as a tourism attraction, is intensive?

20. Could you describe what you noticed about the situation of heritage protection of the Great Wall in Beijing?

21. What did you notice about local residents' quality of daily life at the Great Wall?

22. Did you have interaction with local residents at the Great Wall? If you had, could you describe it in details?

23. Could you describe the attitude of local residents to the visitors at the Great Wall?

24. Did you respect local residents' culture and traditional values when you visited the Great Wall?

Thank you for your time to do this interview! ^\_^