Marketing Ethnicity in Tourism: Chinatowns as Tourist Attractions

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Chinatown as Tourist Sites

• Represent cultural and ethnic diversity of a city

• Experience culture

• Inexpensive food

• Good shopping
Tourist Gaze

• “What makes a tourist gaze depends upon what it is contrasted with, what the forms of non-tourist experience happen to be. The gaze therefore presupposes a system of social activities and signs which locate the particular tourist practises, not in terms of some intrinsic characteristics, but through the contrasts implied with non-tourist social practises, particularly those based within the home and paid work.”

• “... certain ethnic groups have come to be constructed as part of the ‘attraction’ of some places. This is most common in the case of Asian rather than Afro-Caribbean groups.”
Methods

• A convenience sample of Chinatowns in New York City, London, and Singapore
• About 40 hours conducting participant observation at each location, totaling 120 hours
• London in Fall 2010, Singapore in Summer 2011, and New York City in Spring/Fall 2011
• A thematic content analysis was conducted to examine the data.
Results and Discussion

• Objects of gazing
  – Home away from home
  – Exotic?

• Question of authenticity
  – Constructed
  – Market-driven

• Guided and unguided gaze
  – Reinterpretation or misinterpretation
Marketing Ethnicity

• Social responsibility vs market forces

• The role of different actors

• Class and ethnic inequalities