

**Attracting the “Sojourner”:**

**Insights into Cross-cultural Arts Marketing Through A Case  
Study of Chinese Theatre in the UK**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that work of others.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates Chinese theatre in the UK as a case study to address a significant gap in the academic literature regarding strategic cross-cultural arts marketing. Specifically, by understanding the audiences of Chinese theatre in the UK and critically investigating the current marketing strategies of theatre production companies, the thesis explores the following questions: 1) Who constitutes the audience for Chinese theatre in the UK? 2) What motivates their attendance? 3) How do they articulate their experiences of Chinese theatre? 4) What are their post-performance intentions?

Reflecting the thesis's overarching method of action research, the researcher immersed herself in three Chinese theatre productions staged in the UK in 2015, each with a different marketing context. The findings reveal significant areas of divergence between marketers and audience members on the questions highlighted above, such as the idea that the "foreignness" of the Chinese theatre turns out to be the strongest motivation for attendance instead of an obstacle to attendance.

In summary, the thesis argues that there is a strong potential market for cross-cultural theatre in the UK and illustrates that core target audiences can be usefully characterized as intercultural tourists, general theatre-goers, new experience seekers, or adventurers. The concept of the sojourner, meaning a temporary resident in a foreign culture, is introduced from intercultural tourism, and applied to audiences in this cross-cultural context. The thesis recommends a collaborative strategy among key stakeholders in audience development in order to strategically market Chinese theatre, in the UK, in the long-term. The thesis therefore makes a significant contribution to the scarce academic literature on cross-cultural marketing in the arts, and therefore represents a conceptual shift in theory and practice related to the discipline of arts marketing and the wider fields of arts management and cultural policy. Among the wider sociological benefits of a more strategic approach to cross-cultural marketing in the arts is that it challenges cultural stereotypes and re-balances cross-cultural exchange between the East and the West, in the longer term.

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Context and timing .....	1
1.2 Theatre in cross-cultural context .....	4
1.3 Thesis aims and objectives .....	9
<b>Chapter 2. Theatre and audience</b> .....	<b>13</b>
2.1 Audience reception theory .....	17
2.2 Audience motivation and development .....	23
2.3 The audience as sojourners .....	26
2.4 Audience development.....	28
<b>Chapter 3. Cross-cultural arts marketing</b> .....	<b>30</b>
3.1 Products—theatre from different cultural contexts .....	34
3.2 Sojourning? .....	39
3.3 Targeting - marketing strategy .....	43
3.4 Conclusion .....	52
<b>Chapter 4. Methodology and data collection</b> .....	<b>55</b>
4.1 Research methodology .....	56
4.1.1 Qualitative versus quantitative .....	56
4.1.2 Research strategy - action research .....	58
4.2 Research methods.....	63
4.2.1 Case studies .....	64
4.2.2 In-depth interviews .....	74
4.2.3 Observation.....	75
4.2.4 Deep hanging out.....	75
4.3 Research schedule .....	76
Phase 1. Understanding the market and potential audience .....	77
Phase 2. <i>Richard III</i> from the National Theatre of China.....	79
Phase 3. <i>Poker Night Blues</i> at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival .....	80

Phase 4. China National Peking Opera Company UK tour.....	81
4.4 Data analysis, discussion and limitations.....	82
<b>Chapter 5. Findings: The audience for Chinese theatre in the UK.....</b>	<b>83</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	83
5.2 Audience typology .....	83
5.3 Motivations for attendance .....	94
<b>Chapter 6. Experiencing foreign theatre as a sojourner .....</b>	<b>116</b>
6.1 Immersion into the sojourney.....	123
6.2 Interactions with the stage and the other audience members .....	132
6.3 Post-performance intentions .....	136
6.4 Conclusion .....	143
<b>Chapter 7. Marketing Chinese theatre in the UK .....</b>	<b>145</b>
7.1 Reflection on the marketing strategies .....	147
7.2 The divergence between audience and marketers .....	164
7.2.1 Audience segments .....	165
7.2.2 Targeting approaches .....	176
7.3 Myopic marketing input versus long-term audience strategy .....	182
7.4 Conclusion .....	189
<b>Chapter 8. Conclusion and recommendations .....</b>	<b>191</b>
8.1 Original contribution .....	192
8.1.1 Who are the sojourners of Chinese theatre in the UK? .....	192
8.1.2 What motivates attendance?.....	194
8.1.3 The audience experience .....	195
8.1.4 The post-performance intentions of the audience.....	196
8.1.5 Marketing activity .....	197
8.2 Recommendations .....	199
8.3 Reflection on the research process.....	206
8.4 Research limitations and future research .....	207
<b>List of References .....</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>Appendix A Information about Interviewees—Audience.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Appendix B Information about Interviewees—Practitioners .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix C One sample of interviewee .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Appendix D Ethical Approval Form .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Appendix D Sample of signed consent form from interview.....</b>	<b>10</b>



**List of Tables**

<b>Table 4. 1 Research Methodology applied in this thesis .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Table 4. 2 Comparison of Soft System Methodology and Action Research....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Table 4. 3 Interviewees Categories proposal .....</b>	<b>78</b>



## List of Figures

Figure 2. 1 Levels of Familiarity, from the Culturally Familiar to the Culturally Foreign (Carlson, 1990).....	20
Figure 3. 1 Innovation Adoption Lifecycle (Kolb, 2005).....	42
Figure 3. 2 The Ansoff Matrix (Source: Ansoff, 1957).....	45
Figure 3. 3 The Product Life-cycle (Hill, 2014) .....	46
Figure 3. 4 Market Development Stage (Levitt, 1965) .....	47
Figure 3. 5 Five Forces Analysis Model (Source: Porter, 1979) .....	48
Figure 3. 6 Potential Segments of Sojourners.....	53
Figure 4. 1 Action-Reflection Cycle (based on Lewin, 1946) .....	59
Figure 4. 2 The Basic Structure of Soft System Methodology (SSM) (Rodriguez-Ulloa and Paucar-Caceres, 2005, p. 209) .....	61
Figure 4. 3 Research Process Combining SSM and Action-Reflection Cycle.....	63
Figure 4. 4 Levels from Culturally Familiar to the Culturally Foreign (based on Carlson, 1990) .....	73
Figure 4. 5 Four Phases of the Research Schedule.....	77
Figure 5. 1 The Inner and Outer Frames of Audiences for Chinese Theatre in the UK.....	89
Figure 5. 2 Impact Chain of Previous Experience.....	93
Figure 6. 1 The U Curve Model of Cross-Cultural Adjustment (Black and Mendenhall 1991, p. 227) .....	117
Figure 6. 2 The W Curve Model of Cross-cultural Adjustment (based on Oberg, 1960 and Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963) .....	118
Figure 6. 3 Sojourning experience for the audience in Chinese theatre.....	120
Figure 6. 4 Sojourning experience for the “re-entry” audience in Chinese theatre.....	123
Figure 6. 5 The Outside and Inside of Shakespeare’s Globe (photos from the Globe Website) .....	125

Figure 6. 6 Warrior Women of Yang in Sadler’s Wells in 2015 (above); Peking Opera Performance in the Spring Festival Gala on CCTV (China Central Television) (below) .....	130
Figure 6. 7 The Significant Pathways and Coefficients (Hume and Mort, 2010, p. 177) .....	137
Figure 6. 8 The Significant Pathways and Coefficients in the Cross-cultural Theatre Circumstance (adapted from Hume and Mort, 2010) .....	143
Figure 7. 1 Action Reflection as Methodology Applied in this Thesis.....	145
Figure 7. 2 Timeline of the Marketing Process of Richard III.....	147
Figure 7. 3 Richard III Stage Photo (the Globe website) .....	148
Figure 7. 4 Marketing Tricks at the Fringe (Photo by Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images, 2014) .....	151
Figure 7. 5 The Official Marketing Materials of the Production at the Fringe (supplied by the production company) .....	153
Figure 7. 6 Screen Print from the Summerhall Website (captured by the researcher) .....	154
Figure 7. 7 Reviews in the National Press (screenshot by the researcher).....	157
Figure 7. 8 Exhibition and Performance at the Museum of Liverpool (images by the researcher) .....	159
Figure 7. 9 Live Performance at Liverpool City Council (image by the researcher) .....	160
Figure 7. 10 CNPOC Workshop at the University of Liverpool (image by the researcher) .....	160
Figure 7. 11 Peking Opera London performance advertisement in London (photo credit: Xinhuanet.com) .....	178
Figure 8. 1 Collaboration Strategy.....	205





## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Context and timing**

In the context of a globalized world, cross-cultural exchange is becoming more common and significant than ever before. However, the persistent imbalance of cultural exchange between the East and West often places the disadvantaged parties (e.g. Africa and Asia) in an invisible position on the world stage (Deloumeaux, 2015). This research examines the potential market for theatre in a cross-cultural context, especially Chinese theatre in the UK, through the methodology of action research with working with three Chinese theatre productions in the UK in 2015. “Exotic” (Tian, 2008; Said, 1995) elements represent nothing new on the theatre stage in Europe: for example, the celebrated productions by Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba from the 1970s introduced new forms of so-called “inter-cultural” theatre to the West. However, the stereotypes and misinterpretations of home grown cultures in intercultural theatre productions have been criticized for many years (e.g. Tian, 2008; Lei, 2011; Bharucha, 1984). With the increasing national power of East Asian countries, more and more cultural institutes from the East are looking for opportunities and platforms to present themselves in the global markets (Cho and Jeong, 2008; Nye, 2005; UNECO, 2015; UNESCO, 2017)). But the lack of knowledge of Western theatre markets prevents these relative non-dominated cultural products from reaching the full potential audience in the global market, especially in the Western market (UNESCO, 2015; UNESCO, 2017) which has also been witnessed as a reality by the research and the other industry practitioners over the last five years. Through a process of action research, this thesis aims to critique existing literature of theatre marketing and determine a more effective strategy for the Chinese theatre in the UK in the context of the cross-cultural market. It aims to achieve this by studying the theatre market in the UK through the audience study, including audience motivations for seeking alternative cultural experience. In so doing, it critiques the “Euro-centricity” of intercultural theatre and the related literature dedicated to this topic. It therefore addresses a significant gap in the academic literature by synthesizing arts marketing theory and theories around intercultural theatre, which contribute to filling in the gaps in research into cross-cultural arts marketing.

Cultural diplomacy strategy has attracted attention all over the world, in theatre industry in the UK, there was a strong interest in China- and Asia-related productions since 2014, along with the good relationship between China and the UK. On 13 April 2014, the Laurence Olivier Awards, the biggest festival for theatre in the UK, were held at the Royal Opera House, London, and *Chimerica* was one of the big winners (the Guardian, 2014). The Oliver Awards for Best New Play and Best Director for 2013 indicate the popularity of this new play both in the market and among critics. *Chimerica* was written by Lucy Kirkwood and directed by Lyndsey Turner. The title refers to the predominance of China and America in modern geopolitics. During its premiere, from 20 May to 6 July 2013, *Chimerica* achieved significant success at the box-office and garnered excellent reviews. Michael Billington (2013) from *The Guardian* wrote: “If we see a better new play this year, we’ll be extremely lucky”, and Henry Hitchings (2013), from the *Evening Standard* evaluated it as “a tremendously bold piece of writing [...] a landmark production for everyone involved”. These reviews show the success of the play among British mainstream critics, but the extent to whether it actually presents Chinese culture remains open to question.

Apart from *Chimerica*, there were several other plays related to China in London from 2013 to early 2014, for instance: *The Fu Manchu Complex* by Daniel York at the Ovalhouse; *The Orphan of Zhao* directed by Gregory Doran from the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC); *Aiww: The Arrest of Ai Weiwei* directed by James MacDonald and produced by Hampstead Theatre; David Henry Hwang’s work *Yellow Face* in the Park Theatre; and *The World of Extreme Happiness* produced by the National Theatre. And the West End productions *Turandot* and *Miss Saigon* were both blockbusters. The flourishing of the representation of the “Chinese/Asian” image in London echoes the observation of Thorpe in 2010 that “in the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, there was a noticeable increase in the number of theatre productions in Britain concerning China” (Thorpe, 2010, p. 68).

The “Golden Era” as the Chinese President XI, Jinping defined the relationship between China and the UK (Reuters, 2015)) might be a milestone for cultural exchange and cooperation between these two countries, and the large number of high quality productions related to China and Asia in the West End show the cultural influence of China in the UK. However, it was not the beginning of the cultural exchange between the two countries.

The Silk Road linked the cultures for hundreds of years (Liu and Shaffer, 2007) and the direct trade between China and Great Britain through the East India Company from the 17<sup>th</sup> century resulted in significant cultural impact for both countries (Robins, 2006).

The cultural interaction between China and other countries started under the first unified central authority in China, the Qin Dynasty (BC 221-207). Despite the limitations in communication, this dynasty built the first image of China in many Western countries. The Silk Road, which was “a vast network of routes stretching all the way from China through Central Asia to Europe, with links to routes leading North and South”, was used to ferry a wide variety of “goods, artefacts, innovations, and beliefs over the most challenging landscape in the world” (Norell, Leidy and Ross, 2011, p. 16). It played an irreplaceable role in the history of the interaction between China and the rest of the world and bridged the East and the West. As Norell, Leidy and Ross (2011) state, over the centuries, as people moved along the road, cultures, ideas and art forms mixed and mingled, leading to hybrid forms “that were often more than the sum of their various parts” (p. 78). The intercultural communication facilitated through the Silk Road, to some degree, influenced Britain indirectly through other European countries. If the Silk Road and its sea routes, which started from South China, did not reach Britain directly, the establishment and actions of the East India Company (1600-1858) made the interaction and trade between Britain and China more straightforward, which changed the cultures and traditions of both: the development of the tea-drinking culture in the UK being perhaps the most obvious example. Tea arrived in the UK through Dutch traders in 1610 and became popular among the nobility. Its original name “ch’a” or “tee” was from the Cantonese slang for tea (*Tea Comes to England*, 2005). The popularity of tea among the British resulted from the regular trade between the East India Company and China from 1668. Now the word “ch’a” is sometimes used in English to specifically refer to Chinese tea (UK Tea and Infusions Association, 2014). This is a glimpse of the interaction between the two cultures in the history.

Apart from tea drinking culture, the influence of the East culture in the Western arts has been widely witnessed. For instance, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Chinoiserie such as china, lacquer, wallpaper and furniture, not to mention silk, became highly fashionable in Europe. The commentary on one case from the Victoria and Albert Museum’s exhibition of Chinoiserie in decoration in Europe reads:

People were fascinated by the exotic nature of luxury products such as porcelain and lacquer that had been flowing into Europe from East Asia since the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. These imports, many of which were produced specifically for European markets, stimulated Rococo designers to imitate and adapt oriental motifs and ornaments for a wide variety of objects. They did not distinguish between what was Chinese, Japanese or Indian, but combined motifs such as figures in Japanese dress, trellised pavilions, birds and flowers to create an exotic fantasy world. (quoted from Victoria and Albert Museum)

The popularity of these exotic artistic creations among European cultures, on the other hand, consequence to the stereotypes of Far Eastern cultures, as Said (1995) argues, the Orientalists' study and misinterpretation of various cultures led to stereotypes of these exotic cultures. This misunderstanding and misinterpretation, at that time, has been barriers to appreciate the home grown cultures from unfamiliar contexts in the West since then. In terms of theatre, the so-called intercultural theatre is a reflection of this unbalanced cross-cultural interaction.

## **1.2 Theatre in cross-cultural context**

The cross-cultural exchange of theatre tradition is not uncommon in the history, and with the explore of the unfamiliar stage traditions, like Japanese, Indian, Chinese, etc., the so-called intercultural theatre has been the avant-garde in the Western theatre industry. Patrice Pavis (1996) agrees with Fischer-Lichte that it is too soon to define intercultural theatre, the concept can be understood as a hybrid form which mixes "performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas" (Pavis, 1996, p. 8). The best known names of the pioneers of intercultural theatre include Peter Brook and his work *The Mahabharata*, Arianne Mnouchkine and Théâtre du Soleil, Robert Lepage and his productions *The Dragon's Trilogy*, Eugenio Barba and the Odin Theatre, all of which introduced Oriental cultures into their work. The concepts of "intercultural barter" from Barba (Watson, 2002) and "transcultural universals" from Peter Brook and Schechner (Pavis, 2010; Carlson, 1996) have become increasingly familiar and popular. It seems that through these intercultural



productions staged around the Western world, “foreign cultures” spread widely, crossing boundaries. But where was the voice of Chinese culture itself?

Culture, according to the definition of Camilleri (1982), “is a kind of shaping, of specific ‘inflections’ which mark our representations, feelings, activity—in short, and in a general manner, every aspect of our mental life and even of our biological organism under the influence of the group” and “is transmitted by what has been called ‘social heredity’, that is by a certain number of techniques through which each generation interiorizes for the next the communal inflexion of the psyche and the organism which culture comprises” (cited by Pavis, 1996, pp. 3-4). Based on this definition, Pavis (1996) believes that theatrical performances “visualize this inscription of culture on and through the body” (p. 3). Theatre, to some degree, performs a culture in a “best way”. Bennett contends that theatre is a better form than television and film in “the sense of contact” between the performance and the audience, and it accepts the “spectator-to-spectator communication” within “the larger framework of audience as community” (cited by Freshwater, 2009, pp. 28-29). The findings from the spectators of the three Chinese productions, which were studied for this research, agree with Bennett that the interaction between the stage and the audience, as well as among the audience members, highlights their experience in the Chinese theatre in their homeland, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Theatre can represent an ideal mechanism for intercultural communication between the Orient and the Occident, and intercultural theatre is a key outcome of this endeavour.

“Intercultural”, in the opinion of Pavis, is more than “simply the gathering of artists of different nationalities or national practices in a festival” (1996, p. 5), and in terms of intercultural theatre, by the definition of Fischer-Lichte (1996), “theatres of widely differing cultures have engaged in an ever-increasing tendency to adopt elements of foreign theatre traditions into their own productions” (p. 27). The combination of other cultures in theatre can be traced back to the Classical Greek period, and continues into contemporary theatre (Tian, 2008). The work of Min Tian offers some examples of intercultural theatre which relate to Chinese culture in Europe from the neo-classical period to the avant-garde, which proves the enthusiasm for China and Chinese culture in the West. As early as 1735, an abridged rendition of *Zhaoshi gu'er* (*The Orphan of Zhao*) was published by a French Jesuit, Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1674-1743), and since then it has been adapted and staged

in many languages and countries. In 1910, M. Louis Laloy adapted and produced a Yuan play, *Sorrow in the Palace of Han*, which is widely known in China as Han Gong Qiu Yue; and in the first half of the twentieth century, works such as *The Yellow Jacket*, *Turandot* and *The Chalk Circle*, were among a number of Chinese or pseudo-Chinese plays staged in Europe (Tian, 2008).

Apart from Chinese culture, European artists and audiences have been interested in “exotic” cultures, cultures that belong to “a faraway, foreign country or civilization and thus demarcated from the norms established in and by the West” (Staszak, 2009, p. 1) for centuries. With the development of communication and transportation technologies, intercultural exchange or borrowing cultures from the Other— “a member of a dominated out-group, whose identity is considered lacking and who may be subject to discrimination by the in-group” (ibid.)—in Europe has been increasing. Andrée Grau (1992) believes that big exhibitions, which began from the end of the nineteenth century, always stimulate the interests of people in exotic cultures. For instance, in 1906 Ruth Saint Denis created *O-Mike*, inspired by Noh theatre, and the Universal Exhibition not only gave the world the Eiffel Tower, but also brought to the West Javanese gamelan music, which played an important role in the musical development of Debussy (Grau, 1992). During and after these events, “exotic” artists, especially Chinese and Japanese performers (e.g. the Japanese dancer Hanako), were highly saleable commodities and toured Europe and North America for a long time. In Grau’s (1992) opinion, cultural purity is a myth. He insists that “contacts between cultures are probably inevitable” and even more inevitable in the contemporary world, and this view is agreed by the artists who get involved in intercultural theatre creation, but raises debate at the same time.

The question beneath the idea of “universal theatre language” endorsed by Eugenio Barba, Peter Brook, Mnouchkine, Schechner and other Western theatre masters is: whose language it is? There is no doubt that intercultural theatre productions have a certain aesthetic value; however, the representation of the other’s cultures in the “universal theatre language” remains a point of discussion and contention. Tian (2008) critiques twentieth-century intercultural theatre and the contemporary universal theatre as neo-Orientalism. In his opinion, the so-called universal theatre perceives Asian theatre as its ally, while intercultural theatre proponents struggle against European realism and, in their search for a universal language of theatre; for this group of theatre practitioners and artists, Asian plays are “praised, displaced,

reconstructed, and appropriated as materials” in the service of “the desires, investments, and projections” of competing and ever-reviewing experiments and theories (Tian, 2008, pp.10-12). To extend his analysis of intercultural performance in Europe, Tian introduces the term “intercultural interpretation” to explain this phenomenon. In an intercultural interpretation of culture, the image of the other from the theatre perspective, is always based on the need of the self in traditions (historical, social, ideological, political, cultural and theatrical), theory and practice, Tian argues. Intercultural theatre is predicated on “certain theatrical elements, techniques or ideas from the Other” which are taken out of “their historical, cultural contexts, appropriated and assimilated into theatrical practice or theory of the Self”. In summary, in Tian’s opinion, ideally, intercultural translation must take account of the Other’s “cultural, ideological, political, and ethnical aspects that to a greater extent, determine the identity and afterlife” (2008, pp. 11-12), which, unfortunately, is hard to achieve in practice. As Tian (2008) argues, instead of presenting the original culture, Asian theatre tradition has been used by intercultural theatre productions to achieve certain purposes. The critique of it is not about the theatre works themselves but the representation of the Other’s culture in the production. Grau (1992) is even more idealistic in his expectations of intercultural performance, which, he contends, involves not only “picking something from this culture and something from that” but creating “something new, belonging to no existing group, to no existing culture” (1992, p. 10). To combine cultural elements equally into a new cultural work is the expectation of Grau, but he also realizes that it would be naïve to treat interculturalism as an “overriding global phenomenon”, because the imbalance between the West and the East leads to unequal presentation of the cultures (1992, p. 17). Grau is certainly not the first person to criticize interculturalism; Rustom Bharucha (1984) in his reply to Richard Schechner stated:

I think it should be acknowledged that the implications of interculturalism are very different for people in impoverished, ‘developing’ countries like India, and for people in technologically advanced, capitalist societies like America. At no point in his writings on interculturalism does Schechner discuss these differing implications. He assumes that a Euro-American perspective on intercultural exchange is applicable and acceptable to everyone (1984, p. 225).

Similarly, Daphne Lei (2011) defines the phenomenon of the Western domination of intercultural theatre, as “hegemonic intercultural theatre” (HIT). She explains that it is “a specific artistic gene and state of mind that combines First World capital and brainpower with the Third World raw material and labour, and Western classical texts with Eastern performance traditions” (p. 571). She regards Peter Brook, Ariane Mnouchkine and Richard Schechner from the West, and Suzuki Tadashi from Japan, the Contemporary Legend Theatre of Taiwan, and Ong Keng Sen from Singapore as representative icons of intercultural theatre, who are even honoured as “master directors, traditional artists with the stature of ‘living national treasures’” (p. 571). Lei disagrees with the so-called “universal arts” as well, pointing out that:

Some might think it unnecessary or even impossible to theorize intercultural theatre in the new millennium: ‘national identity at large,’ a phenomenon we have been experiencing since the late twentieth century, as well as the techno-globalism prevalent today, seem to suggest that all boundaries—cultural, national, and even artistic—can be eliminated. How then does one think interculturally, if it is difficult to discern cultural differences? The basic East-West dichotomy is also becoming blurry in the age of globalization, because there is always a West in the East and vice versa (pp. 571-572).

In order to support her argument, she highlights the views of Ric Knowles and Patrice Pavis to conclude that “the more culturally mixed we become, the more uneasy we are about the anonymity implied in cultural fusion and the more desirable divisions among cultures become” (p. 572). However, Lei does not deny the positive function of the hegemony at the institutional level, claiming that supporting HIT instead of inviting performances from other cultures offers “a way to comply with an official rhetoric of multiculturalism and diversity without doing too much outsourcing” and arguing that brand-name recognition also guarantees a degree of box-office success (ibid.), which has been approved through the three studied cases in this thesis as well. Based on the new trend of globalization, Pavis responds to the suspicion of the necessity of intercultural theatre, arguing that “we have come a long way from the ‘classical’ interculturalism of the 1980s [...] we have to water down our country wine and our ‘us us us’ culture with some postmodern or relativistic water [...] indeed, *mise-en-scène* in this lapse of time, in response to this cultural confrontation, is already a mix and a cluster of practice from and for the stage”, and after all, intercultural theatre is “only theatre art” (2010, pp. 14-15).

To pursue a better form of intercultural theatre, Bharucha encourages the West and the East to develop “a clearer, more precise, and historical understanding of the regional particularities of specific cultures” (1984, p. 259) and hopes that “in interpreting ‘other’ cultures we do not merely represent ourselves” (p. 260). However, Lei does not hold the same positive expectation. She states that “as an essentially Western form relying on substantial institutional support and elitist discourse, HIT limits and interrupts cultural flow from the East” (Lei, 2011, p. 573). She applies two cross-cultural cooperation cases from Taiwan explain the damage to the original culture of cultural “tokenization”. Quick recognition and access to global citizenship from cross-cultural cooperation somehow eases the anxiety of cultural ignorance, but Lei believes that the harm of cultural “tokenization”, “miscommunication” and “misinterpretation” associated with HIT cannot be eliminated. And the victims of HIT are always the relatively “weak” cultures, meaning the cultures of Asia and Africa at present.

With the domination of the Western culture and economic power in the globalized market, the standpoint of interculturalism could not overcome the imbalance between the East and the West at this moment; intercultural theatre, under these circumstances, could not speak out for the culture it “borrowed”. Limited by the reality of the economic disadvantage and the lack of the power of discourse of the arts and creativity on the world stage, how to present artworks from the East is a big challenge and the intercultural theatre, as discussed, is not the solution to this. This thesis tries to find a way to help the East cultures to sound their voice through a different path.

### **1.3 Thesis aims and objectives**

This thesis constructs a theoretical framework based on a critical synthesis of the established literature on arts and festival marketing, audience research, strategic marketing, intercultural tourism and cultural globalization. In order to analyse the contemporary British performing arts market, the situation of Chinese theatre in this market, and the potential approaches for Chinese theatre to reach its ideal target audiences, the thesis applies multiple methods under the overarching methodology of action research. Secondary research serves to collect historical data and develop

an overview of the existing literature in the fields described above. Internet research into existing Chinese theatre in the UK establishes a clear and visual impression of the current situation of Chinese theatre in the UK market.

The empirical research implements the action research process through three case studies of Chinese theatre in the UK with the application of the research methods of in-depth interviews, observation, research diaries, and deep hanging out (Geertz, 1998; Walmsley, 2016). The study includes 50 interviews in total, including 60 interviewees in the research—there were a few group interviews engaged more than one interviewee. The three case study productions comprise: *Richard III*, performed in Shakespeare's Globe by the National Theatre Company of China; *Poker Night Blues* (adapted from *A Streetcar Named Desire*), performed as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe by Beijing TinHouse Production and Los Angeles based Theatre Movement Bazaar; and Peking Opera UK tour (two classic pieces: *Farewell My Concubine* and *Warrior Women of Yang*) in Liverpool and London, performed by China National Peking Opera Company and produced by London based Sinolink Productions. These productions have been selected as they represent three different approaches to Chinese theatre in the UK market, namely, venue invited production, festival production and commercial production. Working with the producing companies, deploying the methodology of action research, offers an original approach and a new lens to observe and critique marketing strategies and practices. Meanwhile the audience research angle reflects the reception of the market to the marketing communication, and the comparison among the three productions and between the audience and marketing strategies results in an understanding of cross-cultural theatre-going among the audience in the UK and, accordingly, the marketing strategy in this context.

In summary, the underlying thesis behind this study is that promoting Chinese culture in the West cannot depend on the traditional Eurocentric interpretation of intercultural theatre, because recent history has taught us that Eurocentric interpretations are essentially designed to influence European artists rather than present home grown Chinese culture. Based on the increasingly significant national power of China and the high motivation and ambition of the relevant stakeholders, Chinese theatre has the capability to express its own voice on the international stage. It is time to develop a more strategic programming and marketing strategy, from

both theoretical and practical perspectives, for Chinese theatre to explore overseas markets.

In this thesis, the focus falls on the British market. Three Chinese theatre productions performed in this market serve to answer the research question: How can we improve the marketing strategy for Chinese theatre in an overseas market? This key question is answered through the following secondary questions: Who constitutes the audience for Chinese theatre in the UK? What motivates their attendance? How do they articulate their experiences of Chinese theatre? What are their post-performance intentions? Combining the observation of the marketing strategy with the findings from the audience study, this thesis gives a relatively comprehensive overview of Chinese theatre in the UK, and its critique leads to a suggestion for a better marketing strategy based on audience understanding of theatre marketing in a cross-cultural context. Hopefully, this could be extended to the application of the global cultural exchange and increase the academic discussion of this topic.

To achieve the research goal and to present the research findings comprehensively, this thesis is structured in eight chapters. The first chapter introduces the research, and the other seven chapters are arranged as follows. Chapters 2 to 3 review the existing literature in relation to theatre audience study and related marketing theories. Chapter 4 explains the overarching methodology of the research—action research. Chapters 5 to 7 present the findings from the fieldwork with analysis from the perspective of the audience of Chinese theatre in the UK, their experience as sojourners and the marketing strategies the three productions applied. The final chapter concludes the research project, addressing the research questions and suggesting an improved marketing strategy for Chinese theatre in the UK.

This thesis discusses theatre marketing in the cross-cultural context. The outcomes through the creative application of action research into theatre marketing and the audience study have added something new to existing knowledge. The original usage of “sojourney” from cross-cultural tourism to describe the theatrical experience of both Chinese and non-Chinese audience of Chinese theatre in the UK has been proved effective. Combining the understanding of the marketing strategy from the three productions studied in this thesis with the critique of the existing theatre marketing theories, a new and more effective marketing strategy—

collaborative strategy through co-branding and in-depth audience understanding—is suggested. The researcher tries to fill the gap in the existing knowledge of arts marketing, specifically theatre marketing and audience understanding in the cross-cultural context, which has become more common under globalized cultural exchange circumstances. Moreover, it offers an effective and practical marketing strategy for the industry, especially for those who want to explore overseas stages. Hopefully, a wider sociological benefit of a more strategic approach to cross-cultural marketing in the arts would challenge cultural stereotypes and re-balance cross-cultural exchange between the East and the West in the longer term.



## Chapter 2. Theatre and audience

Audiences, described as “scene makers” and “scene watchers” by Richard Schechner in *6 Axioms for Environmental Theatre*, and regarded as “co-creators” by Susan Bennett in *Theatre Audience* (Heim, 2010), play an important role in theatre creation and promotion. However, questions of who the audience for theatre is, what kind of role they play, how they contribute to theatrical events, and what the audience is actually doing and feeling during a performance, remain contested and unresolved. When applying these questions to the context of this thesis, the audience for Chinese theatre in the UK is even more complex. Reviewing existing audience research helps scholars and marketers understand the audience for Chinese theatre in general and target their own specific segments accordingly. To research the audience, the first obvious question might be: What is the audience?

According to Freshwater (2009), the term “audience” stems from the Latin verb *audire* which means “to hear”, instead of to see as we regularly think of the activity of theatre-going, as theatre’s ancient Greek meaning is ‘a place of seeing’. The concept of audience has different connotations in different fields, contexts and scenarios.

In communication theory, Stuart Hall’s “encoding/decoding” defines the role of the audience as actively decoding the messages they receive from a “system of mass communications”, which they interpret “in a range of ways, drawing on the particular cultural resources which their social position has made available to them” (Hall, 1981 cited by Williams, Bennett, Grossberg and Morris, 2005, p. 9). The acts of “decoding”, “receiving” and “interpreting” information are keys to understanding the role of the audience, and this is vital for theatre audiences as well as mass media audiences. What is more, the cultural backgrounds and social positions which Hall observed are pivotal elements in analysing audiences in different contexts.

The importance of the audience/consumer always makes it the key focus for marketers. In terms of marketing theory, Kotler and Armstrong emphasize the importance of the consumer and argue that “to create value for customers and build meaningful relationships with them, marketers must first gain fresh, deep insights into what customers need and want” (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012, p. 122).

Furthermore, they point out several influencing factors behind consumer purchases, stating that, while most cannot be controlled by marketers, “cultural, social, personal, and psychological characteristics” must be taken into account (ibid., p. 159). These factors help marketers to segment consumer markets and improve and tailor their marketing efforts. Kotler and Armstrong discuss the secret of the “buyer’s black box”, which implies the uncertainty of buyer/customer’s characteristics and the myths of the decision making process, and claim that cultural (culture, subculture, social class), social (reference groups, family, roles and status), personal (age and life cycle state, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, personality and self-concept), and psychological (motivation, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes) factors influence consumer behaviour (ibid.). This theory can be applied to theatre audiences. For instance, as Boorsma insists, “most artists and arts organizations need an audience and audience building is one of the main tasks for arts management” (2006, p. 74).

In terms of theatre audiences, the role is even more significant, leading Bennett to cite Grotowski’s challenge: “Can theatre exist without an audience? At least one spectator is needed to make it a performance” (Grotowski cited by Bennett, 1990, p. 1). This sentiment echoes the reality that an audience is an indispensable part of a performance. Furthermore, Freshwater (2009) quotes Peter Handke’s aphoristic audience exhortation: “You are the topic [...] You are the centre. You are the occasion. You are the reasons why” (p. 2). In her book *Theatre Audience Contribution*, Caroline Heim (2010) claims that as “receivers” and “interpreters”, audiences act as “readers of the theatrical event”; and as “sign vehicles” they act as “contributors to the theatrical event”. The importance of audience in theatre requires no more words.

In the modern and contemporary theatrical field, some iconic artists consolidate the important value of the audience. Grotowski defines theatre in *Towards a Poor Theatre* as “what takes place between spectator and actor” (cited by Freshwater, 2009, p. 1), which equates the value of the audience with that of the performers. Around the same period, Meyerhold expressed his opinion of theatre audiences, regarding the audience as crucial for the success of a play. In 1969, he claimed that “nowadays, every production is designed to induce audience participation [...]. We do this consciously because we realize that the crucial revision of a production is that which is made by the spectator” (cited by Bennett, 1997, p.7). This echoes

Freshwater's (2009) description of the relationship between audience and theatre as one that "provides the theatre event with its rationale" and is "indispensable" (p. 2). Peter Brook in *The Empty Space*, a well-worn touchstone in theatre studies, states that: "A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged" (Freshwater, 2009, p. 1). Richard Schechner, Victor Turner, Jane Goodall and other practical and theoretical theatre researchers consider the audience "a tangibly active creator of the theatrical event" (Bennett, 1997, p. 9). As a proponent of universal theatre, Schechner insists that there should be a controlling strategy to ally the foundations with the audience (ibid.). He believes that there is universal language in theatre for audiences, and this is the reason intercultural theatre is appreciated by them (ibid.). This is why finding an acceptable way for audiences to appreciate other cultures leads to a theatre production's success. Despite the discussion of the audience reception of the "intercultural" theatre language, the importance of the audience in theatre seems to be a consensus. Robert Lepage, a Quebecois theatre maker, attributes his global success to his deep understanding of the new generation of audience. In his understanding, the new theatre environment demands a different narrative pattern of theatre to attract younger audiences who are more familiar with multi-media story-telling. Lepage's strategy in this niche market has allowed his intercultural theatre to succeed on a global scale (Dundjerovic and Bateman, 2009). Audiences clearly play a fundamental role in the theatre; from playwriting, stage design and casting, to marketing and post-performance discussion, they impact the whole process of creation of a play. Laura Ginters (2010) contends that "the audience is a critical part of the transaction" for live performance, which makes it an inevitable topic when we talk about theatre (p. 7). In terms of the audience's contribution to a theatrical event, Caroline Heim (2010) believes there are myriad ways, "vocally, physically, emotionally and perceptually" (p. 1) for audiences to contribute to the whole process of performance, especially post-show. Additionally, Rosanne Martorella (1977) expressed the weight of audiences and patrons by acknowledging that "they express their interest by purchasing tickets and making contributions" (pp. 356-357) even before they buy the ticket. All these statements value the importance and contribution of audiences for theatres, from the attempt to be an audience to sitting in the auditorium until after performance. However, the reality is that there is limited empirical research dedicated to audiences (Reason,

2004). The audience as a concept has been admitted to be valuable, but detailed questions about who are they, what motivates them to attend, and what their experiences of theatre are, have rarely been asked in any rigorous critical depth.

Caroline Heim (2010) contends that the active role of the audience in theatrical events in contemporary theatre theory and practice has been “undervalued”, and the audience is treated as “a homogeneous mass incapable of creativity” (p. 1) and “the unique personality” is “little explored in audience research” (p. 21). She believes the audience group is “living, dynamic heterogeneous” and “not only receives but contributes crucial meanings to the theatrical event” (ibid.). A similar opinion is held by Stephanie Pitts (2005), who disagrees with the assumption in traditional practices of the Western concert hall that listeners have “a relatively passive role” and “nothing to contribute” but “attention” to the spectacle arranged for them (p. 257). In terms of audience research, especially into the audience experience, Reason (2004) claims that the discussion of this topic is “primarily theoretical, philosophical or even occasionally anecdotal” and remains “an under-researched area”.

There have been many quantitative audience surveys aimed at describing the demographic features of audiences, such as Baumol and Bowen’s study in 1973 and Throsby and Withers’ study in several countries in 1979 (Bennett, 1997), and they are valuable for audience segmentation for marketing purposes. However, as Patrice Pavis argues, “these data, however quantified and precise they may be, do not cast any light on the spectator’s labour to produce meaning” and neglect the nature of “the aesthetic and ideological relationships” (cited by Heim 2010, p. 13); the audience is much more complex than the data can express. In terms of methodology, Freshwater (2009) is concerned that the study of theatre audiences has lagged behind audience research in mass media methodologically, and quantifiable demographic information based surveys “rarely include questions which address the content of productions or qualitative issues” (p. 30). Matthew Reason’s (2010) work reveals dual levels of perception while the audience is watching a performance: “belief and disbelief; engagement and distance; immersion and reflection” (p. 21). This complexity of the audience experience, both in the auditorium and after a performance, makes audience research much more complex than demographic statistics.

## 2.1 Audience reception theory

Audience reception theory can be traced back to the “encoding/decoding” model by Stuart Hall (1932-2014) who was a British cultural theorist and socialist. In the well-known essay *Encoding/Decoding*, Hall (1993) strengthened the importance of active interpretation by the audience within relevant codes during the communication process, and his model questioned the strong effect theory of communication, which holds that the information from media can lead powerfully and directly to certain behaviour in audiences. In short, Hall in this essay highlights the independence of audiences and questions the hegemony of mass media, suggesting that audiences have the capability to decode information from the media (newspapers, television, radio, film, etc.) autonomously. In terms of audience research in mass media studies, there are two models through which to construct audience reception; one is the “hypodermic model” (also known as the effects model) and the other is the “uses and gratification model”, which is introduced in the next section.

Reception theory originally emphasized the reception of a reader of a literary text. It later extended to other media contexts. Susan Bennett (1997) develops audience reception specifically for theatre, based on the work of Bertolt Brecht. Brecht’s attempts to reactivate stage-audience exchange had a profound effect on both theatre practice and the critical response to plays and performance. For her model of the audience, Bennett (1997) also introduces the theories of Holland, Fish, Iser and Jauss et al. Acknowledging the differences between the theatre and other media, Bennett (1997) claims that “the literary, as well as the filmic, text is a fixed and finished product which cannot be directly affected by its audience”, while in terms of theatre “every reader is involved in the making of the play” (pp. 20-21). So she argues that the original reception theory of readers should be modified for theatrical audience.

In order to structure reception theory for theatrical audiences, Bennett (1997) focuses on the audience and the process of reception. According to her: “How far the audience accepts the proposed receptive strategies will generally depend on some shared socio-cultural background between text and audience, director and audience, production companies and audience” (p. 142), which is also highlighted by Kotler and Amstrong (2012) in terms of the complexity of consumers. Bennett draws on concepts of the “outer frame” and “inner frame” to make the image of the

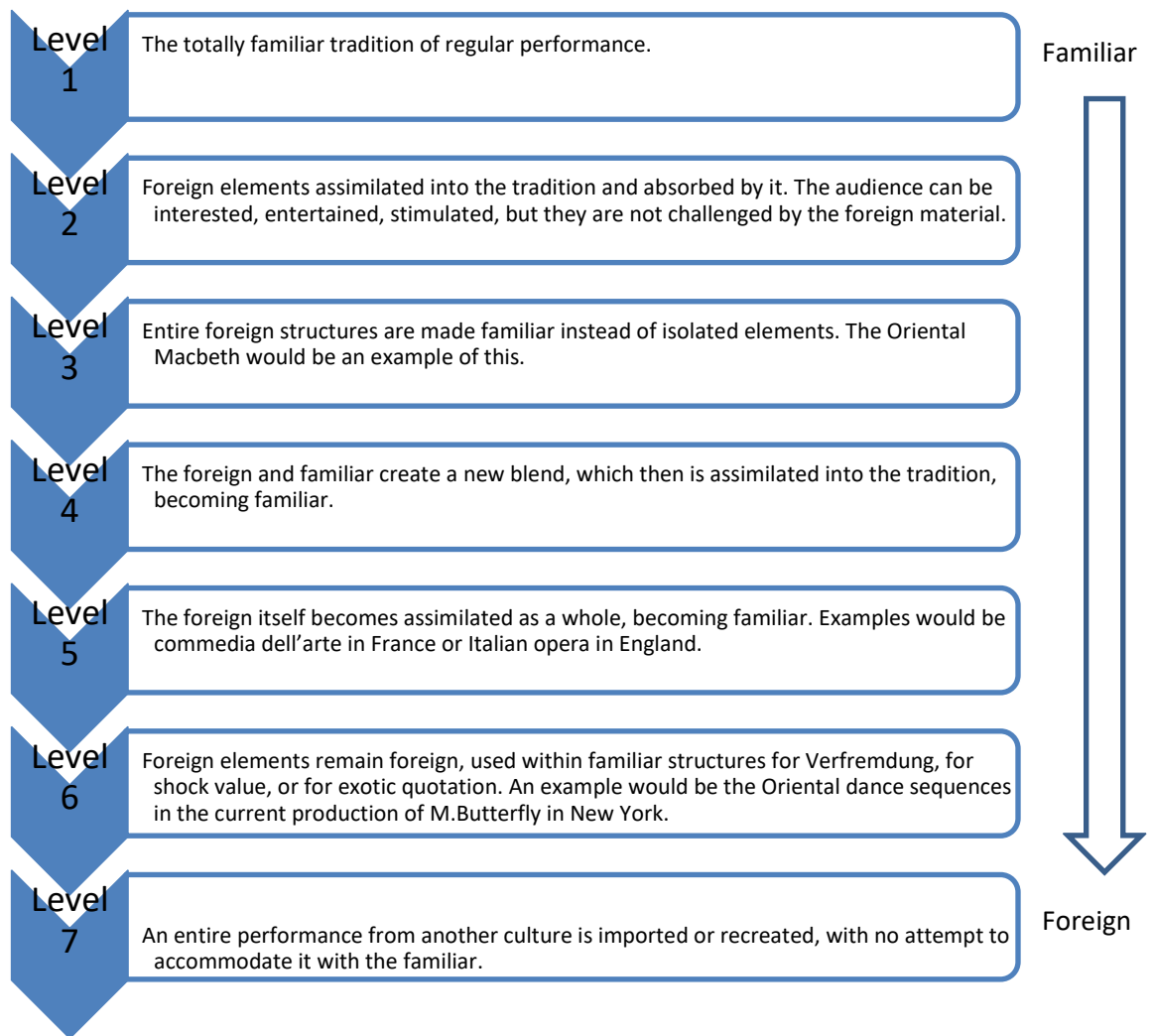
audience richer. The “outer frame” contains all those cultural elements “which create and inform theatrical events”, which Bennett (1997, pp. 140-141) defines as “the existence of commonly knowledged theatrical convention”, including cultural background, audience and production horizons of expectation, social occasion, etc. The “inner frame” contains the dramatic production in “a particular playing space”, which Bennett defines as the “combination and succession of visual and aural signs” (p. 140) which are received and interpreted in the previous experience of audiences. In other words, the “inner frame” is prior knowledge or previous experience, which has been strengthened by audience research since (Olsen, 2002; Tulloch, 2000; Omasta, 2011; Carlson, 1990). This leads to the conclusion that every audience member who attends a live performance is different, and their reception of the context of the theatre is unique due to their previous experience as well as their knowledge of culture, as per Bourdieu’s (1984) discussion of cultural capital. To understand the audience from the viewpoint of the inner and outer frames, as Bennet proposes, asks for much more than the regular demographic survey of theatre consumers: gender, age, educational level, etc. However, to understand the audience in depth requires more sophisticated psychographic audience segmentation, which contributes to theatre marketing in terms of targeting the specific audience segments and customizing the audience experience from each reception point in order to achieve a more satisfying experience..

Heim (2010), on the other hand, is not satisfied with the approaches of reception theory. She criticizes it for being limited to historical, sociological/cultural or psychological concerns, and points out the absence of semiotics. According to Olsen’s definition (2002), semiotics examines “the relationship between senders and receivers via message and code” (p. 261). Heim (2010) applies semiotics to theatre research, and regards the audience as an “interpreter” of signs and a “reader” of the theatrical event. Unlike the reader-response model, Heim refuses the statement of the “secondary” or “passive” role of audience in the audience reception process. Apart from critique, Heim also suggests including the three missing areas proposed by Marvin Carlson: audience contribution, “the semiotics of the entire theatrical experience”, and “the interrelationship between the signs of the stage and life” (p. 15). In short, in her study of the audience’s contribution to theatrical events, Heim stresses the fundamental role of the audience in the theatrical event and highlights the importance of the audience in the post-performance sphere. However, like

Bennett and other audience reception theorists, Heim pays much attention to the experience of the theatre audience during the process of theatrical events; the divergence is the start and end point of this process of experience. Heim believes the process of theatrical experience is beyond the theatre production itself.

In terms of audience experience, Reason (2010) introduces the perspective of Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, citing their definition of an experience as “not just what is going on in an audience’s mind (and body) during a performance, but [...] also what they do with this experience after the event” (p. 24). This experiential perspective implies a significant post-performance potential for audience development. In his research, Reason proposes the “longer experience” to trace the experience of the audience after a performance. As Eugenio Barba (1990) mentions, “the performance is the beginning of a longer experience. It is the scorpion’s bite which makes one dance. The dance does not stop when you leave the theatre” (cited by Reason, 2010, p. 25). Audience experience remains after the curtain descends. The experience could be the motivation for the re-attendance, which is discussed in Section 2.2, and surely, the experience could be converted into marketing value, but it has to be through the audience, which, on the other hand, requires a deeper understanding of the audience, and Chapter 3 has more detailed discussion.

In terms of Chinese performance in the UK, it seems that marketers neglect the “longer experience” of audiences. The ongoing, limitless and plural processes of audience development have not yet been sufficiently considered. Reason (2010) suggests that the experience of the theatre for the audience goes on afterwards in the audience’s memory, in their conscious, unconscious and self-conscious reflective processes, all of which influence their repurchase intention. To use Carlson’s words, the previous memory “haunts” the audience and their theatre-going behaviour and experience (1990). A positive experience, according to Hume et al. (2007), leads to the intention to re-buy or to engage in positive word-of-mouth; and vice versa. Considering the long term development of Chinese theatre in the UK, paying more attention to keeping and developing audiences might necessarily appear in marketing plans. Chinese theatre is on the foreign side of Carlson’s (1990) model (see Figure 2.1), which could potentially indicate a lack of interest for mainstream audiences. The audience development strategy, through understanding and targeting the specific audience segments, helps the theatre production and marketing achieve better performance in audience reach and box-office.



**Figure 2. 1 Levels of Familiarity, from the Culturally Familiar to the Culturally Foreign (Carlson, 1990)**

Experience is hard to study and the reality is that it is not uncommon for audiences with similar backgrounds in both the “outer” and “inner” frame to have different experiences and receptions of the same play at the same time. Sartre in 1976 highlighted the distinction of every audience, contending that “an audience is primarily an assembly” (Reason, 2010, p. 20), which implies that when audience members are sitting in the auditorium, they not only care about what they themselves are thinking about the performance but also about their neighbours’ opinions. In other words, every single reception point influences the experience of the audience, even if they share the same socioeconomic background. This statement, unfortunately, makes the demographic categories of audience seem



somewhat useless due to the neglect of audience experience, in and out of the theatre, which increases the difficulty of the study of audience experience.

Further to the discussion of the relationship between production and reception, Bennett continues to explore the audience's experience during the process of reception, which she believes should start before the audience buys the ticket.

Antonella Carù and Bernard Cova (2006) highlight the pivotal role of experience in marketing approaches and the need to strengthen the facilitation of consumers/audiences to immerse themselves in an experience. They suggest that "the environmental design and the spectacular thematization of offering" require the marketer to provide a context for the audience to immerse themselves in the performance.

The geographic location of a theatre is a key element of the reception, or the immersion process in the flow perspective for audiences. The style of the building, the foyer, the cloakrooms, restaurants and bars, all impact the audience reception. All of these reception points provide audiences with material evidence of "both their support and cultural taste" (Bennett, 1997, p. 131), and for theatres, especially small avant-garde theatres, the extra income from these facilities helps to sustain their business models. Bennett notes the important role of foyer activities, which can contain additional cultural attraction for audiences, such as exhibitions and musical preludes. Other elements which influence the reception of the audience include the playing space itself, the percentage of seats occupied and the set design. In other words, these elements help the audience become immersed in the theatre context, from the perspective of flow theory. Flow, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), is completely focused attention, which means being fully immersed and involved in the process of an activity. Csikszentmihalyi (1991) proposes that flow is an optimal psychology which brings a person spontaneous joy. Every reception point builds the environment for the audience to be immersed in the theatre context. This thesis explores whether home grown Chinese cultural surroundings and flow experiences can lead to a positive audience encounter.

In terms of improving the theatre experience for audiences, qualitative research findings (e.g. Pitts, 2005; Walmsley, 2011) demonstrate that pre-show activities such as introductory talks can enhance audience anticipation because they create "a

sense of empathy between the performance and the spectators” (Walmsley, 2011, p.7). This emphasis on theatre space usage as part of audience reception could be applied to some non-traditional theatre, such as *L’Indiade* from Arianne Mnouchkine and the Théâtre du Soleil. During the performance, the theatre’s decoration, the food offered in the bar and restaurant, book sellers and stores all echo the theme of Indian culture, which contributes to the reception of the audience and culminates in box-office success (Carlson, 1990). In terms of a possible marketing strategy for Chinese performance in the UK, the pre-performance reception design might help strengthen the cultural experience for the audience, and result in increased audience satisfaction and development.

Followed by the discussion of performance itself, Bennett considers post-performance an important part of the process of reception. In her opinion, the feedback of the audience through applause is only part of the receptive process of the audience. Post-production feedback can be inferred from the number of curtain calls, or possibly the level and tone of discussion between audience members and the cast after the show (Bennett, 1997). Bennett believes that activity after the performance is important, as the audience may follow up “by reading the text, by reading reviews, or seeing another production or even a subsequent movie adaptation” (p. 165). This post hoc decoding of the performance gives the opportunity to attract the audience to a subsequent production, which is crucial for audience cultivation, especially for non-traditional theatre or unfamiliar theatre. Heim (2010) similarly highlights the desire of audiences to talk about the experience after a performance and believes that fulfilling this expectation of the audience can heighten their experience and extend their pleasure. Walmsley (2011) agrees that post-show discussions can enhance the audience experience by strengthening the empathic connection between the audience and performers, and by fulfilling audiences’ desire for cultural capital and recognition.

The process of reception, to some degree, reflects and encapsulates notions of liminality, a concept borrowed from anthropology and sometimes defined as “a threshold”. Arnold van Gennep first developed this concept in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and Victor Turner extended it to other areas. Even though liminality is regularly deployed by anthropologists in the study of rituals, the similarity to a theatre experience with its rites means that the three-fold structure of liminality can be used to understand the theatre experience. The three-fold structure – preliminal,

liminal and postliminal, established by van Gennep and developed by Turner (1969; 1982) – reflects the three phases of cultural status, and replicates the pre-show, performance and post-performance activities. Van Gennep describes the preliminary as the practices and routines previous to rituals, the liminal as the “threshold” linking two phases, and the postliminal as the process of building a new identity by the attendees. Applied to theatre experiences, preliminary practices (pre-show activities) prepare the attendees for the liminal rite (performance), while the postliminal actions (post-performance events) help the audiences/attendees decode/interpret the performance and transform themselves into new identities. As the concept of the “longer experience” proposed by Reason (2010) suggests, the postliminal experience can last for a long time, and the experience, or the memory of it, can transform the audience into different people (Walmsley, 2011).

In conclusion, audience reception theory highlights the audience experience through the whole process of reception of a piece of theatre, which includes the pre-show events, the performance and the post-performance events, e.g. receiving the performance information, making the decision to buy a ticket, entering the theatre, spending leisure time in the foyer, restaurant or bar, sitting in the auditorium, and partaking in any post-show activities. All of the reception points lead to different experiences of the theatre, and in order to satisfy the attendees, theatre companies should pay attention to every single point of the reception process. Chinese theatre specifically, is facing a foreign market (the UK theatre market) which makes the positive experience of the audience crucial. Apart from the quality of the production itself, more attention should be paid to helping the audience decode a foreign culture in order to derive a better experience from it, create memory and consequently encourage their interest in future attendance. Understanding the motivations of audiences, British and Chinese, in the UK to attend Chinese theatre should represent the foundation that guides the design and organization of events to attract audiences and to satisfy their needs. It is also the core focus of this thesis.

## **2.2 Audience motivation and development**

The motivation for audiences to attend theatre events is a key area of focus for both theatre audience research and arts marketing. Research in this area explores the

reasons why audiences buy tickets and highlights the need for more effective marketing strategies to attract audiences, especially for unfamiliar work. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012), consumer motivation is “a need that is sufficiently pressing to direct the person to seek satisfaction of the need” (p. 159). By introducing Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Kotler and Armstrong link customer motivation to the needs for physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem and self-actualization. Moutinho defines motivation as “a state of need, a condition that exerts a ‘push’ on the individual towards certain types of action that are seen as likely to bring satisfaction” (cited by Nicholson and Pearce, 2001, p. 450). In short, motivation for theatre-goers constitutes the reasons why they go to theatre and their expectations of their experience at it. Satisfying these expectations offers the audience a positive experience and can lead to repeat attendance.

In terms of motivation for theatre attendance, Walmsley (2011) concludes that spiritual, sensual, emotional, intellectual and social factors are the main drivers of audience engagement. Similar conclusions emerged from Scott Swanson, Charlene Davis and Yushan Zhao’s (2008) empirical research. For instance, they found that the core drivers behind arts attendance are aesthetic development, education, escapism, recreation, self-esteem enhancement and social interaction, and they highlighted that audience members motivated by these factors are more likely to plan their attendance in advance. From a social-psychological perspective of motivation, Crompton details the motivations of audiences as “novelty, socialization, prestige/status, rest and relaxation, education, value/intellectual enrichment, enhancing kinship and relations/family togetherness, and regression” (Nicholson and Pearce, 2001, p. 450). The common findings from this body of empirical research can be summarised as aesthetic pleasure (spiritual, sensual, emotional, novelty), edutainment (intellectual enrichment, education, self-esteem enhancement, rest and relaxation), escapism (novelty) and social interaction (enhancing kinship, relations/family togetherness).

Bergadaà and Nyeck (1995) separate theatre-goers into two motivational typologies: those seeking intellectual stimulation and those seeking sensory experience. They find that theatre-goers’ underlying values are hedonism, social conformism, personal development and communal pleasure, which reflects the findings above. Slater (2007) highlights the cultural and leisure experience of the audience as being designed to address multiple motivations. Based on his own qualitative research

findings, Walmsley (2011) claims that the fulfilment of the audience's desire for emotion, escapism and edutainment enhances its subsequent satisfaction. The audience participants in Walmsley's study articulate the emotional impact as their primary motivation and identify a true and home grown performance directly with a more positive experience, and one which encourages them to empathize with others (ibid.). These audience voices suggest that marketers and venue managers should try to maintain existing and develop new audiences by paying attention to their emotional, escapist and edutainment needs. Moreover, the enjoyable experience and social involvement, highlighted by Pitts (2005) and Nicholson and Pearce (2001), also enhance audience satisfaction and contribute to re-purchase intention.

Lynne Conner frankly admits that instead of engaging in the arts itself, theatre audiences are actually searching for "the arts experience", which is specifically "the opportunity to participate" (cited by Heim, 2010, p. 56). Heim believes that audience members participate in theatre events not only by their applause but that they play their own role as "contributors by voicing their ideas" and these voices construct "a shared identity" among the audience. This statement echoes the emotional and social drivers evident in previous research, that audiences pursue fulfilment of their motivation to find a sense of cultural identity and feel a sense of social connection, inclusion and welcome. This eager need for social inclusion is specifically expressed in the motivation of immigrants for cultural engagement, as Le, Polonsky and Arambewela's (2015) research in Australia shows. The desire of Chinese immigrants in the UK to be an audience for their mother culture confirms this, and this emerging theory is discussed in detail in Chapter 6 with evidence from the Chinese audience members interviewed in the auditoriums of the Chinese theatre in the UK.

Stephanie Pitts (2005) points out that "social conformism" is a motivation for event-goers. She finds that audiences enjoy recognizing familiar faces across the auditorium, even if they went there alone. Fiona Fearon (2010) shares the concern that social exclusion, instead of economic or educational exclusion, is a significant barrier for audiences engaging with high culture. In the context of cross-cultural theatre, the social exclusion of high culture—theatre—for Chinese immigrants becomes social inclusion due to their familiarity with the home culture, and for British theatre-goers, the familiarity of the theatre attending context turns the

foreignness of Chinese culture, the cultural exclusion, into cultural inclusion. In this way, cultural productions containing foreignness are motivating for different audience segments, an idea to date largely neglected by arts marketers. Further discussion of this issue is provided later in the thesis.

In their research into repurchase intention, Hume et al. (2007) point out that customer satisfaction is considered a predictor of repurchase intention, stressing that “mood and past experience” (p. 138) are core drivers of customer satisfaction, and that “familiarity” is an influential element of decision making. Specifically, in the context of the performing arts, Hume et al. (2007) suggest that “experiential hedonic service and experiential fundamentals drive satisfaction and subsequently RI (repurchase intention)” (p. 141), which makes the theatre experience particularly influential on RI, impacting on the emotions, satisfaction levels and repurchase intentions of the audience.

In summary, the core motivations of theatre-goers can be synthesized from the existing research as escapism, socializing and edutainment. The relative satisfaction of the arts experience has a significant impact on audiences’ repurchase intentions and peer recommendations, which indicated that arts marketers should strive to improve the audience experience at every reception or touch point.

### **2.3 The audience as sojourners**

Based on the previous discussion, it seems reasonable to assume that fear of an unfamiliar culture might provide a de-motivation for Western audiences to attend Chinese theatre. Miriam Sobre-Denton and Dan Hart (2008) suggest that “sojourners”, i.e. those who stay or reside temporarily in another culture, experience anxiety when they feel it is hard to predict or explain the behaviour of the host culture. In the context of this thesis, the term “sojourners” is used to represent audience members who reside for a short period of time in a Chinese cultural setting, and for whom the cultural differences might cause anxiety. Under the circumstance of this thesis, “sojourners” refers not only to British audience members at Chinese theatre in the UK who experience cultural differences, but also Chinese immigrants in the UK attending the Chinese theatre in this foreign land who experience “home returning” journey, “re-sojourn” (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963)

which means re-adjusting to their original culture after a cross-cultural journey, which is described in detail in Chapter 6.

Regarding the cultural familiarity of theatre audiences, Carlson (1990) proposes a dichotomy between “culturally familiar” and “culturally foreign” (see Figure 2.1). From the “totally familiar tradition of regular performance” to “an entire performance from another culture imported or recreated, with no attempt to accommodate it with the familiar” (ibid., p. 50), Carlson defines seven levels to distinguish the relative familiarity of a performance (see Figure 2.1). For example, if Shakespeare, for a British audience, is on the upper level, which means culturally familiar, the traditional Peking Opera from China would be at level 7, entirely foreign to British audience. As some motivation and intercultural communication theories argue, an unfamiliar environment can create anxiety for the audience/visitor (Sobre-Denton and Hart, 2008). Motivating an audience to engage in a foreign performance is even harder than it is to engage them in regular theatre works from the West. On the other hand, finding familiarity in the foreignness of Chinese theatre in the UK could possibly convert the generic challenges of motivating attendance into an opportunity: newness and the unfamiliar is not unwelcome to all audiences.

Kenneth David (1971) observed that the sojourning experience has both pleasant and unpleasant aspects. “Culture shock” is a common experience for the sojourner, accompanied by feelings of “depression, anxiety and hostility” and “a strong desire to return home” (David, 1971, p. 45). However, psychotherapy suggests that intercultural experiences can be a valuable way of increasing perceptiveness, and that they are generally pursued by people who look forward to breaking away from the daily routine (ibid.), who seek escapism (Walmsley, 2011; Swanson, Davis and Zhao, 2007) and/or novelty (Nicholson and Pearce, 2001, p. 450).

Chinese theatre and other foreign cultural events offer opportunities for British audiences to be sojourners in their home country; but, as flow theory argues, an unfamiliar environment (e.g. a different language, cultural context, value) can impact the immersion process of the audience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). As discussed, flow can offer an optimal experience for the audience, and may improve the experience as a sojourner in the theatre and help them immerse themselves in the performance. The pre-performance and post-performance events (the process of reception), which help the audience decode the performance, might provide a way to

decrease the cultural shock and transform the audience member or sojourner (the individual) through the performance or liminal ritual.

Even though there are significant challenges in encouraging the audience members to attend Chinese performances, existing research suggests that some audiences do enjoy the experiences from engaging with a different culture. Theatre audience research also shows that home grown performances can lead to positive experiences for theatre-goers (Walmsley, 2011). This argument offers opportunities for Chinese theatre to attract original experience seekers in the UK. Jensen and Linberg (2001 cited by Kolar and Zabkar, 2010) suggest that, in the context of postmodernism, tourists judge authenticity through emotional experiences and are “effective-driven, experience-seeking hedonists” (p. 654). After all, the motivations for these “experience-seekers” are aesthetic, social and educational enjoyment and escapism (ibid.) which are essentially no different from the motivations of theatre-goers. Depending on the authenticity of Chinese theatre in the UK, the motivations of authenticity-seeking tourists have to be considered by marketers, as discussed later in the audience segmentation section of the marketing chapter. However, the sojourner as a concept in cross-cultural tourism can be applied to cross-cultural theatre. The actual sojourner who returns home to the UK, the sojourner who resides in the UK, and those who want to be sojourners someday could all potentially become the audiences of Chinese theatre and also the Chinese immigrants who are sojourners themselves in the UK who wanted a home-return journey. Regardless of who they are outside the theatre, audience members could be called sojourners when they immerse themselves in the experience of Chinese theatre in the UK. But questions of who the sojourners are, how to attract them, and, more importantly in the longer term, how to keep their interest in Chinese theatre, should be studied from practice and from existing marketing theories.

## **2.4 Audience development**

According to the definition by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (2013), audience development is not a “one-off event” or just a “marketing function”. Developing an audience involves the identification, engagement and retention of audience members; it is a planned and strategic management function aimed at delivering



organizational objectives to the target audience (Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2013). Audience development sets out to effect a change in the attitudes, understanding and behaviour of both existing and potential audiences. Based on the statistic that 65% of bookers are “oncers” (i.e. attend once a year) (Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2013), moving this group into a higher position on the customer loyalty ladder can dramatically increase the survival chances of an arts organization. Aimed at removing barriers, deepening relationships with audiences and creating greater inclusion in the arts, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland argues that audience development has the multiple function of changing the attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of both existing and potential audience members. The strategic focus of audience development is to move people up the customer loyalty ladder from “prospect” to “oncer” to “irregular” to “regular” to “advocate” (Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2013).

The document from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland is a guide to audience development aimed at individual arts organizations. As theatre productions from China do not technically belong to one specific organization, the question is: Who should take responsibility for audience development on a macro level? Obviously, at this moment, most of the audience for Chinese theatre are prospects—i.e. potential audience members who have not yet attended a Chinese theatre production, but this does not mean that in general they are prospects to all theatre productions. There may be a group of loyal attendees of Chinese performances, but for the purposes of strategic marketing, attracting the “prospect” to become the “oncer” and offering a positive experience for these attendees in order to keep their re-purchase intention high, is the primary task. Arts marketers can easily forget that the “prospect”, which means the potential audience who has not yet experience the production (Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2013), for Chinese theatre in the UK does not necessary mean that the Chinese culture is entirely foreign to them. This, to some degree, can be strategically used for audience segmentation in order for Chinese theatre to target specific audience groups in the UK. A critical overview of arts marketing strategy is presented in Chapter 7. But first it is important to review existing marketing theories, especially arts and theatre marketing theories.

### **Chapter 3. Cross-cultural arts marketing**

The previous sections explored the tested construct of intercultural theatre and the importance of understanding audience motivations. As discussed earlier in the thesis, with the increasing process of globalization, international cultural exchange has become a trend. The level and direction of cultural trade flowing between East and West has attracted attention from all around the world. However, as Daphne Lei (2011) argues, the cultural flow from the East to the West is limited by HIT, as discussed in Chapter 1. The imbalance of the cultural exchange between East and West is a problematic phenomenon that needs to be discussed and changed (UNESCO, 2005; UNESCO, 2010; Masood, 2012). This chapter explores the relevant literature in order to start a discussion, which should have been started earlier but remains a vacuum in academia, about arts marketing in a cross-cultural context, which includes arts marketing and management, strategic marketing models, international marketing theories, and intercultural tourism marketing. Attracting the attention of scholars as well as practitioners to cross-cultural arts marketing is not only important for the strategic development of marketing of Chinese theatre in the UK, but could also lead to a better East-West cultural exchange in this globalized era. In this thesis, understanding effective marketing strategies for cultural products produced in an unfamiliar cultural context is pivotal to making Chinese theatre visible on the global stage. A suitable marketing strategy could be used to develop loyal and sustainable audience segments for Chinese theatre in Western markets, and this might even be applied to other cultural productions, such as visual arts, films, etc., from various cultural backgrounds in Asia to extend their overseas markets. Unfortunately, even though intercultural exchange is increasing all over the world, the concept of cross-cultural arts marketing has rarely been discussed in the arts marketing literature, especially from an audience perspective (Kay, 2014). In the context of this thesis, cross-cultural arts marketing, refers to marketing strategies for artworks produced from and presented in different cultural contexts, which aim to improve the marketing of cultural products from Eastern countries—a relatively disadvantaged party in the global competition of cultural exchange at present.

Traditional marketing theories have reached a stage of maturity in the fields of business and consumer behaviour, and with their theoretical development, the consumer has come to play a more important role. Of all the marketing tools developed, from the 4Ps (production, price, promotion and place) suggested by McCarthy (1960) to the 4Cs (consumers, cost, communication and convenience) suggested by Lauterborn (1990), attention has been attracted to the role of consumers in the development of marketing strategy. The STP model through three steps, segmentation, targeting and positioning, helps analyse the product and the potential ways of communicating the benefit and value to specific groups (Kotler and Scheff, 1997), and puts the customer at the heart of a marketing campaign. Accordingly, customer relationship management (CRM), which refers to building one-to-one relationships with customers (Kumar, 2010), cannot be ignored by any contemporary institution with a customer development strategy. With the use of Ansoff's matrix (1957), which is a strategic planning tool for devising strategies for future growth of a product, Chinese theatre could find its position in the UK market and, based on which, strategically apply STP to approach the audience and target the market. As a foreign cultural production tries to explore a highly developed market, without any theoretical guidance from the academia in relation to cross-cultural marketing, the classic marketing models are widely experimented with in this thesis in order to explore their feasibility in these circumstances. With the advent of so-called "postmodern marketing" suggested by Brown (1993), the study and profile of consumers has steadily increased. Firat and Venkatesh (1992) apply a postmodern perspective to arts marketing to argue that customers identify and establish the meaning of daily life through consuming cultural productions. To further this opinion, Meamber (2014) believes that in the context of postmodernism, arts marketing can help to "shape" consumers' experience of arts (p. 6). Hoch and Ha (1986) and Neelamegham and Jain (1999) describe the performing arts as experience goods, and Preece and Johnson (2014) admit that the consumption experience as "part of the transaction process" has effected a "core change" in marketing (p. 110). All of this heightens the challenges, while simultaneously raising significant opportunities, for marketing experiential cultural events such as theatre productions.

The discussion of the audience/consumer experience in arts marketing (e.g. by Throsby, 2001; Heilbrun and Gray, 2001; Bourgeon-Renault et al. 2006; Carú

Carúand Cova, 2005; Kolb2005; 2014; Maclaran, 2009; etc.) echoes the concept of the “experience economy” proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1999). As discussed in the last chapter, the importance of the audience is increasingly recognized in the theatre sector and in other cultural industries. So improving audiences’ experience of the whole process of the consumption of a theatre production (for example through pre-show events, during the performance itself and via post-show activities) and meeting or even exceeding their expectations to achieve the value of consuming the arts (Larsen, 2014) is rapidly becoming the key task for theatre marketers.

Developed from the description of the progression of value by Pine and Gilmore (1999), “goods are tangible, service is intangible, and experiences memorable”. Radbourne (2014, p. 206) defines experience as “memorable, personal and revealed during consumption through the stimulation of various senses that meet the customers’ needs”, The 21<sup>st</sup> Century offers some radical new approaches to improving the experience of cultural consumption. For example, Preece and Johnson (2014) advocate Web strategies, and a similar opinion is endorsed by Kolb (2014), who argues that attendance experiences can be enhanced using social media. The theoretical foundation of their suggestions is to improve the communication between the organization and its audience members. For audiences, the virtual community based on the Internet offers a dialogic communication platform and information centre; in other words, an audience tribe (Kolb, 2014) is built. Engaging audience members in a virtual community can motivate audiences and fulfil their desire for edutainment and social engagement, etc. Kolb also believes that social media can be used to “more fully engage the consumer with the art before, during and after attendance” (2014, p. 166), which could effectively realize the “longer experience” suggested by Reason (2010). However, the tribal marketing has the risk of “brand hijack” with consumers overwriting the brand value, Bilton (2017) argues that tribal marketing is no longer just managing the relationship between products and people, but also the relationships among the participants within the tribe. In other words, building an audience tribe is no longer only about building a brand among the consumers but also looking after the relationships of the individuals within it.

The concept of experience marketing was proposed by O’Sullivan and Spangler (1998) as a new strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and at present it is discussed widely in the arts marketing literature (e.g. by Tynan and McKechnie, 2009; Otto and Ritchie, 1996; Cho and Fesenmaier, 2001; Addis, 2005; Prentice, 2001; Kozinets, 1999;

etc.). But when the experience is extended to the inter-cultural or cross-cultural context, the discussion is “extremely rare” (Kay, 2014, p. 217). The review of the existing arts marketing literature by Daragh O’Reilly (2011) highlights the absence of intercultural arts marketing scholarship. There are studies in international business and marketing which explore the impact of various cultural contexts for marketing and global cooperation and intercultural communication studies also pay attention to cross-cultural interaction and its attendant obstacles. While intercultural experience is a key branch of tourism and leisure studies, the findings about the motivation process of intercultural experience-seekers (e.g. Pizam and Fleischer, 2005; Fiske and Taylor, 1984; Mannell, 1990) and the authenticity of cultural tourism (e.g. Kolar and Zabkar, 2010) can also be applied to arts marketing. However, there are few studies connecting these concepts that try to find a practical marketing approach for artistic and cultural products in a cross-cultural context. The challenges of intercultural communication are well acknowledged (Scollon, Scollon and Jones, 2011; Beamer and Varner, 2008; Gibson, 1997; Jandt, 2012; etc.), and the increasing development of intercultural exchange is widely discussed (O’Dowd, 2007; Jack and Phipps, 2005), which makes the study of intercultural arts marketing an interdisciplinary pursuit that relies on synthesizing existing theories.

In the context of this thesis, namely attending Chinese theatre in the UK, the audience inevitably experiences a different cultural context, often as sojourners in their own homeland. Delivering information about the theatrical work without confusing or frustrating the audience with cultural differences and dissonance, and motivating them to engage in the unfamiliar cultural experiences, presents a significant challenge for marketers. By adapting and applying strategic marketing tools (e.g. STP, tribe marketing or Ansoff’s matrix) and synthesizing them with theories from arts marketing, international marketing and cross-cultural tourism and hospitality marketing, a new intercultural marketing strategy is suggested for contemporary Chinese theatre in the UK, which could also be applied to other cultural products from Asia in the global market. Via this research process, it is anticipated that the study of intercultural arts marketing will find a solution for cultural products from relatively disadvantaged countries to challenge the domination of Western culture in global cultural exchange.

As Meamber (2014) claims, the meaning of the arts, in postmodernist terms, is co-negotiated by artists, cultural intermediaries (such as arts marketers), and consumers

(p. 5); in other words, dialogue and meaning-making activities among artists, audience members and marketers is essential for the ultimate success of an artwork. Based on a critical review of existing research and theories, this chapter explores the features of Chinese theatre as an intangible “product”, and discusses possible strategies for marketing this foreign cultural experience and delineating appropriate potential audience segments and the potential strategic dialogue among this specific cultural experience and the audience in order to achieve a better audience satisfaction. .

### **3.1 Products—theatre from different cultural contexts**

As defined by Kotler and Scheff (1997), marketing, is the process by which “an organization relates creatively, productively, and profitably to the marketplace, with the goal of creating and satisfying customers within the parameters of the organization’s objectives” (p. 31). In other words, the ultimate goal of marketing for an organization is to create and satisfy customers/consumers and at the same time fulfil its strategic objectives.

Laurie Meamber (2014) describes arts marketers as gatekeepers who attempt to “inscribe the art objects and experiences with meanings” as they market them, and the producers’ work is to create arts and art experiences. This clarifies the responsibility of the different roles in artistic creation and promotion. To simplify, shaping the consumers’ experience of art is the job of arts marketing, in the postmodern context. This statement can be traced to the research findings of Cova (1996), who discusses the important role of the arts marketer in helping consumers to create individual and collective meanings from artistic products. Through fostering art communities, and bringing artists, artworks, experiences and consumers together, Cova believes that arts marketers have an irreplaceable role in helping consumers interpret the arts and appreciate their value. Kottler and Scheff (1997) explain that the art marketer’s task includes creating new needs in the market instead of just meeting existing demand, because it is possible that there is little existing need for the art products promoted. Chinese theatre in the UK market probably faces the same problem—there is no existing theatre audience segment for it in the UK at present. Instead of focusing on the requirements of the market, for Chinese theatre

productions in the UK, the job of the marketing team is to create a need and demand for new products in potentially new markets.

In the context of marketing cross-cultural theatre, the situation seems more complex. First of all, theatre, as a performing art, is not a traditional product. According to Pine and Gilmore's description of experience (Radbourne, 2014), theatre *is* the experience, the memorable event for the attendee. When the theatre emanates from a different cultural context, the experience is "foreign", and apart from the theatrical experience, the cultural differences are also highlighted in the experience and memory of the attendees. Kotler and Scheff (1997) agree that a performing arts event is "an experience" (p. 189), and define the performing arts as "essentially a communication between the artist/performer and the audience" (p. 193). The "communication" is also highlighted by Meamber (2014) as co-negotiation among artists, cultural intermediaries (such as arts marketers) and audience members. Whether the cultural difference of the foreign production makes the communication difficult or attractive remains up for discussion, and is explored empirically in this thesis via a series of case studies.

Based on the findings of Hoch and Ha (1986) and Neelamegham and Jain (1999), Preece and Johnson (2014) define the performing arts as "experience goods", which cannot be fully valued until "they are fully consumed" (p. 109). However, this way of treating art as "product/goods" and as "consumption" causes controversy (Boorsma, 2006). The arts experience is increasingly the focus of arts marketing literature. For theatre specifically, the relationship between audience and performance, and among audience members themselves, is "complex and shifting" (Ryan, Fenton and Sangiorgi, 2010, p. 217). As a more experiential product, performance is "situated amongst many other, different, but related engagements that form a more complex (spatially and experientially) terrain in which contemporary arts marketing is embedded" (ibid., p. 221). With the feature of experiential and service dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), theatre marketing might well benefit from applying the concept of "experience marketing" to strengthen and improve the audience experience.

In terms of cross-cultural theatre marketing, in this study marketing Chinese theatre in the UK specifically, is not only about the experience of theatre but also the experience of a different culture. This combination makes the audience experience

more complex, which can present significant barriers, as well as advantages, for producers and marketers.

Ryan, Fenton and Sangiorgi (2010) believe that the role of the arts marketer has shifted away from only “conveying messages and providing information” to “setting the scene for a more active participation, creating space for surprise, space for reflection and for interaction” (p. 225). When the scene or context becomes unfamiliar for audiences in the UK, how to provide the “space” for interaction and communication between audiences and the performers, and among audience members, becomes a question that marketers should consider. The primary question concerns audience acceptance of cultural differences between China and the UK. The “cultural distance” (Hofstede, 1980) in marketing is a concept that certainly should not be ignored.

As presented by Hofstede in the 1980s, cultural distance, is a familiar concept in the field of international business management, and especially in the sub-discipline of international marketing (e.g. Moon and Park, 2011; Craig, Greene and Douglas, 2005). With the extension of international markets, culture has become a vital element which needs to be explored and understood. As Craig, Greene and Douglas (2005) argue, culture matters. It is “an important factor that influences the success of products in foreign markets” (p. 99). When products are culturally related, as theatre is, the significant effect of cultural distance is enlarged. As discussed in the intercultural theatre section, cultural differences impact significantly on theatre production. The traditional intercultural theatre, to some degree, presents stereotypes of relatively disadvantaged cultures, in Western dominant culture, to the audience. Cultural distance is a measurement of difference, which has been criticized as an under-estimation of “the complexities and intricacies of culture” (Moon and Park, 2011, p. 19). However, the attempt to deal with the cultural barriers in international trade has increased the discussion of cultural differences. Carlson’s (1990) culturally familiar and culturally foreign model, discussed in the previous chapter (Figure 2.1), reflects this trend.

Cultural differences can certainly prevent audiences from experiencing products from different cultural contexts or limit the potential impact of their experience. The term “intercultural”, according to Lusting and Koester (1993), implies differences of value orientation, preferred communication modes, role expectations and rules of



social interaction between cultures. In other words, differences exist in every process of communication, not only across different languages. If Craig et al. (2005) are correct in their assertion that the central issue in the increasingly globalized economy is “the receptiveness of members of culture to objects and ideas that originate from other cultures” (p. 80), then audiences of theatre productions from China in the UK have to accept different value orientations, communication modes and norms of social interaction if they want to have a positive theatre experience from the immersed “sojourn”. This presents a huge challenge for the arts marketer.

Craig et al. (2005) underline the pivotal role of language in its cultural content, which affects the “transmission of messages, ideas and verbal expressions of emotions and feelings” (p. 82) that represent the purposes of intangible products such as theatre. For culturally rich products, cultural similarity provides a “favourable context” when they enter foreign markets (ibid., p. 99) due to the smaller cultural distance. In the case of Chinese theatre in the UK market, the cultural heterogeneities are definitely not a favourable context. According to Hofstede (2001), human beings tend to avoid the uncomfortable environment of uncertainty and unfamiliarity, and this can influence consumer behaviour (Litvin, Crofts and Hefner, 2004). This finding underscores the difficulty of intercultural arts marketing.

At the same time, Masaaki Kotabe (2007) emphasizes “the changing conditions” of the global environment, by which he means the internationalization process and its impact on financial, trading and industrial activities. Kotabe believes this change decreases the influence of political borders. Shenkar (2001) also has confidence that the increased communication and interaction between cultures bridges cultural distance. But the question is whether this reduces the impact of cultural differences in intercultural exchange. In other words: How do increasingly globalized audiences feel about a profoundly different cultural experience?

Consumer experience has always been considered a key concept in marketing management (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009), and the audience experience is an important topic in theatre and performance studies, as discussed in the previous chapter. But in terms of marketing, it is important to revisit the audience experience (or the intercultural audience experience) in a different cultural context. Holbrook

and Hirschman (1982) introduced the idea of consumer experience, and Pine and Gilmore (1998) developed it in the field of marketing. Tynan and McKechnie (2009) synthesize the existing theories and state that audience experiences “can educate, entertain, and provide an opportunity to display some particular knowledge, value and behaviour socially, or offer an escapist, visual or aesthetic encounter” (p. 504), which echoes the motivations of theatre-going presented in the last chapter.

In the field of intercultural tourism studies, Iso-Ahola’s escape-seeking dichotomy suggests that the motivations for tourists can be classified into two overarching typologies: the “escaper” (push) and the “seeker” (pull) (Crompton and McKay, 1997). The same group might have both of these motivations for a trip—they are looking for somewhere to escape from their daily life and at the same time seeking something new and exciting. Steiner and Reisinger (2004) claim that “experiencing cultural difference is one of the most fundamental motivators for travel” (p. 118), which implies that cultural difference can actually provide an underlying motivation for cultural consumption.

The existing research indicates that the motivations of theatre-going are escapism, socializing and edutainment, which covers the concepts of novelty and family togetherness, hedonism, fantasy, emotive seeking, etc. (Walmsley, 2011; Crompton and McKay, 1997; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; etc.). Chinese theatre, in general, has the ability to fulfil this expectation of theatre-goers, and applying Crompton and McKay’s (1997) description that “motives occur before the experience and satisfaction after it” to Chinese theatre in the UK specifically, the motivation of the audience for this kind of cultural product exists. But questions regarding who exactly desires it and how to make the experience satisfying remain unresolved. Cultural difference, in the current situation, seems to present an obstacle to a satisfying experience, but it can also provide a motivation for the audiences in the UK who seek new experiences. On the other hand, it certainly could be considered as a competitive advantage for Chinese theatre in the UK.

Kay (2014) argues that cross-cultural differences are an important factor in understanding the motivation and behaviour of tourists. The reasons for the importance of cross-cultural differences, which Kay develops from the finding of Pizam and Fleischer (2005), include “growing internationalization; cultural characteristics being vitally important to the attractiveness of the product itself; and

tourism being a service industry where people from different nationalities meet” (p. 215). In other words, with the growth of internationalization and globalization, an increasing number of consumers, audiences and tourists value the “cultural characteristics” of cultural products/destination more. Kay (2014) points out the attractiveness of the cultural authenticity of experiences for audiences. In the case of events, Linda Wilka (2013) draws on experiential marketing to describe how “attending an event is about being touched by dreams, emotions and pleasure, rather than focusing on the functional features and benefits of a product” (p. 334); applied to cross-cultural theatre attending, it is an experience of a foreign dream, or, as Kotler and Scheff (1997) argue, “it leads an audience on a journey that for many is a previously unimagined experience” (p. 18). For the audience of foreign theatre productions, it constitutes an experience of sojourn. The underlying research questions concern how arts marketers attract audiences to begin this “unimagined” journey and who aspires to be a sojourner.

### **3.2 Sojourning?**

There are a large number of theatre-goers, but the fundamental question in this thesis is: Who is interested in Chinese theatre in the UK? As Kotler and Scheff (1997) admit, audiences vary, and their interests and backgrounds are highly diverse. The complex spectrum of motivations of consumers makes strategic marketing vitally important, and Kotler’s solution is to engage in marketing via a strategic approach which can be deconstructed into the segmenting, targeting and positioning (STP) model. Meamber (2014) states that the creation of meaning in the arts in the postmodern context is fragmented and she argues that “consumer loyalties are not fixed and do not need to connect to a unified sense of self. Individuals do not have to commit to any one theme, meaning, or identity” (p. 6). This implies that the postmodern audience is culturally omnivorous. The advantage of this finding in a postmodern context is that the audience is always looking for something different and new, and thus the core task of arts marketers of Chinese theatre in the UK involves finding the right audience segment, and motivating them to attend. This endorses the theory of audience segmentation. Askegaard (1999) suggests that the basic question of marketing is: “Whose wants and needs?” The “who”—the segment—is a fundamental element of a marketing strategy. According to Kerrigan,

Fraser and Özbilgin (2004), strategic marketing management is all about segmentation and positioning, which shows the importance of the right segmentation for a product. Where international marketing is concerned, Usunier (2000) also concurs that “one of the principal aims is to identify, categorize, evaluate and finally select market segments” (p. 3). In this section, the aim is to identify, categorize, evaluate and select the sojourner for the Chinese theatre in the UK.

As discussed, cultural differences can present a challenge as well as an opportunity for Chinese theatre in the UK. On the other hand, audience multi-culturalization also “offers the promise” (Kipnis et al., 2014, p.248) of new market development. Greg Richards (1996) collects evidence from the ATLAS research and suggests that “across Europe as whole, high levels of cultural consumption at home are likely to be reflected in high levels of cultural consumption on holiday” (p. 271) and people employed in the cultural industries are more likely to be interested in cultural consumption. It might be worth thinking conversely from this finding that tourists who enjoy cross-cultural travel might also be interested in attending cultural events to experience a different culture from their homeland. As Shenkar (2001) argues, cross-cultural communication and interaction is increasing and bridging cultural distance, which means that more people have experienced other cultures in this era than ever before. This reflects the emotional value and contemporary trend of seeking nostalgia suggested by Tynan and McKechnie (2009). Litvin et al. (2004) introduce the term “attitude toward the past (ATP)” to identify the impact of previous experience on cultural consumption, or the influence of the experience and memory of the audience on their cultural consumption. Combine with the previous experience’s impact on the theatre audience (Reason, 2010; Carlson 1990 and 2003), it is not reckless to suggest that previous cultural consumption behaviours and attitudes impact on the decision making of theatre attendance as well as the experience of the theatre for the audience. For Chinese theatre in the UK, it is reasonable to target the segment of the audience that has a positive attitude to cross-cultural travel, foreign cultural goods and events and new and novel experiences.

Bonita Kolb (2005) argues that segmentation is specifically important for cultural products and experiential marketing. She points out that, as a result of the diminishing cost of travel, especially cross-national travel, more people have direct experience of other cultures, which means they no longer view other cultures as

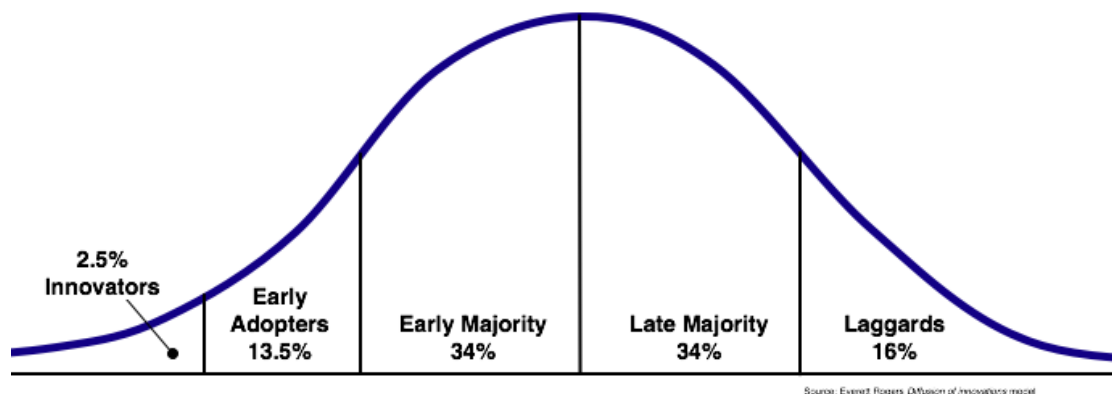
“foreign” (p. 1). Applying this to cultural distance theory, the experience of different cultures lessens the cultural distance between the home culture and the foreign culture. In Carlson’s culturally familiar and culturally foreign model (Figure 2.1), the cross-cultural experience makes foreign cultures closer to the culturally familiar side. It is not hard to suppose that cross-cultural tourists, in other words, have been sojourners at least once, have more interest in being a sojourner in their homeland for experiencing a different culture than their peers without that relevant experience.

Steiner and Reisinger (2004) agree that previous experiences partially determine audience behaviour. They believe that “one interprets experiences to make them what they are” (p. 127) and that “authentic experiences are had, not made” (p. 134). Theatre is a cultural experience for the attendees, as those from different cultural contexts bring in different cultural experiences. As argued, for spectators of cross-cultural theatre, experiencing a foreign culture could act as an identity statement, helping them self-identify as cultural omnivores, and more importantly, as people who are open to cultural diversity. This segment of people who have experienced other cultures through travelling may find a culturally different theatrical experience in their home city attractive in order to create an authentic memory.

Kotler and Scheff (1997) go so far as to endorse audience segmentation as “the first responsibility of a marketer” (p. 94) and define it as classifying consumers into similar groups with similar needs and wants. The core criteria for segmentation are the following: geographic—distance from the theatre, neighbourhoods of most-likely attendees; demographic—age, education, income, gender, family status; and psychographic—lifestyle measures such as activities, interests, opinions, social class or family life cycle (ibid.). A similar segmentation framework is suggested by Kolb (2005), Kerrigan, Fraser and Özbilgin (2004) and Hsieh, O’Leary, Morrison and Chiang (1997). Each criterion has advantages and limitations in terms of grouping the audience. Existing empirical research findings about theatre-goers mostly classifies them as middle-class, white, highly educated, middle aged or older, professional, female groups—based on standard demography; and geographic segmentation strengthens the urban/metropolitan residence, as they are close to cultural clusters (Verhoeff, 1994; Richards, 1996; etc.). These findings have been criticized for simplifying the audience, as discussed in Chapter 2. With the changing

conditions in the world, new audience features appear. For instance, Kolb (2005) underlines a report finding that a new generation (those under the age of 45) of Londoners are interested in experiencing other cultures and are more tolerant of cultural differences. Using cultural products to “further their identity goals and establish meaning” in their daily lives is a new trend in the postmodern context (Meamber, 2014, p. 5). The meaning of cultural products is more than intangible service. The new “experience-seeking generation” identified by Kolb (2005) represents those who “tend to define themselves by the experiences they have had” (p. 65). They are looking for participation rather than passive experience, which presents a strategic advantage for arts and cultural organizations. Considering the cultural experience that theatre can offer, this experience-seeking generation constitutes a golden opportunity for Chinese theatre in the UK, is based on psychographic segmentation.

By introducing the innovation adoption lifecycle (Figure 3.1), Kolb (2005) underlines the role of innovators “who are willing to be the first to try a product” and “seek stimulation” (p. 211). They “have enough money that they can afford to take the risk of trying the unfamiliar” (p. 211), and are willing to spread their satisfaction to others and extend it to a larger audience group, such as early adopters. The description of innovators as “younger, financially stable and well educated” (ibid.), mostly matches theatre-goers, apart from the age factor. In other words, this group of innovators might represent a suitable segment, interested in trying out Chinese theatre as a new product in the theatre market in the UK.



**Figure 3. 1 Innovation Adoption Lifecycle (Kolb, 2005)**

Specifically in the tourism market, Kolb (2005) targets escapists, which refers to those who seek a different experience of daily life; status-seekers; religionists and spiritualists; and researchers and students as segments, classified by benefit and involvement. So the sojourner in this case—who would like to have a cross-cultural journey in their homeland by attending Chinese theatre—is highly educated, young, financially stable, living in or near a cultural cluster, in a culture related profession, and experienced in other cultures.

Askegaard (1999) holds the view that the primary task of marketers is to invest in and understand the wants and needs of the consumer. Richards (2002), in his research into tourism, seconds the opinion that tourists are motivated to visit a destination by receiving information that “matches their needs and wants” (p. 1050). Kotabe’s theory (2007) of international marketing is based on the concept of polycentric orientation, which emphasizes product and promotional adaptation in foreign markets when necessary and involves determining what the audience wants from the foreign or target market, and modifying the marketing information to provide it. Generally, the two independent dimensions of “experience-seekers”, according to Hirschman and Holbrook (1982), are “sensory-emotive stimulation seeking” and “cognitive information seeking” (p. 95), which echoes the motivations of theatre-goers. Carú and Cova (2005) point out that audiences becoming immersed in an experience can be attributed to the familiar elements. Bourgeon-Renault et al. (2006) identify the needs of emotional responses from the consumption of arts, emphasizing the feeling of shared experience. Meanwhile Kolb (1997) finds that a younger audience seeks quality in their cultural experiences (cited by Johnson, 2014). From this, we can conclude that, apart from the general motivations, the needs and wants of sojourners cohere around a new cultural experience, shared memory and the promise of a high quality encounter offered by cultural products. How to strategically deliver marketing information with this content to the specific segment—in this case, the sojourner—is the research problem to be explored.

### **3.3 Targeting - marketing strategy**

The previous section reviewed the definition of products and customer/audience segmentations. Linking contemporary Chinese theatre with a specific audience

segment in the UK—sojourners—is the marketing strategy this section discusses; in other words, this section of the thesis examines how arts organisations and producers might target and position Chinese theatre to sojourners. By reviewing the marketing strategies in arts marketing, international marketing and cross-cultural tourism marketing, some potential marketing models and strategies are suggested.

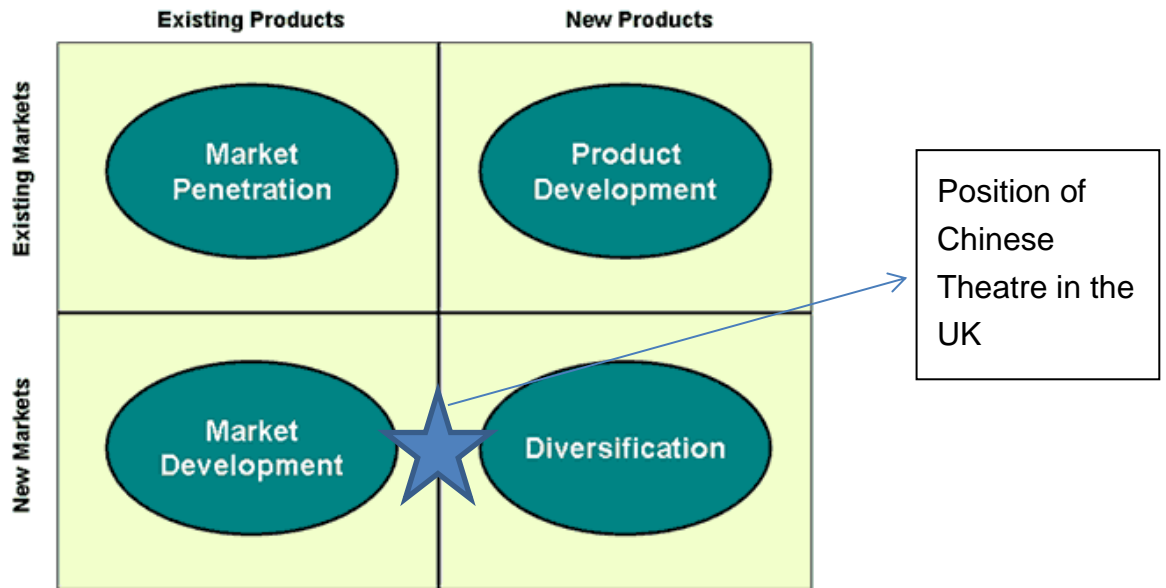
The definition of marketing, in general, highlights the exchange and interactive relationships between production and customers or audiences. Massaki Kotabe (2007) defines marketing as “essentially creative corporate activity involving the planning and execution of conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, products, and services in an exchange that not only satisfies customers’ current needs but also anticipates and creates their future needs at a profit” (p. xxvii). Kotler and Scheff (1997) have a similar definition: “Marketing is the process by which an organization relates creatively, productively, and profitably to the marketplace, with the goal of creating and satisfying customers within the parameters of the organization’s objectives” (p. 31). For arts marketing specifically, Hill et al. (2003) believe it to be “an integrated management process which sees mutually satisfying exchange relationships with customers as the route to achieving organizational and artistic objectives” (p. 1). Boorsma (2006) summarizes arts marketing logic and defines arts marketing as “the stimulation of exchange with selected customers, by offering service-centred support for the co-creation of artistic experiences and by building and maintaining relationships with these customers for the purpose of creating customer value and achieving artistic objectives simultaneously” (p. 87). Laying the debate of product-orientation or customer-orientation aside, the core value of marketing, and arts marketing in particular, is agreed to be about value exchange and delivering mutual benefit for audiences and artists, producers or organizations. Lee (2005) observes that arts marketing practice is not fundamentally different from the traditional idea of audience development, but so-called “audience development” as a traditional marketing term has been challenged in the specific study of audiences in cultural engagement. A broader definition of “audience development” is required by scholars (Walmsley, 2016b). Walmsley (2017) suggests using “audiency” instead of “spectatorship” to describe the active role of the audience, and points out the problematic nature of “audience development” as it implies an inherent flaw in the audience. In a recent keynote speech in Norway, Alan Brown furthered his theory of audience development, arguing that “we need to



stop talking about audience development as a marketing problem, but more as a programming opportunity” (Audiences Norway, 2017).

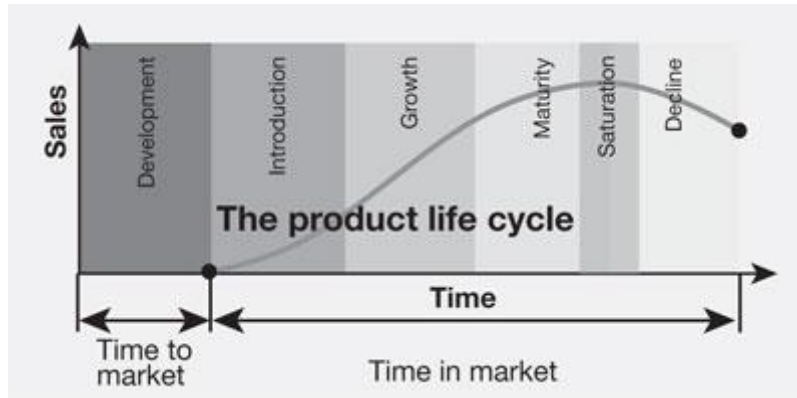
Audience development is a concept adopted from marketing, but it takes on a broader meaning in arts and cultural engagement. The use of the term remains controversial; for the purposes of this thesis, it will be interpreted as engaging the audience, improving their experience of theatre productions from other cultures and prolonging their experience after the theatrical event. Under these circumstances, in order to fulfil the exchange between the product (Chinese theatre in the UK) and the audience (sojourners), the position of the emerging product needs to be explicit.

The Ansoff matrix (see Figure 3.2), an analysis model and strategic planning tool, combines products with markets, and is a useful marketing tool for future growth of products. According to Ansoff’s paper in 1957, this product-market strategy includes market penetration, production development and diversification. Market penetration focuses on using existing products/services in existing markets; market development highlights expanding into new markets by using existing productions; product development, in the opposite way, tries to achieve existing market growth through creating new products/services; and diversification, the most risky strategy, aims at new markets by introducing new products/services (Ansoff, 1957). Applying to this research specifically, Chinese theatre is trying to enter a new market—the UK theatre market—with both existing and new products. Therefore marketing development and diversification are potentially fruitful strategies for Chinese theatre organizations need to consider.

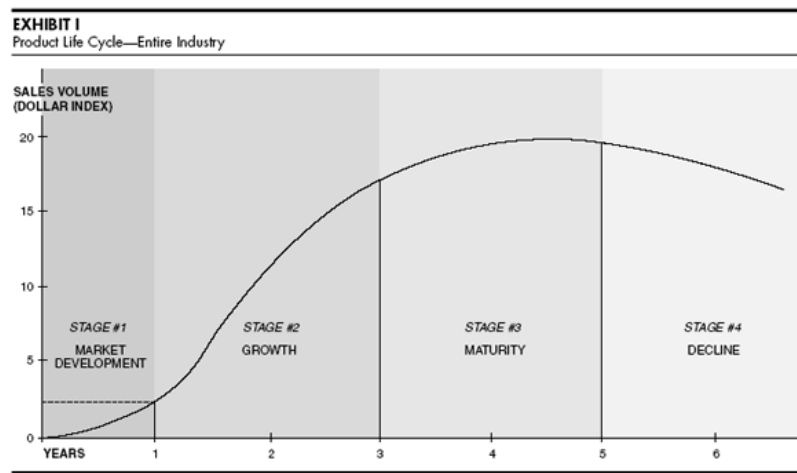


**Figure 3. 2 The Ansoff Matrix (Source: Ansoff, 1957)**

Combining this with product life-cycle theory (Figure 3.3), an economic theory developed by Raymond Vernon (Hill, 2014), contemporary Chinese theatre in the UK market is in the introduction stage. There are five stages for a product entering a new market: introduction, growth, maturity, saturation and decline. Even though theatre, as a product/service, is far from new in the UK market, contemporary Chinese theatre is still located in the introduction phase. Theodore Levitt (1965) defines this phase as the market development stage (Figure 3.4), which is “when a new product is first brought to market, before there is a proved demand for it, and often before it has been fully proved technically in all respects. Sales are low and creep along slowly” (p. 81). This is exactly the stage Chinese theatre is in: newly introduced into a new market and demand for it has not yet been proved, and for the market, the Chinese theatre has been invisible and remained unnoticed.. But the difference is, the theatre in general is a mature market in the UK. There is demand for theatre productions and there is a solid audience base, which could be considered another challenge for Chinese theatre—crucial competition—but also an opportunity. There is demand for theatre in general.



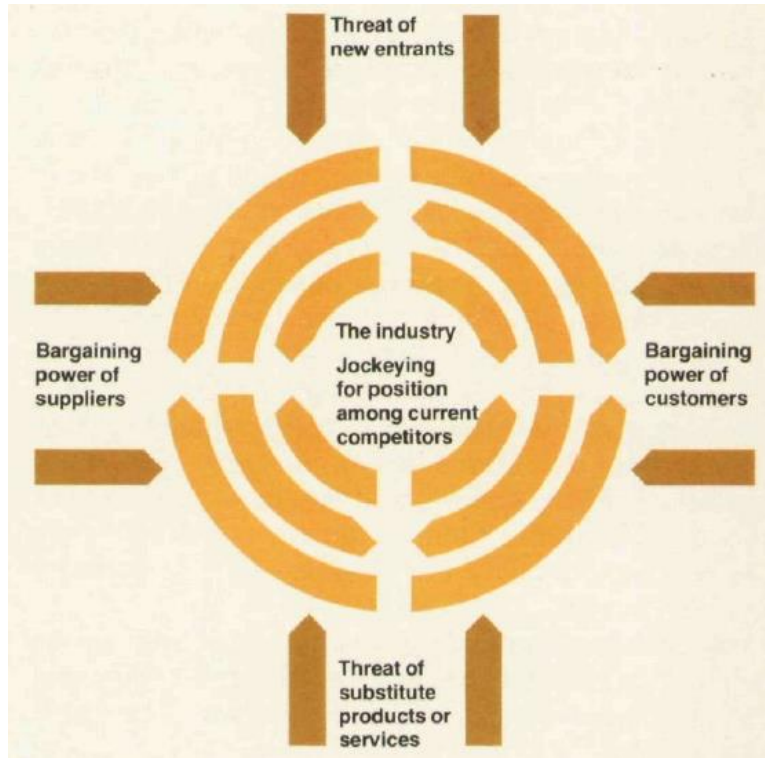
**Figure 3. 3 The Product Life-cycle (Hill, 2014)**



**Figure 3. 4 Market Development Stage (Levitt, 1965)**

The market Chinese theatre is trying to enter—the UK theatre market—is full of barriers. Porter’s Five Forces Analysis—a framework for analysing competition within an industry and deriving an appropriate business strategy based on this analysis (Porter, 1979)—presents five forces of competition in a market (Figure 3.5): rivalry among existing firms, buyers, suppliers, potential entrants and substitutes (Porter, 1979, 2008; Kotler and Scheff, 1997). For Chinese theatre in the UK market, the competitors are not only local theatre productions (industry rivalry), which are of the highest quality in the theatre industry, but also theatre works from other cultural contexts (e.g. other East Asian theatre, South African theatre, etc.). There are of course innumerable substitute products/services in the leisure market competing for the consumers’ time, such as films, museums, tourist destinations, etc. (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). The buyers—the audience in this case—are highly

experienced in this industry and have strong bargaining power, which means they have high standards for the product—theatre—and they might not trust newcomers. The providers, such as local venues, that cooperate with them directly impact the theatre performance. According to Boorsma and Maanen's (2003) research, information from theatre venues is most important for audiences' decision making. This has implied correct in the specific context of this research, and Chapters 6 and 7 present the findings of this analysis in more detail.



**Figure 3. 5 Five Forces Analysis Model (Source: Porter, 1979)**

Apart from the market situation, fully understanding the strengths and weaknesses of Chinese theatre in the UK market is pivotal to making an effective marketing strategy. Kotler and Armstrong (2008) suggest the SWOT model to evaluate a product's position in a market, and deconstruct this into four elements: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The threats to Chinese theatre in the UK are briefly reviewed above. One particular strength gleaned from the literature is the unique and new cultural experiences that Chinese theatre can offer, but we have seen how this can also be considered a weakness, with the misunderstanding and discomfort caused by cultural differences. Globalization has decreased cultural boundaries across the world and strong support from both governments for

intercultural exchange and communication creates a positive new environment for Chinese theatre in the UK. In short, the cultural and theatrical experience of foreign theatre is a double-edged sword. How to transfer weakness to strength depends on the marketing strategy, specifically how to identify and attract the target segment of the sojourner.

In conclusion, these models might help to position Chinese theatre in the UK. It is in the very early introduction stage in its life cycle, facing a new market full of competitors. Based on the SWOT analysis and Ansoff matrix, using the strengths and opportunities for market development and diversification could boost Chinese theatre into the next stage of its lifecycle—i.e. growth. The practical question is: What strategies can be introduced into this case? Based on the literature review of arts marketing and international marketing, branding, tribe/community marketing, and web/online marketing might offer some suitable solutions.

According to the definition by the *Common Language in Marketing Project*, a brand is “a name, term, design or other feature that distinguishes one seller’s product from those of others”. Obviously, this is a concept usually found in commercial business, but it is not rare to see it currently in arts marketing. Askegaard (2006) points out that customers regard brands as a reference to “retain, discover, try out, reject, adopt or adapt existing and new cultural aspects to identity” (Kipnis, Broderick and Demangeot, 2014, p. 233). This implies that brands are used by customers to somehow create an identity or belonging to a community. Özsomer and Altaras (2008) find that consumers link some brands to global culture and use them as a symbol of global participation, imagining a “global identity they share with likeminded people” (p. 9). In other words, people need brands to connect them to a global “imagined community” in a globalized cultural context; they consume specific brands to present their international identity. Chinese theatre has the elements of global cultural identity, but how to build its brand is a question that marketers should consider. The complexity of the brands engaged in Chinese theatre in the UK makes the branding strategy challenging. To be specific, presenting Chinese theatre in the UK engages several institutes, namely, the performing company, production company and theatre venue, each of them engages with their own brand. Applying a broader definition of brand, the big names in the team (celebrities or stars in the cast, or a famous director/producer/story) have their own brands, and even the nations—China and the UK—can be considered brands. Which

of the engaged brands should be presented in the marketing? In cross-cultural exchange, nationality is a topic that cannot be avoided. Even through many of the Chinese theatre productions that go overseas are not national activities, the national image of China is unavoidable. Nagashima (1970) defines a country's image as "the picture, the reputation, and the stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to the products of a specific country. This image is created by such variables as representative products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history and traditions" (p. 68). The country's image gives the Chinese theatre brand a complex meaning and resonance far beyond culture and theatre. As Money et al. (1998) argue, the stereotypes of a country impact the evaluation of product and design for customers. In other words, national images or stereotypes impact the impression of cultural productions from China. Whether this benefits or damages the marketing and audience development of Chinese theatre in the UK currently remains an open question.

People like to belong to a group of "likeminded people" sharing the same brand, which relates to another marketing strategy—tribe or community marketing. Meamber (2014) cites the finding from O'Reilly and Doherty (2006) that contemporary consumption (including arts consumption) "often takes place in temporary consumption communities, both face to face and virtual", and these communities (or consumer tribes) are based on the connection of "shared emotions, styles of life, and consumption practices, including the arts" (Cova et al. 2007; Maffesoli, 1988,1996 cited by Meamber, 2014, p. 8). O'Sullivan (2009) argues that in a postmodern context, all arts audiences are in temporal communities of consumption, and the role of arts marketing in this process is to assist consumers interpret the meaning of arts and connect communities based on art consumption. The sharing element among the audience echoes the theory of segmentation, which strengthens the common interests in specific products. For Chinese theatre in the UK, this might be innovators, intercultural travellers, theatre-goers, cross-cultural experiencers, etc. In other words, they are niche. To build up a community or tribe for this group/segment to share an interest in Chinese theatre, home grown Chinese cultural experiences might benefit audience development. Cova and Cova (2002) claim that "today consumers are looking not only for products and services which enable them to be free, but also for products, services, employees and physical surroundings which can link them to others, to a tribe" (p. 600). Tribal marketing is

different from community marketing (Cova and Cova, 2012); however, the highlighting of the link and the feeling of belonging links the two concepts. The key concept is the sharing of emotion and experience among members, no matter whether it is face to face or virtual, and the products/services are the link. To build and develop this virtual tribe/community of audience members of Chinese theatre in the UK requires the tools of online marketing support.

The study of consumer behaviour in cross-cultural consumer research is concerned with variation across nations with “regard to consumer behaviour patterns” (Lee and Green, 1991, p. 292). According to Fishbein’s behavioural intention model, behaviour is affected by behavioural intention, which is affected by attitude and subjective norm (ibid.). In other words, audience attitudes and subjective norms affect audience behaviour. And the Bass model (Mahajan, Muller and Bass 1991) holds that media and word-of-mouth communication influence consumers’ attitudes (Money et al., 1998). This is what communication effectiveness theories concern; what elements influence communication’s effectiveness during the coding-decoding process and how to improve it. Applying this to the marketing field, delivering marketing information to the target group and improving its effectiveness, influencing the attitude audiences, and communication between the information providers and receptors, all have key impacts on the sales performance of products (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Communication, according to Kotler and Scheff (1997), produces demand, and is about “informing, persuading and educating the target audience” (ibid., p. 300), which is what marketers do. But, as far as Kotler and Scheff (1997) and other academics in communication studies are concerned, communication is expectation, people receive the information they expect and sometimes they twist the message into what they want to hear. This means that people can block information they do not want or expect. In other words, there is a large section of the potential audience who would not receive information about Chinese theatre, which results in the assumption that segmentation and tribe/community marketing play a key role in selecting the right audience group to target in order to improve the efficiency of information delivery. Preece and Johnson (2014) suggest Web strategies to engage audiences. Not only because the Web provides a platform for organizations to approach large-scale audiences efficiently and relatively cheaply, but because it gives audience members an opportunity to communicate with each other (ibid.). The purpose of encouraging audience members

to interact with each other echoes the strategy of tribe/community marketing. This interaction motivates community members to seek opportunities because of the contact with other members (ibid., p. 148). In other words, the Web-based community is a platform for sharing the artistic experience “before, during and after attending the performance”, and the increasing bond among the audience makes the members more likely to be persuaded to share the experience. Social media has a profound impact, creating on-line communities for sharing experiences and reinforcing relationships (Kolb, 2014). For Kolb (2014), social media’s function in arts marketing is building a community to encourage artistic expression in audience members. It is not just a promotional tool, but can create a bond between audience and organization. Again, multiple institutions being engaged in projects leads to the challenge of who should build and maintain this community, especially when the performance is not on.

For Chinese theatre in the UK, the market and audience segments remain vague, and resources are limited. Internet based marketing tools, such as social media, build a virtual community/tribe for innovators and sojourners, and strengthen the bond between the audience members through the sharing of Chinese theatre’s cultural experience. Exploring the likelihood of this happening might be a measurable strategy approach for Chinese theatre in the UK. As the first step of audience development, this platform, combined with the international festival strategy, which is the current platform for Chinese theatre on the global stage, a new brand with more interaction with its audience might be built and accepted. As a consequence, communication between Chinese theatre and the audience might become easier and more effective, which would have benefits in the next steps of market growth.

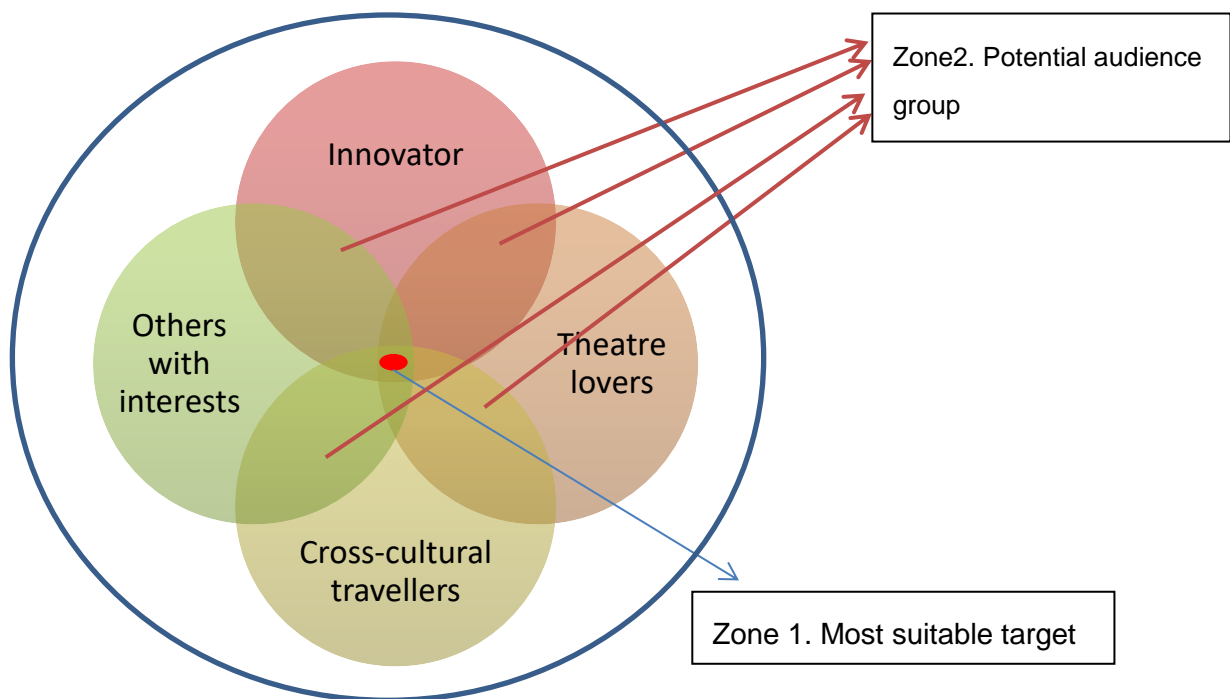
### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has focussed on reviewing potential marketing strategies for Chinese theatre in the UK. The features of the product, the audience segmentation and the targeting strategy have been discussed based on the existing literature on arts marketing, international marketing and cross-cultural tourism marketing. As a product, we can now appreciate that Chinese theatre is all about the experience. This cross-cultural and theatrical experience can be either attractive or undesirable



depending on the audiences' expectations and the marketing communication strategy. The most suitable audience segments in UK for Chinese theatre to target are likely to belong to the following market segments: innovators—who are young and enthusiastic for new experiences; theatre lovers—who regularly pay attention to performance information from venues and the media; cross-cultural travellers—who have the motivation to seek experiences which remind them of other cultures; and others with relevant interests such as students of Chinese studies, theatre studies, etc. All these groups have the potential to be sojourners in the UK (see Figure 3.6).

In Figure 3.6, the fully overlapping area (Zone 1) is tiny, but might potentially offer the most suitable segment for Chinese theatre in the UK; young people who are theatre lovers, keen to find new experiences, love cross-cultural experiences, and have a specific interest in China or the Chinese. It is uncertain how big this group is, but the other coloured area (Zone 2) also seems reasonable to target. This leads to the suggestion for the potential target audience segments of Chinese theatre in the UK: innovators, theatre lovers, cross-cultural travellers and those with related interests. The audience segments reflect the views of the attendees interviewed from the three Chinese theatre productions in the UK, discussed further in Chapter 5.



**Figure 3. 6 Potential Segments of Sojourners**

In terms of the marketing strategies for the target the segments, the previous section suggests that appropriate branding, and tribe/community marketing based on social media might be able to develop the market and push Chinese theatre in the UK market into the growth stage. The questions, in practice, are as follows: What kind of branding should be used, and which institutions should take responsibility for building the tribe in order to achieve audience development? Overall, it is a question of how to effectively target the segmented audience; branding and tribe building are the suggested strategies, but there remain significant challenges in this specific circumstance.

### Chapter 4. Methodology and data collection

The previous chapters review the existing theories on intercultural theatre, audience research and intercultural arts marketing. This chapter aims to explain the methodology of the research and describe the research design, which applies theoretical hypotheses to the real world. The Chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the selection of an appropriate research approach, strategy and method/technique, as illustrated in Table 4.1. Each method is discussed in detail. The second section details the data generation process, which includes the fieldwork design and schedule, the case selection, and the process of conducting interviews. The third section is about data analysis, including the detailed process of the transcription of the interviews, coding and analysis of the data. The fourth section verifies the data and shows the validity of the study and the ethical issues concerned in the research. The fifth section discusses the difficulties and limitations of the fieldwork pertaining to this research.

**Table 4. 1 Research Methodology applied in this thesis**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Applied methods</b>
<b>Nature of research</b>	Qualitative study	See below
<b>Research strategy</b>	Action research	Three cases
<b>Research methods</b>	Documentation	Government policy statements, national database, published and unpublished literature, private conversation
	Observation	Observation dairy
	Interview	Semi-structured interviews, deep hanging out

## **4.1 Research methodology**

### **4.1.1 Qualitative versus quantitative**

The argument concerning the relative benefits and drawbacks of qualitative and quantitative methods is ongoing. There are three methodological movements of this argument. Flick (2006) describes quantitative research and methods as the first movement, qualitative research as the second, and mixed methodology approaches as the last. Mixed methodology approaches, according to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), represent a pragmatic combination of qualitative and quantitative research. Flick (2006) claims that this movement should “end the paradigm wars” (p. 33), which have witnessed at least three periods of conflict: the postpositivist-constructivist war against positivism (1970-1990); the conflict between competing postpositivist, constructivist, and critical theory paradigms (1990-2005); and the current conflict between evidence-based methodologists and the mixed methods, interpretive, and critical theory schools (2005-present) (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The details of the conflicts behind these so-called wars is not the main topic discussed in this research, but the movements and discussion of the development of methods indicates the possibility of using mixed methods and evidence-based inquiry in social science research. The deeper and wider discussion and debate about methodology, somehow, inspires more possibilities for methodological application in social inquiry at present, but whether the qualitative or quantitative research approaches are most suitable remains up for discussion.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) summarize their position by proposing that qualitative research focuses on the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and their research subjects, and “the value-laden nature of inquiry”. In short, it is a question of “*how* social experience is created and given meaning” (p. 8, original italics). Quantitative studies, in contrast, pay more attention to the measurement and analysis of variables, not processes. In other words, qualitative researchers tend towards ethnographic prose, historical narrative and fictionalized “facts”, while quantitative research tends to draw on mathematical models, statistical tables and graphs, with an impersonal, third-person prose. It is not reasonable to value one over the other, but considering the objective of this study, understanding the audience for Chinese theatre in the UK and suggesting a better marketing strategy for theatre productions in a cross-cultural context, requires close

observation and a relationship between the researcher and what is studied—the audiences and participating institutions—qualitative research is most suitable. Qualitative research methodology has been proved superior on both the level of research programmes (McKinlay, 1996). Given its appropriateness to the issues under study in this thesis, audience experience and marketing strategy in a cross-cultural context, with little empirical research at present, the superiority and advantages of qualitative research make it more suitable than quantitative. Oevermann et al. (1979), from hermeneutic perspective, claim that qualitative research is more capable of providing scientific explanations of social facts (Flick, 2006). Taking this idea further, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) regard qualitative research as a better approach which gets closer to the studied issue, through “detailed interviewing and observation” (p. 9), claiming that qualitative researchers “see the world in action and embed their findings in it” which echoes the philosophy of action research—the overall research strategy of this paper—which is discussed in the following section.

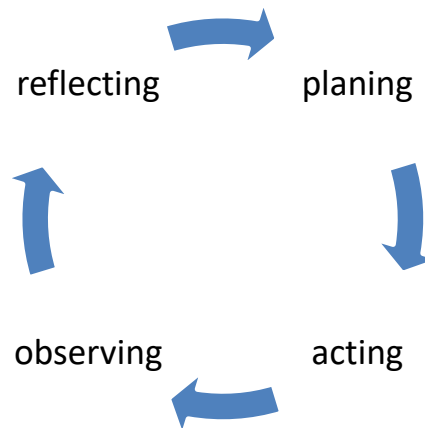
In terms of the methodology applied to theatre audience research, quantitative analysis is regularly used by marketers (Ginters, 2010), and there is some quantitative research of theatre audience groups, such as Baumol and Bowen’s survey from 1973. But, as Walmsley (2011) argues, quantitative methods have not been successfully proven to show “a true synthesis of motivation” because they fail to explicate “the behavioural and emotional meaning of unmet needs” (p. 4), which is essential in order to understand and analyse audiences’ oriented pursuit of theatre. Furthermore, Walmsley (2015) indicates a methodological shift in audience study from marketing and metrics to anthropology and discovery. This shift often involves academics and arts workers acting as facilitators and conduits to cultural value and meaning. Tedlock (1991) makes similar statements about cultural anthropology, saying that the receptionist of a gallery/museum has every resource to be the best anthropologist studying the audience/visitors to the institution. To understand the theatre industry audience, qualitative research—anthropology being one such approach—fits the requirement.

Anthropology, as defined by Ingold (2008), is “a practice of observation grounded in participatory dialogue” (p. 87), and “a field of nomothetic science” (p. 70), as opposed to ethnography, which is idiographic and descriptive. Ingold (2008) endorses anthropology as a philosophy that “it is not a study *of* at all, but a study

*with*” (p. 82, original italics), and argues that anthropologists “do their thing, talking and writing in and with the world” (p. 88). We have been unable to study the unknown world from the armchair, ever since Malinowski’s (1922) suggestion that the ethnographer must be able to “grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* version of *his* world”. Researchers should attain “human understanding” through learning to “think, see, feel and sometimes even behave as a native” (Malinowski, 1922, p. 25 cited by Tedlock, 1991, pp. 69-70). The world, Ingold (2008) insists, is “what we think *with*” rather than “what we think *about*” (p. 83). Regarding audience understanding of Chinese theatre in the UK, unless researchers watch theatre *with* audiences, talk *with* them, listen to them, think *with* them, they will never fully understand either existing or potential audiences, the cross-cultural interactions among the audience members and between them and the theatre, or the impact of the whole marketing process. From an cross-cultural marketing perspective, idealized theoretical suggestions never find practical value unless they are put into practice *with* theatre practitioners and audiences. This research philosophy is highly suited to the research strategy of action research because of the requirement of acting *with* the research object, which is discussed in the following section.

#### **4.1.2 Research strategy - action research**

Denscombe (2014) defines action research as a research strategy rather than a research method. Action research is a term used to describe a “spectrum of activities” (Cunningham 1993, p. 4) which focuses on “research, panning, theorizing, learning and development” (ibid). The aim of this research strategy is to conceive of the research and learning process as a long-term relationship with a social issue/problem. Sanford (1981) describes the process of research as “analysis, fact-doing, conceptualization, planning, execution” followed by more finding and evaluation, and this process is repeated until the studied issue is solved. This definition of the repeated process/circle echoes the definition of action research by Kurt Lewin (1946). Lewin was the first to coin the term “action research” and he defines it as “comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action” (Lewin, 1946, p. 35), and as “a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action” (ibid., p. 38) (Figure 4.1).



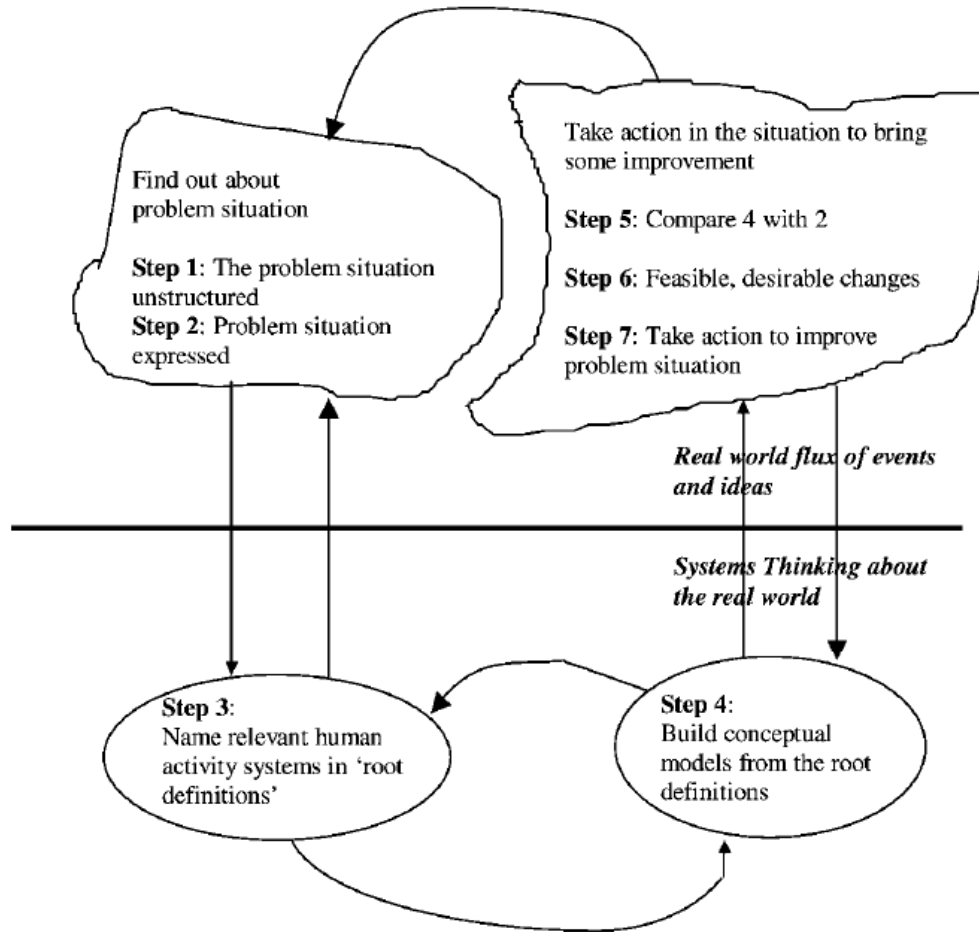
**Figure 4. 1 Action-Reflection Cycle (based on Lewin, 1946)**

Lewin (1946) believes that psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology should work together on social issues, and action research is the culmination of this integrated approach to social research. Although Lewin never systematically states his views on action research, a few themes stand out (Argyris, Putnam and Smith, 1985): it involves change experiments on real problems in social systems, focuses on a particular problem and seeks to provide assistance to the client system; it involves iterative cycles of identifying a problem, namely planning, acting, and evaluating; it involves re-education; it challenges the status quo from the perspective of democratic values which requires effective re-education; and it intends to contribute to basic knowledge in social science and social action in everyday life. The emphasis of action research stressed by Lewin lies in the continuities between the activities of science and the activities of learning in the action context, “the mutually reinforcing values of science, democracy and education, and the benefits of combining science and social practice” (Argyris, Putnam and Smith, 1985, pp.7-8). Also, the central concerns of “the practice of intervention” and the distinctive feature of action research involve “engagement with client systems” (ibid.), which matches Ingold’s (2008) definition of anthropology working *with* the world. Specific to participatory action research (PAR), Herson’s (1996) definition makes the link clear: “action research is doing research ‘with’ people rather than undertaking research ‘on’ people or ‘about’ people” (cited by Yu, 2004, p. 121). This is exactly what Ingold (2008) insists about the anthropological research spirit: work and think

*with* people instead of on or about them. The core attitude of action research is the research strategy of this thesis.

The theory of action research, especially the action-reflection/evaluation cycle, is reminiscent of soft systems methodology (SSM), system dynamics (SD) and the developed soft system dynamics methodology (SSDM). The essential contribution of these models is that they advance a general framework with clear steps to follow (Rodriguez-Ulloa and Paucar-Caceres, 2005). Similar to the theory of action research, SSM also stresses the enquiry process which leads to action in “a never ending learning cycle: once the action is taken, a new situation with new characteristics arises and the learning process starts again” (ibid., p. 308). Both these methodologies hold that life is an ever-changing flux of events. We identify problematic issues, evaluate, take action, reflect the real world, and this leads to another cycle. Checkland (2000) in his thirty years retrospective of SSM mentions the link between the action research cycle and SSM. In systematic thinking, system knowledge of the world supports better design and operation in real situations. Jenkins (cited by Checkland, 2000, p, 20) claims that when using SSM in action research, “analysis is not enough [...] ideas are not usually enough to trigger action”. SD, with the aim of behaviour prediction, relies on three structured steps: problem definition; model conceptualization/building; and running the simulation model/using the result. This three-step methodology can generally be applied to most fieldwork, and it is developed into a seven-step model by Checkland (2000)—the basic structure of SSM (Figure 4.2).





**Figure 4. 2 The Basic Structure of Soft System Methodology (SSM)**  
 (Rodriguez-Ulloa and Paucar-Caceres, 2005, p. 209)

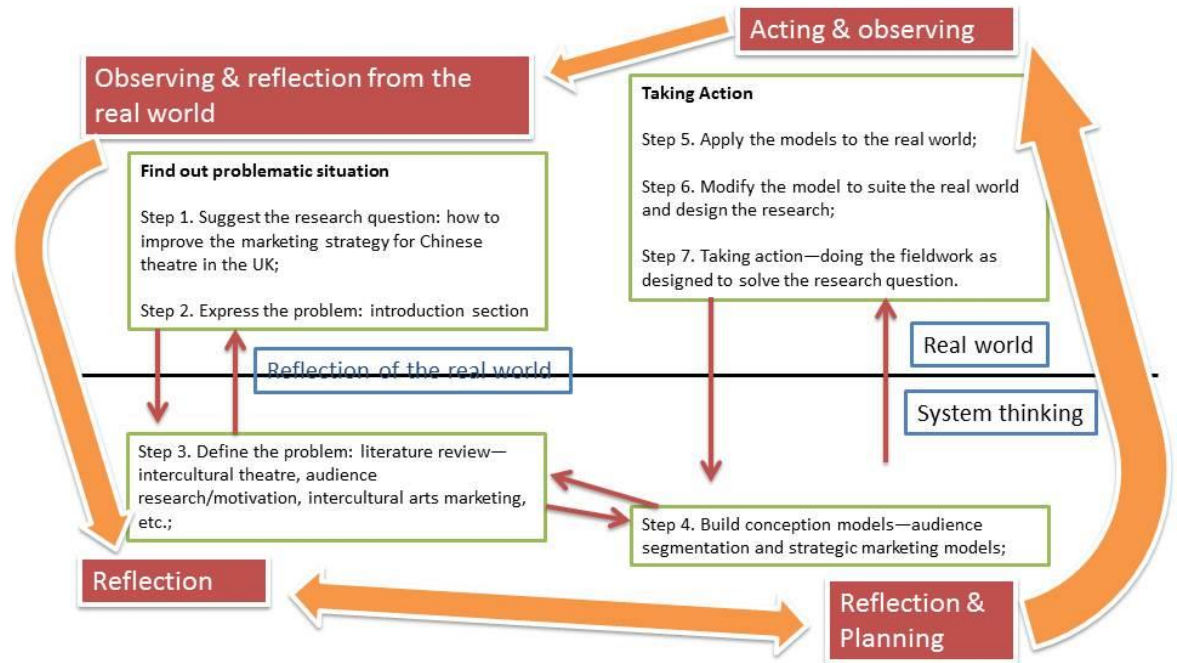
Combining the action-reflection cycle and the SSM model (Table 4.2), steps 1 to 4 of SSM are based on real world observation and reflection; steps 5 and 6 are making plans for problematic real world issues; and step 7 is taking action in order to change the world. Afterwards, a new situation would ideally be re-structured, and a new action based cycle start.

**Table 4. 2 Comparison of Soft System Methodology and Action Research**

Soft System Methodology	Action Research
Step 1. The problem situation unstructured	Observation and Reflection
Step 2. Problem situation expressed	

Step 3. Name relevant human activity system in 'root definitions'	
Step 4. Build conceptual model from the root definitions	
Step 5. Compare 4 with 2	Planning
Step 6. Feasible, desirable changes	
Step 7. Take action to improve problem situation	Acting

Applied to the process of this research, the flow is designed to match the seven steps of SSM (Figure 4.3). Based on the observations from the real world, a “problem situation” is suggested: Chinese theatre in the UK is almost invisible to the public and the marketing strategy is problematic and could be improved; this is step 1. Through the literature review and documentary research, this situation is defined, structured and expressed; these are steps 2, 3 and 4. Based on the reality and existing research findings from the literature review, conceptual models, potential marketing models (e.g. audience segmentation, potential marketing strategy) are suggested; this is step 4. Comparing the theories from the existing research with the real world situation and modifying the suggested models to fit the real world, then contacting the Chinese theatre companies and related stakeholders for fieldwork to test the model in order to get “feasible, desirable changes”, are steps 5 and 6 of the research design. Finally, working with the marketing teams of the theatre companies and taking action to understand the audience and test the suggested marketing strategy, and reflect the observation and findings from the previous circle to the next one for new action is step 7. The observation reflects the reality and the situation changed by the actions which are presented in the findings sections. Consequently, another action-reflection cycle starts, due to the new research questions found from the previous research cycle.



**Figure 4. 3 Research Process Combining SSM and Action-Reflection Cycle**

In order to study and work with the marketing teams of Chinese theatres and the audiences in the UK, the researcher must become an observer-as-participant and conduct herself as an anthropologist doing fieldwork, which matches Ingold's (2008) theory of research methodology. The process of the fieldwork is fully described in the section 4.3, but first a detailed introduction to the research methods applied is given in the following section.

## **4.2 Research methods**

Multi-methodology is suggested by Mingers (1997) as a practice that combines and links techniques, methods and methodologies from the same or different systems of thinking paradigms. Action researchers, according to Yu (2004), employ “a number of methodologies, methods and techniques to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of each method”. This is based on the “interpretive” sociological paradigm and makes sense of action research in practice (p. 119). To some degree, multi-methodology echoes the theory of triangulation in social science that aims to increase the credibility and validity of data by applying more than one method

(Flick, 2004). This system of using a number of methods in practical research can be traced back to the definition of methodology. Originally, methodology was used to mean “the science of method”, which Checkland (2000, p. 36) believes technically makes the concept of “a methodology” meaningless. In order to justify his opinion, Checkland introduced the definition of “methodology” from the late 1990s Oxford English Dictionary, “the science of method” and “a body of methods used in a particular activity”.

Mingers and Brocklesby (1997) define methodology in a similar way, as “a structured set of guidelines or activities to assist people in undertaking research or intervention” (p. 490). In other words, methodology is only made meaningful “by the multiple paradigms and multi-level theory of problem-solving activities” as far as they are depicted in research practice, and hence come to terms with pluralism (Yu, 2004). In his study of qualitative research methodology Flick (2006) stresses the contemporary “pluralization of life worlds” in the context of social relations. This pluralization asks for more than one paradigm or method to suit the research practice. Applied to the design of this research project, which aims to understand the market of Chinese theatre in the UK, this involves more than simply suggesting a better marketing strategy, but rather generating a deeper and richer understanding of audiences and their motivations, intercultural communication and exchange between performers and audiences, etc. One method is not enough to address all of the research questions and requirements of this study. Considering the research questions and aims, several research methods are employed under the overarching strategy of action research. To be specific, in-depth interviews, observation, case studies and deep hanging out (Geertz, 1998) are the primary methods embedded in this research. These methods and their interplay are discussed in turn.

#### **4.2.1 Case studies**

Case studies are the preferred strategy to address “how” or “why” questions (Yin, 2003, p. 1). This thesis focuses on a “how” question and deals with “a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” which is another reason for using case studies, as Yin (2003) argues. Case studies put attention on the detailed workings of relationships and social processes within social settings. According to Denscombe (2014), they explore settings, and the reasons things happen. The real value of this

research strategy is the opportunity to get “sufficient detail” to unravel “the complexities of a given situation” (ibid., p. 55). Case study research has a number of functions in social research, and the purpose is either to reinforce a theory or test a particular theory in a specific setting (Denscombe, 2014). The most valuable function of the case study as a research strategy for this research is that it tends to be seen as “a starting point” for a research (ibid.). Serving as an “exploratory foundation” (ibid, p. 61), the case study assists the researcher in developing new theories, which is the ultimate purpose of this research. The collection of “soft data” tests the hypotheses and theories generated from the literature review, and at the same time generates new theories from the observation of the details of the cases.

As a part of action research practice, the steps of the action-reflection cycle are applied to three cases of Chinese theatre productions staged in the UK in 2015, in order to understand the existing marketing strategies’ impacts from the various types of products and venues. Based on the findings from smaller action-reflection cycles of each case and the whole fieldwork, the suggested marketing strategies of *Richard III* from the National Theatre of China, *Poker Night Blues* co-produced by private theatre companies, and China National Peking Opera Company’s (CNPOC afterwards) commercial tour, are examined, which enables the researcher to observe their impacts, in order to refine and improve them for theatre productions in the future. The three cases represent different situations of Chinese theatre in the UK, including one traditional and one contemporary, the adopted Western classic, original Chinese stories and adopted modern stories in China, and the Peking Opera, speaking drama and physical theatre, which offer a relatively comprehensive profile of Chinese theatre in the UK market. The brief of the cases studied are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

### *Case 1. Richard III*

In July 2015 (20<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>), a Mandarin version of *Richard III*, produced by the National Theatre Company of China, was invited to perform at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London. The National Theatre Company of China is a national subsidized theatre company based in Beijing, with a reputation for Chinese styled theatre and spoken drama. *Richard III* uses Mandarin dialogue, and blends traditional Chinese performance elements into the production, for instance, the costume design, and the

Peking Opera singing and movement style. As one of the international Shakespeare productions in the “Globe to Globe” festival of 2012, the play was invited to the Globe during the London Olympic season. Back then, *Richard III* was a success in terms of box office and critical acclaim, *The Guardian*, for instance, gave it a four-star review. This review’s influence lasted until the performance in 2015, and it was actually recalled by some of the interviewed attendees as their reason for attendance.

Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre is a reconstructed Elizabethan playhouse in the London Borough of Southwark, on the South Bank of the River Thames. Not only is the building of the Globe in the Elizabethan style, the stage also maintains the traditional style: there are no spotlights, no microphones or speakers for amplification and all music is performed live.<sup>1</sup> Audiences stand in the yard where there are no seats, and their physically close range means the actors and the audience can see each other during the performance.

The combination of a top Chinese theatre company and a well-known theatre venue in London makes this case special. In terms of marketing, Shakespeare’s Globe took the full responsibility in the UK. It was a special event, a Chinese produced Shakespearean work marketed by a local theatre venue famous for its Shakespearean tradition. This is a typical case of invited international production and marketed by a well-established local theatre venue and the findings from which could be easily applied to other similar cases in the future.

Following the action research reflection cycle, the researcher was involved in this case as a marketing consultant with the knowledge gained from the literature, and from interviews with the potential audience before each of the three cases. However, the researcher did not engage in the practicalities of the marketing campaign but kept contact with the marketing manager to be updated on the marketing’s impact.

With full access to the all five shows in six days, the researcher was in a good position to observe and recruit attendees for interview. To be specific, the researcher sought out various categories of attendees across the five shows, including different

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<sup>1</sup> When the show staged in the Globe, the artistic director was Dominic Dromgoole, afterwards, Emma Rice took the job in 2016 and Michelle Terry in 2018. The change of the artistic director of the Globe does impact on the programming and performing tradition..

age groups, British and Chinese people, group attendees and individuals. In addition, the Globe's social network accounts (Twitter and Facebook) helped to spread the audience recruitment information for the study. In total, ten interviews were conducted with over 15 attendees.

The interview approach was based on convenience for the interviewees, whether face-to-face, by phone or by email. All the interviews took place after the performance, and were recorded by audio recorder with the permission of the interviewees, and were transcribed verbatim. Only the premier night group interview was an exception, as this took place in a bar near the theatre. To be more detail, this interview was with a few members from a Shakespeare practice theatre company, it was too noisy in the bar to record the conversation, so notes were taken. The interviews lasted from 20 minutes to two hours and the average duration roughly 30 minutes. The post-show interviews at the Shakespeare's Globe were relatively shorter because the audiences were in a rush to get home, while the interviews arranged after the show lasted longer due to more convenient time arrangements for the interviewees, and the audience members that agreed to rearrange their interviews were more willing to share their experiences.

### *Case 2. Poker Night Blues*

Adopted from the Tennessee Williams masterpiece *A Street Car Named Desire*, *Poker Night Blues* is physical theatre piece that combines the energies and talents of a Beijing based private theatre company, TinHouse Productions, and the US based theatre company, Theatre Movement Bazaar. Actors and actresses of this co-production were auditioned through the workshop hosted by the American director, Tina, in China. Three actors and two actresses were chosen for the play from hundreds of applicants, due to their outstanding physical theatre skills. Unlike *Richard III*, this play was a commercial co-production between two private theatre companies from China and America. This co-production model is not rare in China: other examples include *War Horse* which was a co-production between the National Theatre of China and the National Theatre, and *The Dragon*, which was a co-production between the National Theatre of Scotland and Tianjin People's Art Theatre, China. The latter production, *Dragon*, was invited to partake in the Edinburgh International Festival in 2015. As an invited performance at a world

famous festival, *Dragon* did not have to face the pressure of marketing as much as the other Chinese productions in the Fringe. On the other hand, *Poker Night Blues* had to market itself in Edinburgh, which is no different to any other Chinese theatre production in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. What did the company expect from attending the Edinburgh Fringe Festival? How could they achieve their goals? What was their expectation of the audience? How could they market the play to the audience? All these questions are studied and comparisons are made with other Chinese theatre productions in the festival.

In terms of the details of the product itself, the play lasted for one hour, and was a physical production with limited Mandarin dialogue and summarized English subtitles. In August 2015, the play was presented at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe (the Fringe), at Summerhall which is “the newest and biggest arts venue” in Edinburgh (Summerhall, 2016). The London based performance agent company, Performance Infinity, managed the performance in Edinburgh, which included the venue pitching, marketing, media connections, artist management and public relations.

The Fringe is just one of the Edinburgh festivals that take place each summer. The atmosphere in “Edinburgh the Festival City” comes alive from the end of July, and the festival season lasts for six weeks until the end of August. There are eight international festivals during this period, and the tourists and performers transform the city into a stage, which is markedly different from its regular appearance (Jamieson, 2004). The Fringe is distinguished from the other festivals, as its “initial unauthorized status added to its rebellious and provocatively playful character and pitted it against the legitimate and civilizing International Festival” (ibid., p. 67). The Fringe’s character attracts avant-garde culture to the city, following the professional and nonprofessional performing artists who stage their productions in venues across the city in, for instance, halls, disused churches, re-appropriated university spaces, and even the city centre streets, including the Royal Mile (ibid.). The experimental formats, productions and iconic artists attract theatre audiences as well as theatrical practitioners looking for new experiences and inspiration to Edinburgh during August.

In 2015, there were 3,314 shows staged in 313 venues across the city, 27% of them were theatrical, and an estimated 2,298,090 tickets were issued (Edinburgh Festival



Fringe Society, 2015). All these elements created a unique theatre-going context: huge numbers of theatre productions happened in a limited time and there was an atypically high proportion of theatre practitioners in the audiences. As we shall see, the differentiation of the festival, as a result, stimulates theatre-goers with different motivations, experiences and post-festival behaviours and intentions.

To be specific, this case involves a self-funded Chinese theatre company being produced on an international festival platform. In order to obtain a more comprehensive overview of the different typologies of Chinese theatre performed at international festivals, audiences from other foreign theatre productions in the Fringe, general theatre attendees and festival audiences and artists are included in the analysis of this case. Acting in the capacity of part-time marketing consultant and researcher for Performance Infinity, the researcher engaged in the preparation of the marketing strategy and was able to gain direct access to the audiences of the plays and successfully interview two reviewers and other relevant practitioners in the festival, as discussed later in this chapter.

Due to the busy festival schedule and carnival-like atmosphere, the researcher chose to interview audience members who were not running to other plays, and bought drinks in exchange for a one hour interview during the last week of August 2015. Also, general festival attendees and artists as audience members were selected at the researcher's attendance of other Fringe productions, based on the binary categories of with or without cross-cultural theatrical experience. And because of the festival, there are big amount of audience with different characters gathering in Edinburgh in August, the researcher easily found some festival/theatre audiences without cross-cultural theatre experience to interview in order to understand the obstacles between them and foreign productions. As the differences of the Fringe marketing, the researcher did not act with the performing company during the festival—the implement of the marketing in the Fringe is mainly by the actors, but the experience and skills of communication with potential audience had been shared with them for their practice of marketing themselves. In summary, there were 14 interviews including a total of 19 participants in this case study, who comprised *Poker Night Blues* attendees, Fringe audience members, artists and reviewers.

### *Case 3. Peking Opera UK Tour*

The third case is the China National Peking Opera Company's first overseas commercial tour. "Commercial tour", in this case, means that the tour was not by diplomatic invitation, nor did it receive any financial support from the Chinese or British governments. Sinolink Productions, a British company, produced the tour, which was a profit-making activity. The CNPOC committed to two Peking Opera productions in the tour.

In detail, the production organization, Sinolink Productions, is a London based cultural producing company, and the producer, Kevin Zhang, is a Peking Opera performer himself and a founder member of the London Jingkun Opera Association. The CNPOC is a nationally subsidized Chinese Peking Opera performance company which has the best Peking Opera performing artists in China, such as Ms Shengsu Li and Mr Kuizhi Yu. Apart from presenting the classics which have been staged for centuries, the CNPOC also produces newly written Peking Opera works. In terms of artistic quality, the CNPOC has stood for the highest level of performance of the art since it was established 60 years ago, which makes overseas tours for diplomatic purposes its main duty, such as performing "Chinese cultural years" in various countries (CNPOC, 2016). In the domestic performance market, the CNPOC has started to undertake commercial tours, but this was its first foray into a Western market. This attempt to introduce a national cultural treasure through a commercial approach offered a unique opportunity to understand the audience for foreign theatre, and a special case to understand the overseas market for Chinese nationally subsidized arts, like Peking Opera or other regional Chinese operas.

Peking Opera, also known as Jingju or Beijing Opera, is an old and well developed art form from China, which combines music, vocal performance, mime, dance and acrobatics. As Li (2010) concludes, "it is a total theatre which emphasizes stylization over realism" (p. 1); and as Barba highlights in the foreword to the same book, it is a theatre of the actor "who has not forgotten anything"; acrobatics, acting, dance and singing are all required skills for the performers. Listed as one of the world's intangible cultural heritages by UNESCO, Peking Opera has been presented all over the world as part of a diplomatic approach to showcasing Chinese culture since the 1920s, when Jingju Master Mr Mei Lanfang first introduced Western audiences and theatre practitioners to an entirely new type of performing art.

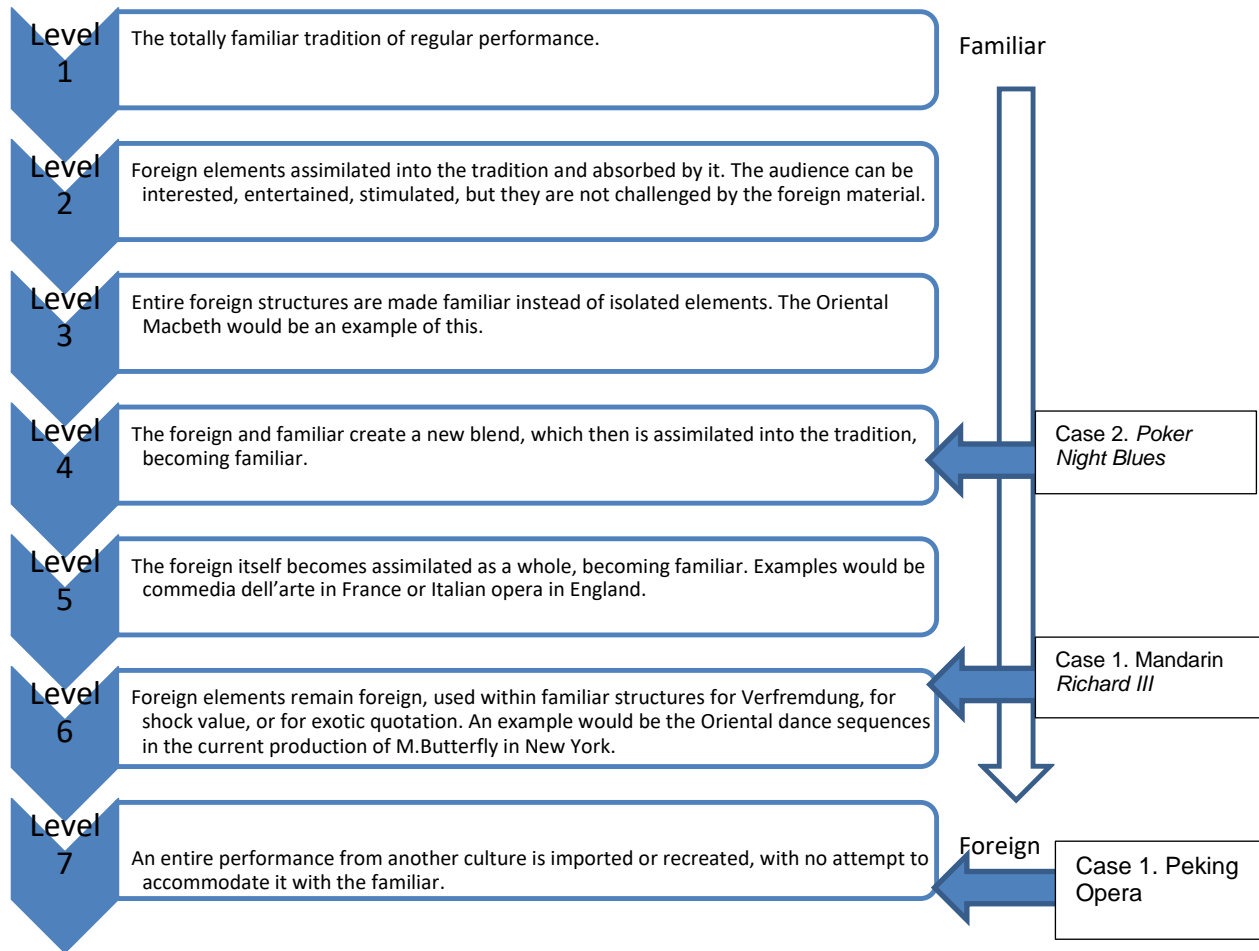
In this case, the tour presented two Peking Opera classics: *Warrior Women of Yang* and *Farewell My Concubine*. Both were presented by Troupe One of the CNPOC, which is regarded as the best of the three troupes of CNPOC and usually tours overseas. In terms of cast, the leading performers were Ms Shengsu Li and Mr Kuizhi Yu, along with their trainees, who are considered the best Peking Opera performers in China. The production toured to two English cities in November 2015: London and Liverpool. In London, the performance was at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, in the 1,500 seat Rosebery Venue located in Islington, which aims to present large-scale works by national and international theatrical production companies. In Liverpool, the performance was at the Echo Arena, which can accommodate 1,350 people and offers an intimate space for theatre, comedy gigs, family shows and spoken word performances. Apart from the production company, British marketing and PR companies were commissioned for promoting the tour across the UK. The details of marketing strategy are discussed in the Chapter 7.

In this case, the researcher was involved in the project as a production assistant from June 2015. The fieldwork again followed the action-reflection cycle illustrated in Figure 4.1. The researcher played the role of production assistant as well as marketing consultant, and applied the audience and marketing reflections from the previous two cases, a few significant suggestions had been applied to the practice and led to certain outcome, such as the notice of etiquette of appreciating Peking Opera and the decoration of venue. The details of the marketing strategy creation and reflection upon it are discussed in Chapter 7. The special role the researcher played provided a comprehensive vision of the marketing planning, execution and feedback from the market and audience. It offered full access to the front door and auditorium in order for the researcher to talk to the attendees. In order to understand the attendees in the two cities, the researcher hung out in the auditorium and the foyer during the interval and at the end of each performance (two in Liverpool and five in London) and then conducted interviews with the audience. The audience members interviewed were chosen by convenience, but also by including various demographic types, for instance, age groups, Chinese and non-Chinese attendees, individuals and groups. In total, there were five interviews, including more than ten attendees in Liverpool, and seven interviews with more than 15 attendees in London.

*Connections and justification of the three cases*

The three cases include three different theatre typologies: *Richard III* is a Shakespearean spoken drama, *Poker Night Blues* is a piece of physical theatre, and Peking Opera is a traditional musical performance with dancing. Even though all are from China and use Mandarin for dialogue, the cultural familiarity of the three cases, as Carlson (1990) defines it, is different (see Figure 4.4). The first case is a Chinese version of a famous Shakespearean play. For a British audience, the Chinese stage traditions are still culturally “foreign” but it builds upon the familiar Shakespearean story, which locates it between levels 5 and 6. The reason for this location is because the Chinese cultural elements and theatrical expression remain foreign, however, the foreign elements are assimilated with the familiar Shakespearean story, making the whole experience of the play relatively familiar.

The second case, *Poker Night Blues*, is similar to the first to some degree (located at level 4). The blend of a well-known Western masterpiece with Chinese stylized physical expression makes the experience closer to the familiar than the foreign for the audience. At the same time, the special festival context makes the cultural fusion less foreign for the audience, which as discussed later in the thesis at Chapter 6. The two works from the Peking Opera tour are entirely Chinese in terms of story, narrative style, cultural background and performing tradition, which leads to the most foreign experience of the three cases (level 7). These diversities in theatre typology lead to significant differences in audience segmentation for the three cases.



**Figure 4. 4 Levels from Culturally Familiar to the Culturally Foreign (based on Carlson, 1990)**

These three cases also stand for three different production models of Chinese productions staged in front of a British audience. *Richard III* was by invitation of a British arts organization, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, which is not an uncommon situation for national theatre companies in China. *Poker Night Blues* was a piece of Fringe Festival work—the most popular theatre festival for small-scale theatre companies in China. There are a few famous Chinese avant-garde theatre companies, for instance, San Tuo Qi Theatre and Meng Jinghui Studio, which regard this platform as an international stage to present their work. Peking Opera as a recognized national cultural treasure, regularly tours internationally for diplomatic reasons, and is considered most alien to audiences from other cultural contexts. The first commercial attempt may suggest to be a pioneer model for the other traditional Chinese performance forms (e.g. regional opera, folk performance) being promoted overseas.

Consequently, studying these three cases through their audience and marketing strategies offers the opportunity to understand the audience for theatre productions from different cultural contexts. Audience topologies, motivations, experiences and values based on attendance and post-performance intension, which has been neglected in the field of audience study, is studied here. Empirical study of the three cases offers a comprehensive profile of the theatre market and the audience for Chinese theatre in the UK. This is valuable for cross-cultural theatre marketing study from an academic perspective as well as for the industry, with increasingly globalized theatre and arts markets.

#### **4.2.2 In-depth interviews**

In-depth interviews are used to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of interviewees' viewpoints on a specific topic; for research which focuses on exploring new areas, in-depth interviews can help realize the research goals through understanding the research objects (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003). Denscombe (2014) suggests interviews as the most effective method when research wants to explore "complex and subtle phenomena", such as "opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences" (p. 186). To understand the studied objects in depth rather than present them in a simple way requires more information from the informants than quantitative statistics. In this research, simply reporting the market situation and audience demographic features is not the goal, therefore semi-structured interviews rather than structured interviews are used.

The semi-structured interview differs from the structured interview, which has a rigorous set of questions to follow. The former method is more open and allows the researcher to bring up new ideas during the interview based on the responses of the interviewees (Fylan, 2005). According to Flick (2006), semi-structured interviews are widely used because the openness of the interview structure leads to freer expression. As a result, new and unexpected information is generated and discussed more deeply with the interviewees, which rarely happens with structured interviews or questionnaires.

The in-depth interview is used throughout the fieldwork. Target participant groups are categorized into the following stakeholder segments: Chinese theatre attendees in the UK, producers and marketers from China and the UK, performance venues,

cooperating marketing and PR agents, and other British theatre institutions that work with Chinese peers (see the table in Appendix B). Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most effective way to generate a free and expressive atmosphere for the informants. Theatre practitioners, such as producers, directors and marketers, have rich experiences and insight of the industry, so semi-structured interviews might push them to talk and express ideas freely and honestly. Potential or actual attendees of Chinese theatre in the UK each have unique experiences of theatre. In order to hear their personal experiences and understand their expectations of Chinese theatre, an open and interactive conversation is more effective than a fixed question list.

#### **4.2.3 Observation**

Observation is defined by Denzin (1989) as “a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection” (pp. 157-158 cited by Flick, 2006, pp. 219-220). Denscombe (2014) describes observation as “an unobtrusive method of data collection” (p. 215). In short, observation is an appropriate approach to study cultural phenomena, in this case, the marketing of Chinese theatre productions in the UK. During the marketing process the Chinese theatres did not play the main role in the coding/decoding process; instead, the plays themselves are more like objects to be coded by marketing and decoded by audiences. How does the marketing strategy work? Are social media used to assist the marketing, and if so how do they function? Does a community/tribe build and form an audience? How does the audience react to (decode) the marketing information? All these questions can be addressed by observation from the researcher—who is a Chinese national and Mandarin speaker— without disturbance, to avoid research deviation. On the other hand, the subjectivity and bias within this method has to be admitted, multi-methods are employed in order to decrease the subjectivity of one method in the research data collection and analysis.

#### **4.2.4 Deep hanging out**

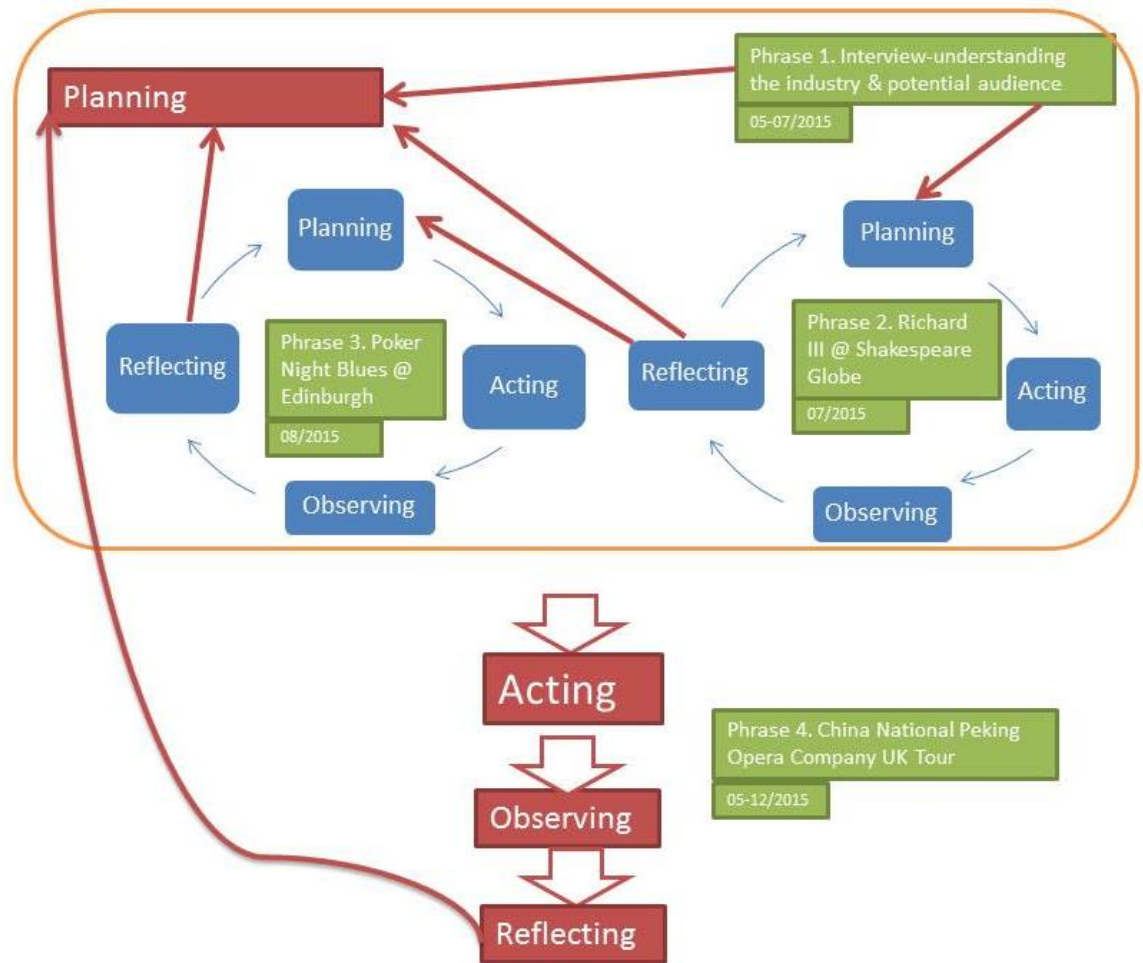
Deep hanging out is an anthropological method suggested by anthropologist Clifford Geertz in 1998. It requires the researcher to immerse himself/herself in a society

along with a cultural group or in a social experience on an informal level (Geertz, 1998). It is a form of participatory observation, and the researcher is physically or virtually present in a group for extended periods of time or for long informal sessions. The reason for applying this anthropological method into this research is the informal nature of it, and the participatory observation it facilitates, which fit into the fieldwork with Chinese theatre companies in various situations. Through informal contact with those who participate in Chinese theatre productions, producers, marketers, performers, venue staff, and audiences who attended the studied shows or similar shows, the researcher had access to actually thinking *with* them. Combined with the observation and the formal interview, the researcher was embedded in this social research and able to compare not only the three cases, but also the voices of the different approaches. Consequently, a better reflection of the real world is presented and evaluated in this thesis.

#### **4.3 Research schedule**

The process of fieldwork lasted for several months and included 4 phases: preparation, case one (*Richard III* in Shakespeare's Globe Theatre); case two (*Poker Night Blues* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival); and case three (CNPOC's UK tour). Following the tenets of action research, the observation and findings from each phase were analysed and applied to the next phase of the research. Each phase had an independent action-reflection cycle, and applied the reflection from previous case to the planning section. In the last case, the marketing planning section included reflections from the previous two cases, and the findings from the three cases are reflected in the findings chapters (Figure 4.4). The details of the phases follow.





**Figure 4. 5 Four Phases of the Research Schedule**

**Phase 1. Understanding the market and potential audience**

Period: May 2015 - July 2015

This phase was preparation for the following action research cases and involved investigating the potential audience segmentations and industrial experts. The planned interviewees (see Table 4.3) included the potential audience members with the characters suggested by the literature review; the producers from China and the UK who experienced cooperation; marketers/venue managers based in the UK who cooperated with Chinese theatre companies; and marketing and PR agents who had experience of engaging Chinese theatre. Through conversations with the informants, the current market situation of Chinese theatre in the UK, the audience reflection in the market, and the potential marketing suggestions from the industrial practitioners, were determined and used to guide the next phase.

**Table 4. 3 Interviewees Categories proposal**

Phase 1 <sup>2</sup>	Potential audience groups	Arts/theatre lovers (students, researchers, arts/theatre attendees); Chinese cultural lovers (Chinese study students/researchers; cross-cultural travellers;
	Producers	Chinese producers with experience of touring in the UK; British producers with experience of cooperation with Chinese theatre companies;
	Venue managers/marketers	Those who had worked with Chinese theatre companies; those who had worked with theatre companies from other cultural contexts but not Chinese;
	Agents	Theatre agents with experience of introducing Chinese theatre in the UK; PR/marketing agents with experience of working with Chinese theatre companies;
	Other stakeholders	Policy makers; academics; relative societies.
	In total, around 12 people were to be interviewed in this phase <sup>3</sup> .	
Phase 2	Audiences	Those who bought the tickets to attend Chinese plays;
	Marketing team	Those who engaged in the full process of the marketing campaigns.
	In total, around 5 to 6 audience members and 2 marketers were to be interviewed <sup>4</sup> .	

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<sup>2</sup> The arrangement of each phase is explained in next section

<sup>3</sup> This is the assumed number of interviewees, the actually number of interviewees is present in the next chapter.

<sup>4</sup> As above.

Phase 3	Audiences	Those who bought the tickets to attend the plays and the general festival visitors;
	theatre companies	Producers; directors; actors/actresses;
	Agents	Marketing agents; UK producers;
	Venues	Venue managers; venue marketing members.
	In total, around 6 to 8 audience members, 3 members of the theatre company, 2 agents and 2 people from the venue were to be interviewed.	
Phase 4	Audiences	Those who bought performance tickets, and attended pre-performance events;
	Marketing companies	Marketing managers;
	Venues	Venue managers; venue marketing members;
	Other cooperating organizations	Confucian institutions; research institutions.
	In total, around 6-8 audience members, 1 marketing manager, 2 venue marketing members and 2-3 other institutions were to be interviewed.	
All of the interviews were face-to-face, by email or by phone. All were recorded and transcribed based on mutual agreement.		

**Phase 2. *Richard III* from the National Theatre of China**

Performance dates: 20/07/2015 - 25/07/2015

Research period: 24/06/2015 - 30/07/2015

There were four performances of *Richard III* at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in 2015 and ticket booking opened in May 2015. The researcher received permission from the venue to conduct observation during the performance as well as the marketing preparation process, and the audience interviews were held during the interval and post-performance of each show. The audience members were

interviewed, individually or in groups, depending on the context and on participants' respective preferences. Following the performances, marketing team members were also interviewed. During this process, the researcher played the roles of observer and consultant for the London Chinese communities' (Mandarin speakers) market development team for the production which involved a few suggestions to the marketing strategy, but unfortunately, not all of the suggested actions were applied. In short, in this action research cycle, the findings from the first phase were applied to the marketing planning process. Alongside the role of marketing team member, the researcher also acted as an observer and audience member throughout the process. In-depth interviews were employed in this phase to enrich the findings.

The findings from the observation and interview were reflected upon and applied to the planning of the next phase.

### **Phase 3. *Poker Night Blues* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival**

Performance dates: 01/08/2015 - 28/08/2015

Research period: 01/08/2015 - 30/08/2015

Unlike *Richard III*, this case was produced in the context of an international festival. According to the UK producer, the marketing campaign focused on street marketing in Edinburgh to attract festival visitors without long-term preparation as for *Richard III*. The researcher observed the whole process, the marketing activities, the communication with the venue (Summerhall in Edinburgh), the audience reaction, and the impact of marketing information delivery, rather than getting involved in the implementation of marketing campaign, which mostly involved giving out flyers in the street. However, apart from observation and the interviews with audience members and venue managers, the researcher immersed herself in the Chinese theatre company by deploying the technique of deep-hanging out. As discussed, the reason for using this research technique rather than interviewing the performing company members directly was to build a personal connection in a casual environment, which is more likely to produce real opinions. Besides, the trust from this method led to the application of the researcher's suggested action in the daily marketing practice of the actors and the reflection from it. In this phase, the

researcher's aim was to explore the situation of a Chinese theatre company in an international festival, understand the marketing strategy, and observe the audience who attended the play and those who engaged in the festival but not this specific production. Questions tend to get more sincere answers during casual and private conversations because of the trust of personal relationship. This trust can lead to formal interviews afterwards.

Along with *Poker Night Blues*, there were a few more Chinese theatre pieces and other plays from different cultural backgrounds at the Fringe. A minor comparison is made between this play and another non-English production. The differences between private and nationally supported activities, the marketing effect differences between a group and an individual play etc. were also observed and discussed during the festival. The findings about marketing from the international festival were reflected upon for the planning of the next phase.

#### **Phase 4. China National Peking Opera Company UK tour**

Performance dates: November 2015

Research period: May, 2015 - December, 2015

As a project assistant on this production, the researcher engaged in the whole marketing process of the project as well as acting as an observer. The findings from the last three phases were applied to improve the marketing plan for this case, which represents the planning step of the action-reflection cycle in this specific one. During the action taking part, observation, interview and documentary research methods were embedded. The relatively longer time for the marketing campaign lead to several new situations and unexpected findings. The findings from various aspects, such as the audience, marketing agency, CNPOC, venues, associated institutions, etc., were reflected upon and critically discussed. At the end of this action-reflection cycle, a new cycle started, with an improved marketing strategy.

#### **4.4 Data analysis, discussion and limitations**

All the qualitative data, specifically the audio interview records from the in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim, some of the interviews conducted entirely or partly in Chinese are translated into English for the research. Three interviewees asked for there to be no audio recording, and their answers were therefore recorded in note form by the researcher. All the data were input into NVivo 11 and the thematic analysis was conducted via this qualitative software tool. Qualitative research has the limitation of having only a small number of participants, which cannot ever represent the general situation (Walmsley, 2011; Griffin, 2004). In this thesis, the uncertainties of an international festival increased the challenges of research. For instance, the audience were festival visitors, and may have had their own tight schedules, which makes conducting audience formal in-depth interview more difficult; the sheer number of plays (over 3,000 plays from various countries in 2014) might well distract the audience, and their workload might prevent the venue managers, producers or marketers from engaging in the research. Due to the nature of action research, which requires the researcher to get involved in the institution to some degree, the risk of subjectivity is difficult to avoid. However, qualitative research seeks depth instead of breadth, and this thesis aims to discern a marketing strategy for the early step of audience development for Chinese theatre in the UK. Moreover, the four phases of the research process, which embeds numerous methods, compensate to some degree for the limitations of each method and should produce reliable complementary data. The time limitations of this research project inevitably make following up on the long-term experience of the audience challenging, if not impossible. The new reflection cycle based on the findings from this research as another action-reflection cycle will not be discussed in this thesis, but the follow up findings and changes from the new actions developed from this research are worth another research project to follow up to reflect and inspire the future more actions to change the reality with the practitioners.

## **Chapter 5. Findings: The audience for Chinese theatre in the UK**

### **5.1 Introduction**

As the core element of a performance, audiences form the primary focus of this thesis. As discussed in Chapter 2, existing theatre research has gone beyond demographic portraits, with audience researchers focusing on various aspects of audience behaviour, experience and psychology, such as theatre-going motivation (Walmsley, 2011), audience reception (Bennett, 1990; Carlson, 1994), and audience repurchase intention (Hume and Mort, 2010; Hume, Mort and Winzar, 2007). All of the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the theatre audience and therefore, at least in theory, should help to make theatre production and marketing more effective. However, with increasingly global theatre production flows, more theatre productions are being introduced and staged in different cultural contexts from their own, and consequently, more theatre audiences are exposed to productions which are culturally foreign to them. Detailed research about the audience in these circumstances, whether theoretical or empirical, remains absent so far from both the academic literature and arts marketing practice.

This thesis attempts to fill this gap through studying the attendees of three Chinese theatre productions in different cities under different circumstances in the UK in 2015. In this chapter, a portrait is drawn of the audience attending these productions, which conveys and deconstructs their motivations and expectations, their experiences and their post-performance intentions, in order to respond critically to the research questions regarding potential audiences for Chinese theatre in the UK.

### **5.2 Audience typology**

In the three cases, due to the differentiation of the performance typologies, the audiences of each case are distinguished from each other. At the same time, however, the audience for Chinese theatre in the UK does have common features with regular British theatre-goers. As Chapter 4 explains, this research strategy included four steps: plan, act, observe and reflect. Before the three cases in the fieldwork, some audience segments that might be interested in Chinese performance

were interviewed in order to pre-test audience awareness and gauge their opinions of foreign productions. The reflections upon these interviews contribute to the plan for the first case, *Richard III*, as the action-reflection cycle requires, and the same for the next two cases. In summary, from the fieldwork, 40 interviews were conducted including 55 interviewees (informal short conversations were conducted with more people, but their information is not included in the following table, however their opinions are mentioned in the discussion). Their details are listed in Appendix A.

In order to achieve diversity in the interviews, the researcher intended to recruit attendees from different demographic categories. It can be clearly seen from the Appendix A, that there is no significant gender imbalance among the interviewees: 29 females to 28 males; in terms of age, the majority of the interviewees were aged over 30, and most were either in their 30s or above 60 (retired). It is no surprise to find that most of the audiences were British. While Chinese audiences presented in the first and third cases, in the second case the Chinese audiences were very hard to find in the Fringe theatre venues; on the other hand, there were more international attendees (neither British nor Chinese) at the Fringe productions (New Zealand, Germany and Ireland) were interviewed. The occupations of the interviewees showed a strong connection with the arts and cultural industries, as discussed in Chapter 2. This connection does not necessarily mean that the attendees worked in the industry or correlating industries, especially the theatre attendees outside of the Edinburgh Fringe, but all were professionals with a high level of education.

As discussed in Chapter 2, theatre audience research must go beyond demographic analysis, as people's theatre-going behaviours are much more complicated than their social economic status might suggest. Even so, the demographic details of the interviewees shown above offers a skewed profile of the attendees of Chinese theatre in the UK: middle aged or above, highly educated, professional and often working in the cultural industries. In the other words, they represent typical theatre-goers in the UK.

To segment the audience further, the lifestyles of the interviewees was explored. Using lifestyle factors, also called psychographics, is considered a more variable and dynamic approach to audience segmentation than traditional divisions such as socioeconomic characteristics (Kotler and Scheff, 1997). Lifestyle segmentation is based on the idea that people do what they do because it fits into the kind of life they



live or want to live, which leads to a focus on the audiences' activities, interests, values, opinions and the like (ibid.).

The lifestyles described by the interviewees in this research indicate a shared interest in theatre and foreign cultures among the audience members in the UK. The common lifestyle factors of the audiences include a love of the arts, cultural events, and cross-cultural travel. To be specific, the majority of the attendees interviewed are theatre-goers who love theatre in general and attend arts events on a regular basis. Also, if they can afford it, they tend to seek out new theatrical and cultural experiences. The features of the attendees match the audience segmentations identified by The Audience Agency (2017): Metroculturals - prosperous, liberal, urbanites interested in a very wide cultural spectrum; Commuterland Culturebuffs - affluent and professional consumers of culture; and Experience Seekers - highly active, diverse, social and ambitious, engaging with arts on a regular basis. In other words, an audience actively engaged in arts and cultural activities in the UK, as The Audience Agency's study shows, is interested in attending Chinese theatre.

James, for instance, is a 19-year-old Londoner studying China studies at undergraduate level. The interview with him took place the week after he finished his one-year exchange programme in Beijing. A few of his family members are in the theatre industry and he likes to go to theatre in London, which is a hobby he kept up when he was in Beijing. Duncan is a linguist and a translator. He loves Shakespearean works presented in different languages, which motivates him to attend as many foreign Shakespearean productions at the Globe Theatre and Barbican Centre as possible.

All the interviewees from the fieldwork share common lifestyle factors, which could be described as arts loving and attending live arts events. They are open to foreign cultures, and love to travel to foreign countries whenever they have the opportunity. Instead of being "the snob" (Peterson and Kern, 1996), the audience members interviewed for this research, from the perspective of cultural sociology, are more "the omnivore" (Roose, Eijck and Lievens, 2012). Omnivorousness, defined by Peterson and Kern (1996), is a reflection of openness to other cultures and the weakening of both social and cultural boundaries. Peterson (1992) applies the term to audience lifestyle and states that the audience is omnivorous for cultural productions, which he calls "cultural omnivores". In Maguire's (2015) new book,

cultural omnivores are cultural consumers whose cultural consumption tastes include both high-brow and popular genres. A similar argument of cultural openness is suggested by Roose, Eijck and Lievens (2012): . “A more open personality”, they believe, “is likely to engage more in both diverse and high-brow cultural behaviour” (ibid., p. 494). Roose Eijck and Lievens (2012) conclude from their empirical research that this omnivorousness is part of a cultural lifestyle, and the openness related to “trying new things and enjoying diversity” is characteristic of cultural omnivores. For the audience interviewed, their attendance of Chinese theatre in the UK is a statement of their identities as cultural omnivores.

According to Maguire’s (2015) findings, in Western consumer societies, consumers with higher levels of education and income are more likely to have a greater diversity, and volume, of tastes than others. The audiences interviewed for this research, as profiled above, match the description of high-status individuals (ibid.), and their expression of seeking new experiences also exhibits the characteristic of cultural omnivorousness. Jiaoyang, for example, is a Chinese undergraduate in London. She goes to art exhibitions, the theatre and music concerts such as live Jazz; she reads *Harry Potter* as well as plays such as *Waiting for Godot*; and she likes to attend the vintage fair in Notting Hill. She said that she is “open to all experiences” and that is part of the reason she is in London.

Another example comes from the Fringe. Ryan attended the last show of *Poker Night Blues*. He is a retired professor and toured his own theatre troupe to Europe when he was young. He likes Chinese arts and has visited China before. He also likes Chinese theatre and Chinese film, and theatre and film in general, and is a big fan of Tennessee Williams. It is not surprising to find that he travels a lot and likes everything of cultural fusion. Likewise, in the Liverpool audience of Peking Opera, Linda showed her openness and cultural omnivorousness by confiding: “you never know what it would be, you got to experience it, you got to try it”. She has tried many new theatrical and arts productions besides Peking Opera.

From the attendees interviewed, there are indications that the audiences for Chinese theatre in the UK seem to share similar lifestyles, they love to experience cultural events and, most importantly, they are omnivorous who are open to new cultural experiences. This cultural openness and omnivorousness matches the characteristics of the cross-cultural tourist, as discussed in Chapter 2. Cultural differences can lead

to negative experiences, while new experiences from the different cultural perspectives of a sojourner drive the cross-cultural tourists (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010). New experience seeking, in terms of aesthetic, emotional, hedonistic or educational experience, is a common pursuit of the culturally omnivorous. To travel across cultural boundaries or to attend theatre productions from different cultural contexts are just different choices based on similar values and lifestyles. However, among these new experience seekers, there are notable differences across the three cases, especially in their preferences for production choices.

In the first case study, the participants regularly went to Shakespearean productions and attended international productions at theatre festivals. Serlina and Dian, for instance, share a lot of common features with other attendees. They go to Shakespeare's Globe a few times a year to see high quality Shakespearean productions, and also regularly go to the Barbican Centre and to Edinburgh during the summer to see international productions.

In the second case study, the festival visitors are quite different in their daily lives from the other two case studies. The reason could be the higher proportion of theatre practitioners, such as producers, actors, directors and playwrights, than is usually found in everyday theatre-going contexts. Being professionals in the industry seems to lead to the attendees having different lifestyles. Mike, for example, is a producer, who works with Chinese theatre companies from time to time. He regularly goes to every kind of theatre production, travels to various countries and regularly attends theatre festivals. During the Fringe period, he attended a few shows each day and socialized with peers from all over the world by attending events in Edinburgh. In Edinburgh, there are regular theatre attendees who are not distinguished in lifestyle from the audiences in the other two cases, only with stronger interests in new theatrical experiences.

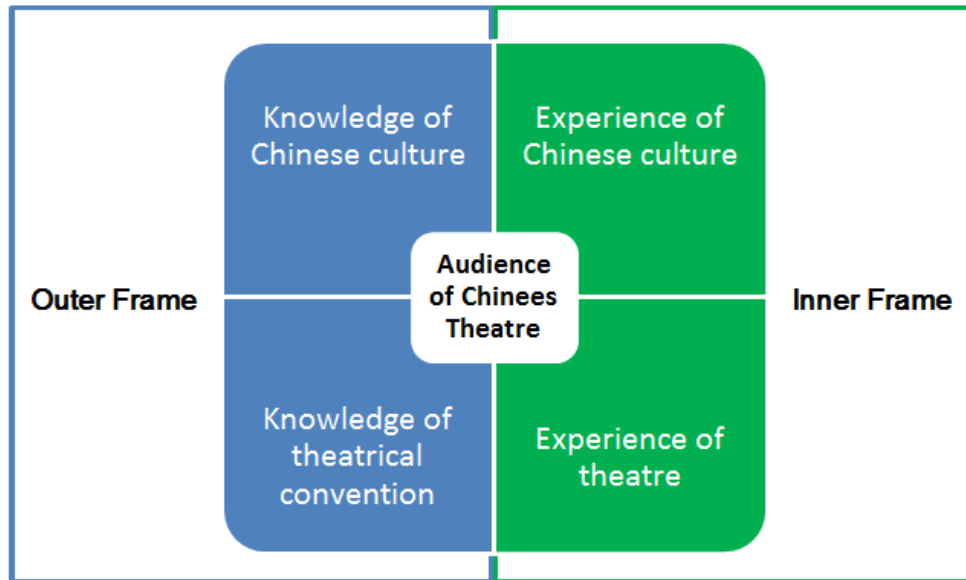
In the third case study, the audiences in London are no different from the first case study apart from being more interested in dance productions than Shakespearean works; but the audiences in Liverpool presented a slightly different live performance taste: they regularly go to comedy and regional theatre productions in the Everyman Theatre or Emperor Theatre, and mostly they have experience of Chinese culture, e.g. Chinese New Year celebrations in Liverpool's Chinatown.

The general demographics and lifestyle choices of audiences in the UK for Chinese theatre in the three case studies has now been outlined, but the audiences' experience and knowledge of Chinese theatre and culture remains unknown. As Bennett (1997) and Carlson (1994) argue, knowledge and previous experience have a significant impact. Indeed Carlson even claims that people are "haunted" by their experience of the theatre they have previously attended. The following discussion applies the audience reception theory suggested by Bennett, and Carlson's idea of cultural memory, in order to analyse the Chinese theatre audience.

Audience reception theory suggests portraying audiences through an inner and outer frame, which strengthens "theatre memory" in a model different to Carlson's (Bennett, 1997). The inner frame is received and interpreted through the lens of previous experience. In other words, it is audiences' prior knowledge. In this thesis, the inner frame of the attendees includes their experience of China, Chinese culture or theatre productions. The outer frame contains all the cultural elements "which create and inform the theatrical event" (Bennett, 1997, pp. 140-141), in other words, it is the audience's knowledge of theatrical convention, which includes cultural background, and the production's horizons of expectation and social occasion. For the attendees of Chinese theatre productions, knowledge of China, Chinese culture or Chinese performing traditions might be considered along with regular theatre knowledge as the outer frame. In short, the inner frame describes the audience's previous experience, while the outer frame focuses on the audience's knowledge of the production.

In the context of understanding the audience of Chinese theatre in the UK, the inner frame includes audiences' cross-cultural experience, and the outer frame could be extended to their knowledge of Chinese culture as well as their general theatrical knowledge. As shown in Figure 5.1, the audiences specific to Chinese theatre productions can be described as those with the outer frame (blue quadrant) knowledge of theatrical convention and Chinese culture; and the inner frame (green quadrant) experience of theatre and specific experience of Chinese culture. The interviewees in the three cases do not have all the features in the four quadrants, but the majority of them do present these features in varying proportions. This outer and inner frame model explains the intangible characteristics of theatre audiences, and in combination with the reception experience of the actual attendance, the audience of Chinese theatre is studied with fresh qualitative insight. Comparing the interviewees

from the three cases, the inner and outer frames of the audiences are different for each production, which implies that audiences with different knowledge and experience are attracted by different types of production.



**Figure 5. 1 The Inner and Outer Frames of Audiences for Chinese Theatre in the UK**

In terms of their reception frame, the interviewees at *Richard III* exhibited rich knowledge and experience of theatre-going and theatre conventions, or example specific knowledge and experience of Shakespeare. On the other hand, their knowledge and experience of Chinese culture was relatively less. Among the British interviewees, Bernard represented someone with both experience and knowledge of Chinese culture and theatre. He is a professional Shakespearean actor, retired from his career as a barrister, and he regularly attends and performs in theatre productions . Bernard visited Hong Kong, where he attended some theatre productions alongside other traditional Chinese performance. He has tried to learn Mandarin and is familiar with Chinese literature classics. In other words, he fulfils all of four quadrants of the frame. He has a rich outer frame and a deep understanding of theatrical convention and Chinese culture; but for the inner frame, his Chinese culture experience is not as rich as his theatre experience. While he was the only British attendee of *Richard III* interviewed who had visited China the other British audience members of *Richard III* interviewees had less knowledge or experience of China. It is possible to

conclude that the audience for *Richard III* attended the show mostly based on their regular theatre-going behaviour, and their experience of the show would be “haunted” by their memories of previous Shakespearean productions and the specific space—the Globe—rather than the Chinese aesthetic itself. This finding is discussed in detail in the section 6.1.

The attendees at the Fringe were quite different from the others in terms of their frames. Holding professions in the industry – for example, Vivien and Tim who are theatre reviewers, Cherry and Ivy who are scholars in theatre studies, Mary who is a photographer, Mike who is a producer, and the like – they have the best knowledge of theatrical conventions among the three cases. In terms of theatre experience, the theatre-goers at the Fringe are looking for a special theatrical atmosphere. Peter, for example, is a typical theatre-goer at the Fringe. He runs his own estate agency, and has been to the Fringe every year for more than ten years to see international productions. He also goes to London from time to time specifically for theatre productions.

On the other hand, even though many theatre practitioners travel the world, they have limited knowledge or experience of Chinese culture, but this does not mean they are not interested in it. For example, Cherry and Eric are from Germany, and this was their first visit to Edinburgh to attend the Fringe. They live in Berlin and regularly go to the theatre; they love cross-cultural travel, love Chinese films, visited China one year ago, and Eric, a linguistic scholar, is trying to learn Mandarin. They have knowledge of theatre conventions, share a rich experience in theatre and enjoyed their experience of Chinese culture, but admit that they lack knowledge of Chinese culture. As Eric confided:

Obviously there are a lot of symbols we didn't get, such as the butterflies, I am quite sure in the original script it doesn't exist, and it must be something to do with traditional Chinese culture, I really wish I knew.

This reflects most of the reception frame of the interviewees at the Fringe – an audience with rich knowledge and experience of theatre, but little of Chinese culture, semiotics and symbolism. This frame, to a degree, impacts their motivation for theatre-going, as does their knowledge and experience of theatre. To be precise, their experience and knowledge of the original story of *A Streetcar Named Desire* “haunted” their experience of this Chinese production more than other elements;

meanwhile, their experience of *Poker Night Blues* seemed to construct a new theatre memory and influence their future theatre-going motivations and wider cultural lives, . This is discussed in detail in the following section.

The audiences of the Peking Opera tour in London are very similar to the *Richard III* case, as regards their lifestyles, but in terms of the frames, more of the interviewees have experienced or are familiar with Chinese culture. For instance, Jerry and Tom came to see the performance with their Chinese friends. They had been to China together the previous year (2014) and attended a regional performance. They also went to the Shaolin performance (Chinese martial arts) at the same venue in London. Tod, another example, is a barrister who had just come back to London from a month-long trip in China. He attended a regional opera performance in Suzhou, which impressed him a lot. The audience of the Peking Opera in London regularly go to theatre and attend other culture events, are open to different cultures and appreciate opportunities to experience other cultures, not limited to Chinese. This openness to foreign cultures, combined with their knowledge and experience from regular theatre-going, impacts on their attendance decisions and their experience during the performance. As Pia, an actress who lives in London and performed at the Fringe in 2015, conveyed in Edinburgh, “London is multi-cultural, it, sometimes, also makes you forget the foreignness of other cultures”. In this circumstance, the audiences went to the show not only for the theatrical enjoyment, but also for the cultural journey. For Tod, as for Jerry and Tom with their Chinese friends, it was the continuation of their journey in China, while for Ling and Sara, it was a preview of their future journey to China. For Ben and his mother Susan, this might be the only opportunity to experience China in the short term. Either way, the reception frame of the audience in London is one of knowledge and experience of regular theatre, and experience of Chinese culture to varying degrees.

In terms of knowledge and experience of Chinese culture, the Peking Opera audience in Liverpool was not fundamentally different from the audience in London. The majority of the interviewees in Liverpool expressed a close relationship with the Chinese community in Liverpool, such as attending the Chinese New Year ceremony in Chinatown, studying and practising Tai Chi with their Chinese friends or watching Chinese films. Fewer had actually visited China (only one, Billy, had), but the interviewees claimed that they had knowledge of Chinese culture. In terms of

their knowledge and experience of theatre, they all attend various types of live performances regularly. For instance, Billy goes to live music performances, while his mother likes musicals; Jenny likes opera while Sammy and Marian like theatre and stand-up comedy. The audience members interviewed who live in Liverpool love live performance. Lily says they enjoy “a good night out”. In the other words, with or without the experience and knowledge of theatre and Chinese culture, the Liverpool audience attend shows because of their entertainment value and liveness, rather than other elements, which is quite different from the audience in London.

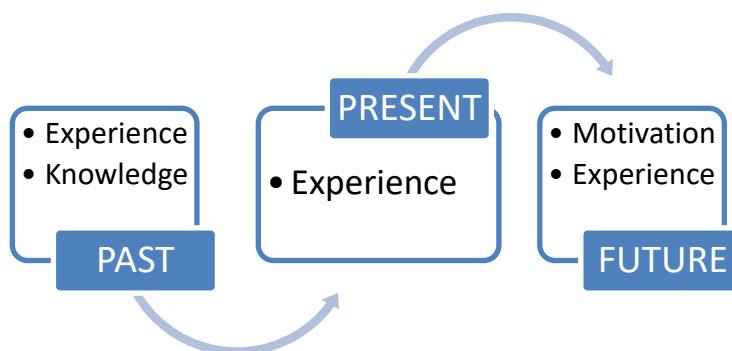
The common frame for the audiences of the Peking Opera production in London and Liverpool is their closer personal relationship with China than the interviewees from the other two productions. As well as the higher proportion of Chinese people in the auditoriums, more British people shared a connection with Chinese people or its culture. For instance, in London, Ben was in the gap year of his undergraduate study in history, and his mother told the interviewer about his obsession with East Asian history and culture. Ying was interviewed before the fieldwork, but she did attend the Peking Opera in London. She recalled her memories as a little girl when her grandfather sang Peking Opera to her, which made her appreciate every opportunity to attend Peking Opera anywhere in the world. In Liverpool, John is married to a Chinese woman, Faya, and his interest in traditional Chinese performance has continued, even though he and Faya had a poor experience of Chinese performance in Manchester. Linda and her mother love Chinese films: “I don’t even need the subtitles to watch it [Chinese film], it engages you with the emotional expression, the movements, everything, full of surprise”. All of this connection with, and experience of, Chinese culture impacted on their experience of the performance. In Carlson’s (1994) words, these memories of Chinese culture “haunt” the audience, a phenomenon which is explored in detail in Section 6.1.

In summary, the audiences for the three typologies of theatre productions from China could be described as regular theatre-goers, to differing degrees. However, the differences in the attendees from the three productions are more valuable to inform future research and marketing strategy. The productions which were relatively culturally familiar to the audience, i.e. *Richard III* and *Poker Night Blues*, attracted audiences that were specifically theatre-goers, with good knowledge and experience of theatre and relatively less knowledge or experience of Chinese culture. Meanwhile, the completely culturally foreign production, Peking Opera, attracted



attendees with closer personal connections with China or with a strong interest in foreign cultures. Through the perspective of the reception frame, the audiences for Chinese theatre are those with experience of Chinese culture or foreign culture, and knowledge and experience of theatre convention. The audiences' lifestyles impact their theatre attendance motivation. Their attendance of the Chinese theatre leads to new knowledge and experience, "theatre memory" as Carlson (1994) says "haunts" audiences' future theatre-going. This echoes the "longer experience" suggested by Reason (2010) in a different approach. Previous theatrical experience, or general cultural experience and memories, impact on future theatre-going behaviour.

Future theatre attendance could be therefore considered as prolonging the previous theatrical experience. The audience that attended *Richard III* and *Poker Night Blues* was impacted by their previous theatre experience; and the audience for the Peking Opera had a "longer" experience because of their Chinese cultural experiences. The cultural foreignness of the production makes the threshold of theatre attendance and appreciation higher than for general productions, and the closer relationship with the Chinese and Chinese culture of the audience reduced the obstacles to some degree. More importantly, if theatre-going behaviour can be impacted by theatre or cultural memory, their experience of the Chinese productions would impact future theatre-going behaviour. This "longer experience" is discussed at length in the following section in audience motivation, and their post-performance intention also confirms that theatrical memory not only "haunts" their current theatre experience but also prolongs it into future theatre attendance behaviour, building an impact chain (Figure 5.2).



**Figure 5. 2 Impact Chain of Previous Experience**

In short, the audiences of Chinese productions are much more complicated than the marketing stereotype that “Chinese community would be attracted by Chinese productions” which had been heard frequently during the fieldwork. As theatre audience studies reveal, theatre-going is an aesthetic pursuit with a high risk that not everyone wants. Considering the cultural foreignness of Chinese productions, the threshold of attendance seems higher still. However, there are specific audience segments interested in Chinese theatre in the UK and successfully attracted by it, as this study demonstrates. To find and target the right audiences requires marketing teams to understand the production, segment the audience effectively, and motivate them through targeted communications. The following discussion regarding audiences’ motivations for attendance, their experience in the theatre and their post-show intentions of re-attendance, help to define and nuance the existing and future audiences of Chinese theatre in more detail.

### **5.3 Motivations for attendance**

Cooper-Martin (1991) considers live performance to be an experiential service, meaning a service consumers expect to “experience and enjoy” through consumption. In other words, Cooper-Martin believes that to “experience” and “enjoy” are the underlying motivations for experiential consumption. To some degree, audiences do go to the theatre for experience and enjoyment, as with many other experiential services, but the distinction between a theatre experience and other types of experiential services makes the motivations for attendance much more complicated and nuanced than simply experience and enjoyment.

Understanding why audiences are motivated to attend a theatre production is one of the key topics of audience research. Kotler and Armstrong (2012) define consumer motivation as the need that directs people to seek satisfaction of their desires. Desire and need motivate audiences to take action, which, to some degree, explains theatre attendance behaviours. The desires and the expectations of theatre-going, as existing research shows, are emotional, intellectual, social, edutainment, escapist, aesthetic, self-esteem enhancement, novelty and hedonism (Walmsley, 2011; Swanson, Davis and Zhao, 2008; Nicholson and Pearce, 2001 etc.). Motivations for theatre attendance are complicated, and people are not motivated by just one thing. The

drivers of theatre-going overlap rather than being mutually exclusive. For Chinese theatre-going, it is even more so. This section analyzes the motivations of attendees in the three cases. Although the findings reflect general theatre-going motivations, there are some unique findings that pertain to the attendance of Chinese theatre in a foreign environment.

### *New experiences*

In general theatre-going circumstances, the search for new experience is a risky marketing strategy. Throsby (1990) finds that, for an audience, the newness of the work has a significantly negative impact on motivating attendance. For the general theatre market, new experiences have difficulties creating demand (Throsby, 1990), whereas for festival goers, as Snowball et al. (2010) argue, the wide range of genres and new forms of performance generally encourage attendance.

All three productions studied in this thesis provide new experiences for audiences in the UK. In the argument of whether newness attracts audiences to cultural productions, the three cases in this thesis illustrate two different circumstances. For the general theatre market, shown by the NCPOC tour in Liverpool and London, as Throsby (1990) believes, the newness was not positive for attracting an audience. The festival environment of the Edinburgh Fringe attracted audiences specifically looking for new theatrical experiences. *Richard III* was in the general London theatre market but was the legacy of a successful international festival, the Globe to Globe Festival in 2012. The audiences from all three productions were aware of, and motivated by, the newness of the productions.

Awareness of the foreignness of the theatre productions was commonly admitted by the audiences, and most of them laughed, saying they “did not know what to expect”, but they did know the production they were going to experience would be new, and they were thrilled by this novelty. For example, Sarah attended the Peking Opera performance in London and this was her first time experiencing Chinese art:

It's lovely to see a new journey, a new way of opera. [...] the colour, the cultural difference, and I just want to see something spectacular [...] to see something that we never seen before. This is the first time I saw it in London, that's why I booked the tickets immediately when I saw it came through. And I think this is something that you haven't been exposed to, I

haven't had the opportunity to see it in this city before, [...] it's so different, I thought it's going to be so different to everything else what we've been exposed to.

A similar opinion came from Susan: "for me, it's about a new experience", and her son Ben: "I just thought it would be quite an incredible cultural experience". Peking Opera productions naturally compete with other productions in the general theatre market. Their newness and foreignness actually attract the attention of audience segments seeking new experiences and can motivate their attendance. This new experience in the UK theatre market excited some specific audience groups, and transformed the negative effect of newness that Throsby (1990) describes, into a positive effect. The other two theatre productions, which are slightly less foreign to a British audience, also benefited from the new experience offered by the Chinese elements.

*Richard III* and *Poker Night Blues* were both adopted from well-known Western plays, but the Chinese elements in the new productions brought a new experience for the audience. The foreign presentation of the classical works brought uncertainty and curiosity for the audience, with many of the audience members at both productions admitting that they did not know what to expect, as did the audiences of the Peking Opera performance. For example. Dian at *Richard III* said, "I've never seen anything near that in London", and her daughter who came with her followed up with, "I have never seen *Richard III* ever, and it was in Mandarin, so I thought, why not?". When a new experience of Shakespeare was offered to the regular theatre-goers, their reaction was generally "why not", even though they did not really know what to expect.

In Edinburgh, festival attendees are generally seeking new productions, as discussed. They are knowledgeable about theatre and many of them work in the industry. The attendees of *Poker Night Blues* were also motivated by the chance to enjoy a new experience. For example. Cherry was motivated to attend because of the different artistic qualities of Asian theatre: "Asian theatre, like Chinese opera, is using kind of different arts in it [...] it's completely unusual and spectacular". Her partner Eric agreed, saying "you could say that we are looking for a new experience from Asian works, because they are quite different". Ryan, who had attended the Fringe for the past ten years, said: "I am always looking for something different, I

suppose, different from the shows I've seen [...] I will go to classic works too, but when I come to the Fringe, then I want the Fringe experience". In Ryan's mind, the "Fringe experience" refers to a new, riskier theatrical experience. Cherry and Eric were attending the Fringe for the first time. They were expecting to experience the historical city and the festival atmosphere, and were also tempted by the different proposition offered by Chinese theatre. Ryan lives in Glasgow and the Chinese production offered him a new experience, which is what he seeks from the Fringe. He added that the Fringe is always irresistible for those who want new experiences, always "looking for something new".

Chinese attendees, who are sojourners themselves in the UK, were also motivated by the new experience of seeing Chinese productions presented in a foreign country. The different space and the audiences created a new experience, as they saw the theatre production from their own cultural perspective. For example, Jiaoyang attended *Richard III*. She is familiar with the original story, but the Chinese version excited her: "I don't know how the Chinese version adapted this play, I just came without knowing anything, and I expect to see anything". Yelin attended the same show another night with her little son; she was motivated to see a Shakespearean production presented by a Chinese national company in the Globe Theatre which is famous for historical theatrical production, and she liked the new experience provided by this combination. A similar motivation was expressed by the audience participants of the Peking Opera in London and Liverpool, but for Chinese audiences, the new experience was not the primary motivation to attend.

The new experience accompanying the foreignness of the Chinese theatre productions in the UK did motivate attendance across markets. However, the novelty was expressed among the audience of the Peking Opera more than the other two productions. As discussed in the audience typology section, the attendees of Chinese theatre tend to have cultural openness and be omnivorous; they seek new experiences. Cross-cultural tourism studies reveal that the motivation of experience seeking is not uncommon among tourists (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010) even though cultural differences have been proved to cause uncomfortable feelings (David, 1971). To be a sojourner and seeking new experiences from theatre productions has not been explored in the literature to date.

Immersive experiences in the theatre could improve the satisfaction of the audience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) and motivate theatre-goers (Walmsley, 2011). However, when the immersive experience exposes the audience to another cultural context, whether this encourages or discourages the audience from attending has not yet been studied by academic research. Certain segments of the audience of Chinese theatre productions in these three cases show a positive reaction. Audiences in the theatre market in the UK, especially in London, are open to the new cultural and theatrical experiences. The apparent newness and foreignness of Peking Opera directly attracts audiences who are seeking new experiences. In other words, the UK theatre market contains audiences who are motivated by the new experience of foreign productions. However, the new experience seekers at the Fringe Festival mentioned novelty less as a motivation for attending the Chinese production. They visit the Fringe to have new experiences, which makes them open to surprises from productions, but a new experience from a certain production is not the primary motivation for their attendance. In other words, the Fringe participants tend to be motivated by new theatrical experiences, and novelty is something they expect from the productions they attend

#### *Risk and artistic quality*

Risk is a factor that can demotivate customers (Slack, Rowley and Coles, 2008). For theatre productions, which are intangible experiences, the quality is difficult to judge in advance, unlike durable goods, and no refund or compensation is possible (Throsby 1990, 1994; Colbert, 2003). Attending a foreign theatre production is more risky for the audience, as Throsby (1990) argues. In the marketing literature, risk is an essential concept in understanding consumer behaviour (Conchar, Zinkhan, Peters and Olavarrieta, 2004) and is conceptualized as involving two elements: uncertainty and consequences (Cox, 1967; Cunningham, 1967; Dowling and Staelin, 1994; Schaninger, 1976; Taylor, 1974). As discussed, most of the people interviewed for this thesis mentioned that they did not know what to expect from the Chinese theatre production when they decided to attend. Accompanying the motivation for new experiences is the guaranteed quality of other elements, which lowers the perceived risk. In other words, specific audiences seek new experiences, but some assurance of artistic quality is essential to motivate them.

This quality assurance comprises various elements. The most frequently mentioned was trust in the venue. The three case studies covered four venues: two in London (the Globe Theatre and Sadler's Wells Theatre), one in Edinburgh (Summerhall) and one in Liverpool, (the Echo Arena). Apart from the Echo Arena, all the others are well known theatre spaces and were all mentioned by the audience as an important motivation for them to actually make the decision to attend. To some degree, trust in the venue where foreign theatre productions are presented seems to ensure perceptions of quality for the audience, and finally becomes their motivation to buy tickets.

*Richard III* was staged in the Globe Theatre twice, and audiences remained motivated to attend due to the brand of the theatre. For example, Dian, besides the excitement provided by the new experience of the production itself, admitted that reputation of the theatre made the decision-making process significantly easier: "I think it's kind of you trust the venue, you trust that they will put on something of really good quality, and this is a consistently high standard, so, you know, this gives you some kind of freedom to make choices you might not make in another venue". Trust in the Globe Theatre was also mentioned by Duncan, who had seen the same production in 2012, but he insisted that if it was in another venue, he would not have gone to see it. Meanwhile, Chinese audiences of *Richard III* who were not attached to the venue also expressed the impact of this brand on their decision making. The reputation of the special space of the venue presented a charm for the Chinese audience, who considered the experience of the space to be new. Jiaoyang mentioned that she always wants to see productions in this space because "it's quite distinguished from the other theatres in London". This is a significant finding, which highlights the impact that co-productions and presenting venues can have on audience perceptions of unfamiliar work.

The Sadler's Wells Theatre also enjoys a strong reputation for quality among theatre-goers, and the Peking Opera tour benefitted from this trust. Among the audience members interviewed at Sadler's Wells, many repeatedly visit the theatre for productions. One such attender is Tom, who went to see the Shaolin performance one month before the Peking Opera in the same place. Tom confided: "we trust them that they would only put on really high quality performances, and we like the diversity here". Natasha concurred that: "Sadler's Wells is so good at providing [diverse performances], because this is where I saw the Kabuki performance as

well”. This expression is very similar to the audiences at the Globe, but different from those at the Echo Arena. In London, the audiences of the two Chinese productions presented in both venues were motivated to see a foreign production due to their trust in the venue’s brand, and the Chinese production was not their first attempt to have new theatrical experience in the space. This could be one reason for the failure to attract an audience at Liverpool: the Echo Arena seems to lack a strong artistic reputation among the theatre-goers of Liverpool, with participants mentioning their regular theatre-going choice to be the Everyman Theatre or the Empire Theatre rather than the Echo Arena itself.

A similar brand trust for the performance companies motivates the Chinese audience, who are not as familiar with the UK’s theatre and theatre venues. *Richard III* was produced by the National Theatre Company of China, and the Peking Opera performance by the China National Peking Opera Company. Both companies are nationally funded and recognized by Chinese audiences as high quality arts organizations. For instance Yelin was excited about the performance by the National Theatre Company of China. For her it stands for “the highest” quality Chinese theatre performance. Yelin is not a regular theatre-goer and had just moved to London with her family, which made her quite cautious in her theatre choice: “it has to be a national level performance, I need some promise of the quality of the performance, such as the reputation of national performance companies”. A national company to some degree ensures the quality of the performance for the Chinese audience.

Trust in CNPOC also promises the quality of the Peking Opera performance, especially the cast of the company. The significance of trust in the cast was provided by Ding, who spotted the Tube advertisement for the tour in London, but was not convinced to see it because: “I had a terrible Peking Opera experience in Chinatown with some amateur performers, my mom could do much better than that!”. However she was informed by a friend that it was staged by CNPOC and featured Mr Yu, Kuizhi and Ms Li, Shengsu, who are her mother’s idols in Peking Opera performance, and so she bought tickets for both shows immediately. The guarantee of a high quality performance by the company and the high reputation of the performers themselves motivate the Chinese audience who are knowledgeable about Chinese theatre, and this brand affiliation lowers the risk of attendance. In contrast, *Poker Night Blues* was produced by Beijing TinHouse, which lacks national funding



or a well-known cast, which are among the reasons it failed to attract more Chinese attendees at the Fringe. Compared to *Green Snake* at the Fringe 2014, performed by the National Theatre Company of China, where more than half of the attendees were Chinese, *Poker Night Blues* was perceived to be too risky for the Chinese audience at the Fringe.

The brand of either the venue or the performance company motivates attendance because it enhances audiences' perceptions of artistic quality and therefore mitigates risk. Among the audience of *Richard III* at the Globe Theatre and the Peking Opera at Sadler's Wells were people who expressed their close attachment to each venue. Brand attachment is a relatively new brand construct, which highlights the emotional quality and strength of the relationship of an individual to a brand (Fedorikhin, Park and Thomson, 2006; Baumgarth, 2014). This personal relationship between the audience and the theatre develops trust and loyalty, and consequently leads to the confidence to choose new and unfamiliar productions, such as *Richard III* and Peking Opera. Brand can therefore motivate the audience to try new productions.

Apart from the attachment between the brand and the audience, the brand's power also lies in its role as "a storyteller or myth-maker", connecting with the identity of consumers: "customers buy the product to experience the stories" the brand tells (Preece, 2014, p.27). In this sense, the audiences who build attachment to a theatre or a performance company associate with the identity of the brand. They remain motivated to see productions in the specific space as they feel their identity and lifestyle match the images of that venue and space. In this thesis, the attendees of the Globe Theatre are either Shakespeare lovers or international theatre-goers who trust the venue, and those in Sadler's Wells love the international dance productions on its stage. Their attendance presents the audience's lifestyles as culturally omnivorous and globalized.

Brand attachment to the venue and the performance company, for the Chinese audience, is not the only element that reduces risk and assures quality. Word-of-mouth is another motivation often mentioned by the audience members interviewed. Especially for the audiences at the Fringe, where there are thousands of shows, recommendations from trusted friends motivate attendance. Similar situations happen in London and Liverpool too, but were less frequently mentioned by the interviewees.

For example, Mary confided that she came to the show in the Fringe without knowing anything about it because she had met a friend who told her to see it. Among the attendees at the Fringe Festival who did not attend the Chinese production, friends' recommendations transpired to be stronger than other motivations. For example, Edmund is an actor, and he ranked five criteria for seeing a show to the interviewer, in descending order of importance: "the cast, the writer, the director, the venue and whether or not I had seen it before", but he added: "I much prefer word-of-mouth from people I trust". He could abandon his own criteria based on word-of-mouth from a trusted friend. So did Pia, another artist performing at the Fringe. Pia shared her experience of being convinced to see "a clown thing" which she was not interested in and thought it "might just be light, silly and enjoyable for an hour but nothing special" only because "I got recommended by a friend, I thought ok, I trust this friend, I only went because he recommended it". Word-of-mouth is so powerful that it can change the stereotype of a certain genre of performance for the audience and convince them to try something they never thought they would be interested in.

At the other two productions, word-of-mouth was also frequently mentioned by the interviewees as a motivation for general theatre-going, but for the Chinese productions, the interviewees at the Peking Opera performance seemed more likely to talk about friends' recommendations, especially in Liverpool. It may be due to the quality security of the brand of the venue or the performance company being less significant in Liverpool, that word-of-mouth played an important role in lowering risk. As an example, Faya and her husband had an unpleasant experience of Chinese performance in Manchester, which subsequently made them cautious about attending Chinese theatre, but Faya describes being convinced by a trusted friend: "she knows the theatre thing, I trust her to choose good things"; so they travelled from Manchester to Liverpool to see the show.

Similar recommendations from friends in the industry were mentioned by other interviewees in Liverpool. Billy and his mother had come to the show because his sister had recommended it. Sarah and her family made the decision due to the words of a friend who works in the city council. The attendees in London, apart from those who directly received information from Sadler's Wells, also mentioned word-of-mouth from trusted friends, organizations or the media. Natasha was firstly impressed by the performance from what she read in the *Evening Standard*, even

though she said: “I would come anyway no matter what *Evening Standard* says”. She is interested in Chinese performance and trusts Sadler’s Wells. However, the *Evening Standard* as a trusted information source first delivered the information, which made the information valuable and trustworthy. Huw also mentioned trusted information sources: “I don’t have many friends who share this interest [theatre-going] with me, I read reviews and theatre information in newspapers to see what is on and what is interesting”.

From Slack, Rowley and Coles’ (2008) research, it is clear that word-of-mouth is “a vital source of information to potential audiences” (p. 47). This is confirmed by Wachtel’s (1980) findings that friends’ recommendation was one of the top factors influencing theatre-going. Slack et al. (2008) conclude that word-of-mouth is “the most used channel of awareness, information, choice and even purchase of tickets” (p. 55). In terms of productions from other cultural contexts, word-of-mouth seems even more powerful; not necessarily from friends who are familiar with Chinese culture but trusted information sources that people rely on for theatre information.

When theatre productions are from unfamiliar cultural contexts but attract people with new or foreign experience, audiences look for quality securities to lower the risk from the newness. In this thesis, the brand of the theatre venues and performance companies along with word-of-mouth emerge as the trusted sources that motivate engagement with a new experience. As an intangible cultural production, Chinese theatre also motivates certain audiences through other more artistic elements. For example, the aesthetic enjoyment of Chinese culture was mentioned frequently.

#### *Aesthetic enjoyment and nostalgia*

Aesthetic enjoyment has always motivated audiences to consume cultural products, and theatre is no exception in theatre (Walmsley, 2011; Boudier-Pailler, 2008; Zolfagharian and Cortes, 2011); neither is Chinese theatre. The core feature of Chinese theatre productions is obviously theatre. As discussed in the audience typology section, the attendees of the three Chinese productions across three cities in the UK are mostly regular theatre-goers, and experiencing the aesthetic enjoyment of the theatre is a pre-condition for many.

Sam and Tom at the Fringe, who were not attendees of the Chinese production but a South African one, confided that: “you get to feel a different culture, different ways of seeing theatre, dance, from different countries, a different aesthetic, done differently”. They enjoyed the differences in productions from other cultures, but this per se was not motivating enough to solicit their attendance:

I’ll go [to see a play] because it’s interesting from the difference, the reason I go to a show is first because I hope the show is good, and if it happens to be cross-cultural, it’s either bonus really, but it’s not the reason really for me to see a show. I mean, as far as it’s interesting and enjoyable. I don’t go to a show just because it’s from different culture.

Their sentiment was shared by many audiences at the Fringe Festival. Audiences are motivated to attend shows at the Fringe they believe are going to be “good” in terms of artistic quality, rather than because they offer new cultural experiences. After all, among the thousands of performances, there are countless productions with new and experimental ideas. Consequently, aesthetic enjoyment is the primary motivating factor. In terms of *Poker Night Blues* at the Fringe Festival, the attendees were motivated by the promised aesthetic enjoyment of the original story of *A Street Car Named Desire* with which they are familiar. As Vivien, a theatre reviewer, recalled: “it is all because of Tennessee Williams” that she put the show in her review list two months before the festival. Ivy, a Shakespeare researcher from Australia, knew nothing about the production: “I didn’t know what show I was coming to see, I arrived in Edinburgh just half an hour before the show started, I just knew it was a Tennessee Williams show, so I showed up”. Tennessee Williams is their personal aesthetic taste, they love to attend any cultural events related to his work, as with Huw’s interest in Shakespeare in the first case: “it’s Shakespeare, I knew it was going to be good”.

A favourite artist, an original play, or a well established company promises the audience a certain aesthetic enjoyment, which is a key motivation for their attendance. This was mentioned frequently in cases where the production was adapted from a well-known piece. When this adaptation was combined with something new, in this case specifically with the Chinese culture and theatre traditions, the production became more attractive for the audience.

Duncan, another Shakespeare lover, liked *Richard III* so much that he attended the same production twice in same venue, out of enjoyment of Shakespeare but also because: “I was interested to see theatre from a culture with a long-established tradition of performance”. *Richard III* from China fulfilled two aesthetic expectations for him; it is a Shakespearean work and it is from a country “with a long-established tradition of performance”. Ryan attended *Poker Night Blues* at the Fringe Festival motivated by similar reasons but the aesthetic enjoyment of the Chinese elements was the dominant driver: “I’m interested in Chinese theatre anyway, and the possibility of seeing an American play presented in a Chinese way will be very interesting”. This was not the first time Ryan had attended Chinese theatre, or the Fringe Festival. He enjoys the theatrical experience of Chinese productions, and the cultural combination of a classic American play with a Chinese interpretation improved his expectation of aesthetic enjoyment. Another interviewee from the Fringe attended for the same reason, but Chinese was not her superior motivation: “I was tempted to attend because *A Street Car Named Desire* is my favourite play ever, and because I’ve been to China, I would like to see how these two stories mix and merge together”. The allure was the original story, but the mixture with China, with which she somehow connected, made the production special and it became a must-see among the thousands of productions at the festival.

Adapted productions, like *Poker Night Blues* and *Richard III*, in terms of their aesthetic enjoyment for the audience, naturally attract audiences who like Western classics, are interested in international productions, or like cultural fusion productions. Audiences with these interests are attracted by international festivals, such as the Fringe and the Globe to Globe Festival, due to the cluster of new productions.

However, for the Peking Opera, which is generally foreign and strange to the audience, attendees still expressed the motivation of aesthetic enjoyment. For instance, Tod attended the Peking Opera in London after his return from a one-month trip to China, where he saw some traditional performance: “really it was just for tourists”, but the glimpse of “the colour, the beautiful costume and the difference from other performances” that Chinese traditional performance could offer “stimulated my interest to come this evening”. His experience in China showed him the aesthetic enjoyment he might have from the Peking Opera performance, which motivated his attendance. As the audience typology above shows, there are cross-

cultural travellers interested in Chinese theatre in the UK, and to varying degrees, most of the audience are connected with Chinese culture, which made the trip to a Chinese production nostalgic for them. For Tod, the Peking Opera performance in London prolonged his journey to China, as it did for many other attendees.

The central “modern concept” of nostalgia, for Higson (2014), is “the experience of wistfulness, a hopeless longing for something lost and irrecoverable”. Higson adjusts this for the post-modern context, claiming that the irrecoverable becomes “attainable” and “the difference between past and present” blurred (p. 120).

Zolfagharian and Cortes (2011) believe that “aesthetic novelty” and “nostalgic uncommonness” as an “expressive rarity” are core motivations for purchasing artwork, collectibles and antiques (ACA), and argue that the “synaesthesia of aesthetics and nostalgia are the two major sources of value underlying the marketing of ACA” (p. 29). In the context of Chinese theatre-going in the UK, both for Chinese and non-Chinese groups (e.g. Tod), nostalgia provides an important motivation for attending Chinese cultural events. Nostalgic motivation in this context manifests in the wistfulness of China as a home and a cultural root, the longing for Chinese culture that audiences experience or want to re-live. It is noteworthy that this motivation was mainly expressed by the attendees of *Richard III* and the Peking Opera, which carry heavy Chinese symbolism.

Like Tod in London, Bill in Liverpool had also just come back from China. Attending the Peking Opera excited him greatly because he considered China as a place he had “explored” and planned to visit again. Jerry and Tom in London invited their Chinese friends, who invited them to China, to the Peking Opera performance, to remember their beautiful journey to China. The group did the same thing in Xi’an, China, where they attended a regional traditional performance (*xiqu*), and all of them now enjoy a bond based on this shared memory.

For audience members who had visited China, prolonging their journey once back in the UK transpired to be one of the core motivations for attendance. Meanwhile for the Chinese, the productions from China represented a return journey home, fulfilling their wistfulness of the memory of their homeland and longing for their original cultural roots. Ying, a Chinese Canadian who lives in London, cherishes the memory of her grandfather singing Peking Opera to her when she was a little girl. She loves attending any traditional Chinese performance to remember the similar

tone from her childhood. Ling, who is originally from Singapore, shared a similar motivation: she missed the street performance of “*jingxi*” (Peking Opera) in Singapore, and there were few performances in London; she bought tickets for both pieces: “I really appreciate this opportunity. I mean, how many opportunities you get to see Chinese opera in London? It’s a very valuable opportunity and we took it”.

In the auditorium of the Peking Opera performances there were a significant number of elderly Chinese, especially in London. One Chinese couple was interviewed. They live in Leeds and their children in London bought tickets for them as a gift. “I live here for more than 40 years, I cannot travel back to Shanghai often now, too old, my wife is a really good Peking Opera singer, we come to see this performance, we cannot go back to China to see it any more”, the Chinese grandfather said, “and I’m so glad that *guocui* [national treasure] could perform in this country, you know, we were excited about it since we heard about it”. For this old couple, attending a performance from their homeland is a substitute for a visit home. They are not able to take the long journey back, and Chinese theatre, especially traditional theatre, reminds them of their life in China. This nostalgic motivation is shared by the Chinese who leave their home country for a long time and miss the cultural context they grew up in.

To some degree, a similar nostalgia was shared by the Chinese people who came with family members, particularly those with children. The parents seemed to be motivated to attend because of the cultural roots they miss; but more importantly, they were motivated to pass on this cultural experience to their children, who were either born in the UK or left China as infants. Cultural heritage and inheritance, as part of their children’s education, was a key motivational determinant of their attendance.

### *Cultural inheritance and education*

Education is one of the motivations for audiences going to the theatre, which has been shown by existing theatre-going research (Walmsley, 2011; Nicholson and Pearce, 2001). In this thesis, education as a motivation for theatre attendance was mentioned by most of the interviewees at the three productions. However, due to the cultural difference of the productions, education presented differently among the audience groups from different cultural contexts.

For the Chinese immigrants who came with children, cultural inheritance, or, in the language of immigration psychology, “cultural maintenance” (Berry, 2001), was the initial motivation for their attendance. Cultural maintenance represents the preservation of cultural identity and characteristics that the immigrants consider important. These immigrants place value on holding on to their original culture (Berry, 1997; 2001). In this case, Chinese immigrants to the UK are keen to engage in Chinese theatre in order to pass their original culture on to their children, so they can inherit Chinese cultural roots even after they have left their motherland.

Bringing their children to the theatre to experience “home grown” culture from their homeland motivated the Chinese families’ attendance of both the Mandarin version of *Richard III* and the Peking Opera.

Yelin brought her 10-year-old son to *Richard III*. She expressed concern about this act, confiding that: “I hope he can find some cultural link with China”. This motivation for attending a high quality theatre production from China to connect their British-born children to their motherland, was expressed even more strongly by the attendees of the Peking Opera tour. The researcher encountered a big Chinese group at one of the Peking Opera performances in London. Three Chinese families had come together, and their family structures were similar: middle aged parents who had immigrated to a new country for further education and stayed for work, with children under twelve years old who were born in the UK. One of the mothers said, “I just want him [her 12-year-old son] to experience the Chinese cultural treasure, it’s our root”. Continuing this “Chinese cultural root” means a lot to Chinese immigrants, and the relatively rare opportunity to experience Chinese cultural productions motivates these Chinese families to attend theatre productions from China as frequently as possible. Actually, the Chinese families interviewed in the Peking Opera readily admitted that they had also attended *Richard III* a few months previously, and were very pleased to have further opportunities to enjoy shows from China. Cultural inheritance as a motivation for cultural event attendance is an attempt to achieve “cultural maintenance” and to keep the “ethnic identity” of Chinese immigrants in their receiving society—the UK.

This cultural inheritance requirement also motivated Natasha to bring her half-Chinese daughter Perlina to the Peking Opera performance. Perlina’s father is British-Chinese, according to Natasha, he does not know much about Chinese culture, “which he regrets deeply now”. In order to prevent her daughter from



having the same regret, Natasha goes to as many Asian culture related performances with Perlina as possible, such as Kabuki in Sadler's Wells: "but never Chinese opera, that's why I would like to introduce it to my daughter, [...] I would definitely like to let my daughter know more about it, she needs to know her cultural roots". There is no difference between Natasha and the Chinese parents who insist their British born children should inherit the cultural roots of their parents. Attending theatre productions from China, especially traditional ones like Peking Opera, is one of their choices to achieve cultural inheritance.

Cultural inheritance is one of the manifestations of education as motivation. For audiences who are not Chinese, self-education through attending theatre productions from different cultures motivated their attendance of *Richard III* and the Peking Opera performance. The new experience accompanying the cultural context of the production encouraged attendance. However, besides the new experience, audiences were also motivated by their professional requirements (acting, theatre studies, linguistic study, etc.), particularly in the case of *Richard III*. As an actor, part of the reason for Bernard's attendance was to see "a company which is rooted in the country [China], and obviously they will bring in different theatre traditions. [...] it's about what it's taken from the ground, about how you do a play that is interesting, the rooted tradition". He brought his role as an actor to the theatre and expected to study the cultural impact on the stage presentation. The same production, for Duncan a linguistic scholar and Shakespeare fan, was a lesson "to see theatre from a culture with a long-established tradition of performance" with its own language.

Amongst Peking Opera performance attendees, both in Liverpool and London, the need to retain an open-mind to a new cultural experience was expressed. For instance, in London, Ben came with his mother. He was in a gap year of his history degree and attending the Peking Opera was a way to learn about Chinese culture and history: "Absolutely also a good education for me too!", his mother agreed. In Liverpool, Linda and her mother were motivated to come as a "special lesson" to know more about Chinese culture as well as a result of their enjoyment of Chinese films. In Edinburgh, fewer members of the audience claimed educational incentives as their motivations, apart from Eric and Charlie, who were learning Mandarin and theatre respectively. For these participants, attending a Chinese theatre event was an

opportunity to learn more about Chinese culture and a Chinese representation of *A Street Car Named Desire*.

Education as motivation was not mentioned as the primary reason for attendance, but also cannot be ignored as an important factor. When this desire is fulfilled through the experience of the theatre, the audience requires more information for re-attendance in the future. This marketing implication is discussed in the following chapter. For Chinese families, cultural inheritance for their children represents a special part of their education, as it enhances their children's understanding of their cultural roots. For other audience members, educational value is derived from the new experience, and is implicit, even though it is not talked about directly..

#### *Family cohesion, social and other motivations*

However, edutainment is not the main motivation for theatre attendance; being entertained seems to be more important. Having a good time with family and friends is an important reason for attendance, for Chinese productions just as for regular theatre productions. This reality is underplayed in both the academic and industry literature. "To have a good night out with my friend" is the way Lily expressed her and her friend's motivation to attend the Peking Opera in Liverpool. Many other audience members from other productions agreed. Theatre, as an experience, no matter which cultural context it comes from, is always motivated by social factors. Among the interviewees, apart from those at the Fringe, many came with family members or friends to share the experience and spend quality time together.

According to Cooper-Martin (1991), "going to the theatre is experiential consumption, in which hedonism is the main motive" (cited by Boudier-Pailler, 1999, p. 5). This is developed from Hawes's (1978) theory that socializing and strengthening family life constitute two of the core motivations for leisure activities. The same conclusion that family togetherness and socializing represent two of the core motivations for festival attendance is reached by Duran and Hamarat (2014). It is acknowledged that many of the attendees of jazz events regard attendance as an opportunity to socialize with friends and family (Burland and Pitts, 2010) and the same motivations apply to theatre attendance. Research into arts tourism in Seoul (Lim and Bendle, 2012) reveals that experiencing another culture with family (20% of the respondents) and friends (24% of the respondents) is the main choice for

Western visitors. For Chinese theatre productions in the UK, audiences exhibit some of the same motivations as for regular productions from their own culture and reveal similar drivers to cross-cultural tourists.

Family togetherness and cohesion was mentioned regularly by audiences at *Richard III* and the Peking Opera performance, but for *A Street Car named Desire* at the Fringe, family groups were rare. This could be due to the relatively smaller audience at each production at the Fringe, and it not being a particularly family-friendly production. Both Chinese and British families attended the other two productions.. Unlike the Chinese families, the children of the British families at both *Richard III* and the Peking Opera performance, were grown-up, and sharing the experience and having family cohesion were the motivations for attendance.

The initial motivation for Bernard's attendance of *Richard III* was a reunion with his step-daughter: "my step daughter had spent three years in Beijing, and when she was in Beijing and I told her that there was *Richard III* in Mandarin, she was like 'Yes! Yes! Definitely!'. So I bought the tickets when she was supposed to land in England". Family cohesion was superior then to other motivations for his attendance. Afterwards, the experience of the production impressed him and encouraged his re-attendance in the future, but at the beginning, having a good time with family members was the simple motivation to buy the tickets. Parents' expectations that the play would interest their children also emerged following the Peking Opera performances in Liverpool and London.

In Liverpool, Billy had visited China with his father, and when his mother found the Peking Opera performance information she knew that "he would be interested in it, because I know he likes everything to do with China" and she would like to share a memory as her son did with his father in China, by attending the Chinese production. In London, Susan came to the show to celebrate her birthday with her son Ben: "it's kind of family thing, just two of us, a celebration [...] I thought Ben would really love the costumes and whole Asian cultural experience". Celebrating a special day with a family member, attending a production which her son was interested in, and creating a shared experience and a lasting family memory of an event motivated their attendance. Even though it was a new cultural experience, being educated and entertained by it were motivations for attendance, family cohesion and togetherness might be the core motivations for family attendees.

Families were not the only groups who attended the Chinese productions; friends were another significant audience group. At the Fringe, as discussed, word-of-mouth was a significant motivation for theatre-going, but sharing time with friends by attending a show was also attractive. Anna came to the *Poker Night Blues* with her friends, who knew almost nothing apart from that the original story was *A Street Car Named Desire*, they all loved the film and Tennessee Williams. The reason for their attendance of this particular event out of thousands of other productions, as Anna recalled, was that the friends wanted to have a good time together. They first picked Summerhall as an appealing venue to spend time together, and then the show just happened to match their time slot. For them, having a good time together with friends was more important than what production they actually attended. Even for Mike, a producer at the Fringe, spending quality time with friends overrode his professional considerations: “while at one point I was bringing a colleague from China, and I thought it would be good to see some Chinese shows with the colleague, and see what they thought about it”, socializing with friends and building common topic through attending a performance all of them were interested in, was his initial motivation for choosing the play.

For the Peking Opera performance, a similar expression of sharing a good time with friends was common. For instance, Jerry and Tom invited their Chinese friends to share the performance because: “we knew they would love it [...] we attended a traditional Chinese opera in Xi’an with them [...] we had a great time in China”. To extend their happy memory of China with their Chinese friends in London motivated their attendance.

It is not hard to conclude from these insights that socializing with friends and family in order to share an experience and create new memories is one of the major motivations for theatre attendance, and this is equally true for Chinese theatre in the UK. However, the cross-cultural context made the experience particularly special and also made the motivations for attendance more complicated. The motivations at the Fringe were not significantly different from the other Fringe productions, due to the multicultural context and experimental environment of the festival. For the other two cross-cultural productions in the more general theatre-going environment, the motivations for attendance combined those for general theatre-going with new-experience seeking and cross-cultural tourism.

The findings so far support motivations of novelty (new cultural experience), brand trust, aesthetic enjoyment, education and edutainment (including cultural inheritance for Chinese families specifically), socializing and family cohesion, along with other minor motivations (e.g. ticket price). However, what prevents the audience from attending Chinese theatre remains unknown. The next sections discuss the reasons why some audience members, especially those who expressed their interest in Chinese culture and theatre-going, chose not to attend these Chinese productions.

#### *Weak motivation*

The potential audiences interviewed outside the context of the three case studies expressed an interest in attending Chinese cultural productions, and the main reason that prevented them actually attending seemed to be essentially a lack of information, as discussed in the marketing chapter. However, at the Fringe, there were people who had received the information about Chinese productions, not specifically the *Poker Night Blues*, but still decided not to go. The obstacles to their attendance were various, and these are worth discussing to reflect on audience impressions of Chinese theatre and to try to seek an effective strategy to reverse it.

In arts attendance research, there are findings that “threshold fear”, which is a psychological barrier, dissuades people from entering spaces where they might feel uncomfortable (Fleming, 1999; Prince and Schadla-Hall, 1985). “Threshold fear” might be a factor for those who hesitate to engage in arts events. Convincing new audiences to visit museums or attend theatres is never an easy job. However, in the context of the Edinburgh Fringe, the participants are regular theatre-goers and many attend foreign productions, so “threshold fear” is no explanation of why target audiences are not motivated to attend Chinese productions. From the interviews, mainly at the Fringe, stereotypes and negative previous experiences were the reasons for target audiences, who are theatre-goers and cross-cultural explorers, not to attend.

Sam and Tom, who were interviewed after a South African play, live in Edinburgh and had been attending the Fringe Festival for more than 13 years. They enjoy the multi-cultural environment of the Fringe and attend a large number of new productions in the festival. They had noticed Chinese productions in Edinburgh during August for a few years:

Actually there are more Chinese shows around [than before], but I can't remember if we attended any of them, it sounds like we've been avoiding something from China, to be honest, we did not intend to, last year we wanted to see a Chinese show, but it seemed like more touristy stuff [so we did not go].

Their interest in Chinese theatre exists, but the productions they encountered were "more tourist stuff". "They were very eye-catching in the Royal Mile with their stunning, traditional costumes I guess, there were a lot of tourists around taking pictures". They recalled the scene of a Chinese company in the Royal Mile promoting a show: "it was very attractive [visually], but we wanted to see something more than that". They implied that Chinese theatre at the Fringe is for tourists but is unlikely to be good theatre, which is what they are looking for.

Edmund shares the same feelings, but expressed them more directly. His mother is a senior scholar in China Studies, and he has strong interests in Chinese culture: "A group of friends and I always celebrate Chinese New Year, due to our various slight connections with China". As an actor, Edinburgh in August is not unfamiliar for him, and he could easily recognize the Chinese companies in the Royal Mile:

Every year I have been aware of Chinese shows mainly through their advertising, principally processions down the Mile, which seem to focus on music, dance, movement. I haven't been to them as they often seem to be aimed at a touristy shallow interest in Chinese culture, as opposed to offering real insight into Chinese theatre.

The impression of Chinese theatre as "touristy" and "shallow" impacted negatively on Edmund's motivation to engage with it. He admitted: "I thought it was simply playing on Orientalist fascination in a shallow appreciation of Chinese culture, aimed more at pleasing a Western audience, or even worse, aimed at propaganda." Because of his connection and understanding of Chinese culture, he would like to see better representations of Chinese culture on the Western stage. His preconceptions of Chinese theatre at the Fringe prevented him from actually going to the theatre and seeing the productions from China.

On the other hand, for the Chinese theatre companies, the impression of tourist oriented theatre catering to the Western audience and self-Orientalism, or even having a propaganda purpose, especially coming from experienced theatre attendees,

reflects the problems of how marketing communications are interpreted. It seems that the use of staged performance as a cultural diplomatic tool of the Chinese government's soft power strategy has to some degree left a negative impression on Western audiences. Even though most of the Chinese theatre companies are not government backed, some potential audiences retain the stereotype, even though they have encountered the performers in person and received marketing information. The current marketing strategy for motivating the target audience needs to be rethought. For the other two cases in the general theatre market, their niche marketing strategy combined with the features of the productions won over the target audience, but this does not mean that the marketing strategies would work again. The different experiences of the audiences in the three case studies reflect the successes and failures of the current marketing strategies of the three productions and suggest a need for further development based on proven motivation for attendance as well as the interactions between the audience and the stage and between the audience members themselves.

## **Chapter 6. Experiencing foreign theatre as a sojourner**

Audience research has not been paid enough attention either in academia or in professional practice (Walmsley, 2011; Brown and Novak, 2007.) and the empirical study of audiences in the circumstance of foreign cultural productions is conspicuous by its absence. In the previous chapter, the motivational drivers behind Chinese theatre productions in the UK were revealed. This chapter analyses audiences' experiences in the theatre alongside the concept of the sojourner, as delineated in the literature review. A sojourner is defined as someone who temporarily stays in a foreign country (Sobre-Denton and Dan Hart, 2008), and the term refers to many types of traveller including international students, trainees, business people, military personnel, foreign service officers, etc. (Brein and David, 1971). So far, research into sojourners has focused on intercultural communication, and adjustments in sojourner psychology, especially when sojourners face cultural differences. Berry (1997) considers "sojourney" as a sub-field of immigration studies, a sojourner being a short-term immigrant—in this thesis, the "short-term" could be as short as the duration of a piece of theatre. The audience goes through a process of cultural adjustment, as sojourners in an unfamiliar culture, not dissimilar to the immigration experience in the society of settlement.

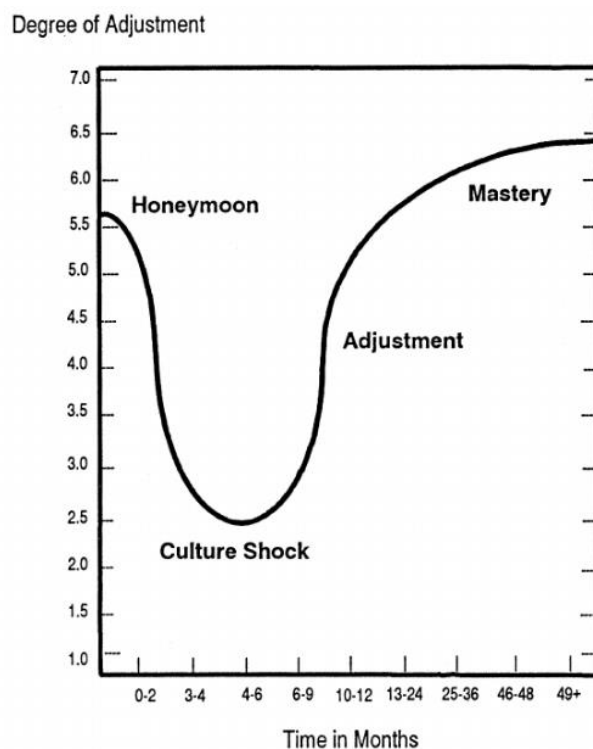
There are a few models that usefully describe the stages of adjustment of the sojourner into accepted new culture. For instance, the stage description, (see Figure 7.1) which is a model widely applied by sojourning researchers to describe the different stages of adjustment (Adler, 1975; Du Bois, 1956; Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Jacobson, 1963; Lesser and Peter, 1957; Oberg, 1960; Smalley, 1963), and it suggests a U curve of adjustment (Lysgaard, 1955). The U-curve model describes the four stages of adjustment to a new culture of the sojourney: honey moon, culture shock, adjustment and mastery. The curve indicates the psychological adjustment of sojourners, from the initial excitement about the new journey, to the struggle, then getting used to the new culture and mastering it, a pattern commonly found among sojourners in immigrant psychological studies (Black and Mendenhall 1991).

The U-Curve has since been developed into a W-Curve by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) (see Figure 7.2) to indicate the re-acculturation process sojourners undergo

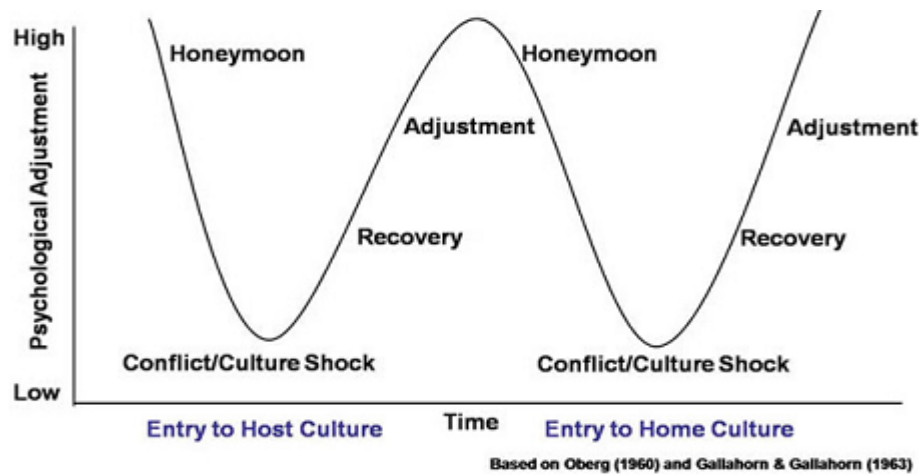


back in their home environments, describing in a longer experience of the sojourners. Different from the U-Curve which focuses on the process of adjustment to a new culture, the W-Curve shows that when sojourners come home from a foreign culture they need to re-adjust to their home culture, which becomes foreign to some degree. In short, the W-Curve shows that when sojourners return home from their sojourn, they experience the same cultural adjustment to their home culture—the U-Curve—as they did when they left home for the new culture.

Pitts (2016) describes the sojourner's re-entry experience as the re-adjustment process of the sojourner into their homeland. Various studies maintain that the psychological adjustment processes of the sojourner cannot be applied to every tourist and that there are no typical sets of adjustments processes that are true for every sojourner (e.g. Klein, Alexander and Tseng, 1971; Breitenbach, 1970; Spaulding and Flack, 1976; Becker, 1968). Models may over-generalize the processes for individuals, however adjustment to a new cultural context, revealed by both models, is experienced by sojourners. The audiences interviewed at the Chinese theatre productions in the UK, no matter what their nationality—British, Chinese or others—share a similar adjustment process to sojourners: excitement about the new experience, frustration from the cultural shock, recovery and adjustment, and finally enjoyment of the new cultural experience.



**Figure 6. 1 The U Curve Model of Cross-Cultural Adjustment (Black and Mendenhall 1991, p. 227)**



**Figure 6. 2 The W Curve Model of Cross-cultural Adjustment (based on Oberg, 1960 and Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963)**

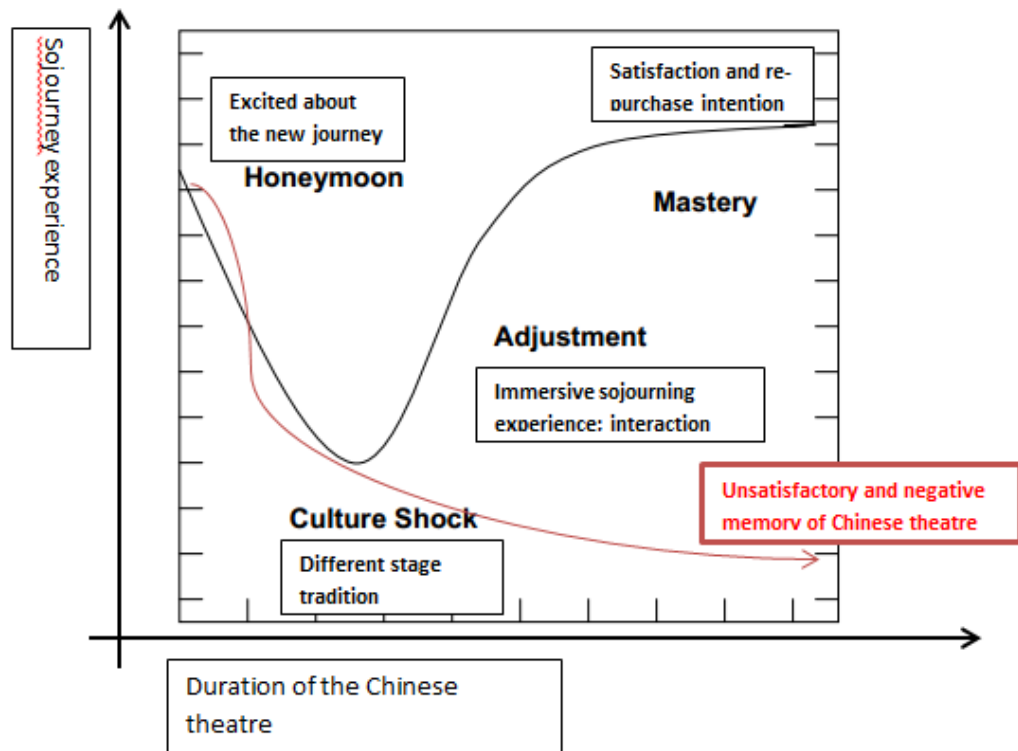
In the theatre context, with cultural adjustment to the foreignness, audience members achieve catharsis, which marks satisfaction with the cross-cultural theatre experience. Catharsis, comes originally from Aristotle's *Poetics* and describes the process of purification and purgation, especially of the emotions of pity and fear aroused by tragic drama and resulting in renewal and restoration (Berndtson, 1975). However, catharsis is a controversial concept. There are various interpretations of it and the critical debate regarding the concept has lasted for centuries (Walmsley, 2013). According to Golden's (1973) interpretation, "tragic catharsis will emerge, convincingly, as that moment of insight and clarification toward which it is the essential nature of art to strive" (p. 478). In other words, audiences can reflect and project the emotions expressed by the art, especially strong emotions.

This school of interpretation of catharsis is used by researchers who explore the audience experience of the arts. For instance, Scheff (1979) and Nussbaum (1986) believe that cathartic works could encourage audiences to project their emotions onto stage characters, which results in physical reactions, and releases them from these emotions in actual life (cited by Walmsley, 2013). This is widely applied in experience consumption, for instance, hedonic consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) and the "absorbing experience" created through engagement (from

the emotions, senses, imagination, and intellect) in hedonic activities (Radbourne et al., 2009). In the globalized cultural environment, catharsis is not only limited to productions from the same cultural context; it is also reflected across the auditoria of the three Chinese productions explored in this study. The emotional reflection and projection between the audience and the stage characters was expressed by the audience members interviewed and by the researcher. During the sojourning experience in the theatrical context, flow and immersion help the cultural adjustment and the final achievement of catharsis for the audience. This highlights the whole cultural and theatrical sojourn that attendance of Chinese theatre can provide.

Based on Church's (1982) combination of existing findings, the process of sojourners' adjustment can be described via three steps (Figure 6.1) which is not fundamentally different from U-Curve model. The first stage, as Oberg (1960) describes, is the "honeymoon" stage, when sojourners are fascinated and elated about the new culture and curious about the new experience. At this stage, the sojourner is excited about their forthcoming new experience. Applying this to the audience of Chinese theatre (see Figure 6.3), at the very beginning, even though the majority of those interviewed gave answers such as "I didn't really know what I expected from it" (Dian and Serlina from *Richard III*; Jack, Ivy and Anna from *Poker Night Blues*; Sarah and Linda from the Peking Opera London show, etc.); they were excited about the prospect of having "a good time" in the theatre and a new experience from a different culture. As the previous chapter illustrates, longing for a new experience was one of the main motivations for audiences (both British and Chinese) to attend an unfamiliar production. At the beginning of their journey,

the “honeymoon” stage of fascination was the main theme.



**Figure 6. 3 Sojourning experience for the audience in Chinese theatre**

Audiences of Chinese theatre experience similar cultural adjustments to sojourners, they experience the excited “honeymoon”, then encounter to cultural shock from the different stage traditions, through the immersive experience and the interaction with the stage, other audience members and even the space, they adjust into the new culture and achieve satisfaction. The red line indicates an audience who could not overcome the culture shock and left the theatre with unsatisfactory, negative memories.

When the “honeymoon” stage is complete—its duration depends on how soon the sojourner can cope and communicate with the new culture—culture shock and unexpected differences from the stereotype of the host culture cause a hostile emotion (Church, 1982). During the performance (as long as two and a half hours), the audience might not experience any hostility to the host culture—in this case Chinese culture—but may experience cultural shock, and even experience unconformable feelings, to differing degrees, regarding the cultural differences experienced (see Figure 6.3).

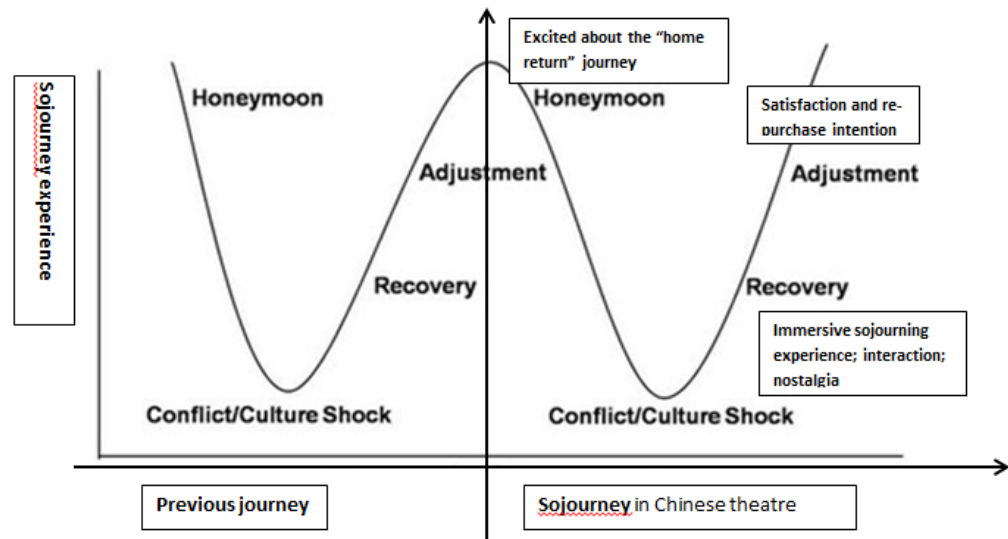
Perlina at the Peking Opera performance in London said, “at first I thought it’s high pitched, I thought it was extremely loud”. So did many other people who attended this art form for the first time. Jenny, who attended the same show in Liverpool, admitted that it was very different from what she expected: “I thought it would be like somebody singing alone, and then the other one sings, like opera maybe, but definitely not like this”. The significant difference, in terms of staging style, of Peking Opera and traditional Western opera made the audience who were more familiar with the Western style confused, and they struggled to get used to it. Even for some experienced and knowledgeable reviewers, what to expect from this foreign production remained uncertain. Michael Billington (2015) admitted in his review that he expected to immerse himself in “an alien world of antique militarism set during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD)” (Guardian, 2015), but his actual theatrical experience, especially the story of the female generals and the unfamiliar stage language surprised him throughout his participation in “this extraordinary production”.

At the same time, the audiences’ prior stereotypes of Chinese culture were challenged by the plot or the production values, and this would also cause the audience to feel uncomfortable, and in some circumstances, feel hostile towards the host culture. For example, one male audience member in Liverpool said, “there is no way that the females could lead the army to win the battle, especially in China. I do know some Chinese history [...] the performance was fine, but the story doesn’t make any sense”. The relatively feminist story of the *Warrior Women of Yang*, “for all of its feminist overtones” in Michael Billington’s (2015) words, could not be accepted by some audience members as a legitimate plot, as it played against their impressions of Chinese history.

However, most of the uncomfortable experiences undergone by the audience members interviewed were overcome by a process of cultural adjustment. Church (1982) describes this as the “recovery” stage (Figure 6.1), when the sojourner increases their linguistic knowledge and ability to get around in the new culture. As they complete their adjustment, the anxiety from the cultural difference largely dissipates and the sojourner accepts the new customs and enjoys the experience of the host culture. For sojourners in the theatre at Chinese productions, the recovery from the anxiety caused by cultural difference might not result from increased

language capability, but from immersive theatrical enjoyment, which helps them adjust to the unfamiliar aesthetic on the stage (see Figure 6.3). In other words, the direct cultural contact between the audience and the stage, as well as among the audiences (both Chinese and British), overrides the obstacle of the “foreignness”, leading to an enjoyable cross-cultural theatrical experience. As little Perlina described in Sadler’s Wells, “it grew on me in the last hour, really”.

How the audience recovers from the bottom of the “U” curve to actually enjoy their sojourn in the theatre needs to be highlighted in order to identify the positive elements of their experience of Chinese theatre, and improve the marketing strategy for forthcoming Chinese productions. Based on the feedback from the audience members interviewed, a few positive experiences were mentioned. They did not directly lead to recovery from the uncomfortable experience of confronting a different culture, but it is undeniable that their enjoyment during the journey led to a positive adjustment. The enjoyment of the audience in the three Chinese productions highlighted could hardly be applied to every audience member who attends a foreign production; but the audience typologies discussed reveal how diverse the audiences were, especially in terms of knowledge and previous experience—both cultural and theatrical. Martin Barker (2006) claims that “audiences bring their social and personal histories with them” (p. 124), which impact on the adjustment process. Some might not experience the bottom of the “U” curve and some might not recover from the culture shock throughout the whole journey. In this study, three typologies of Chinese theatre sojourner can be roughly defined: the general British audience, the British audience with Chinese knowledge/experience, and Chinese immigrants. For the last two audience groups, the W-Curve of cultural adjustment could be applied in order to understand their re-entry sojournery from their experience of Chinese theatre in the UK. As Figure 6.4 illustrates, the first U-Curve of the W shows the cultural adjustment for Chinese immigrants adjusting to the British society where they live now and for the British who had been sojourners in China before; and the second U-Curve of the W shows their return journey to China in the UK—the same as the tourists’ experience (Church, 1982; Pitts, 2016). The audience with Chinese connections also experience the cultural adjustment curve when they re-experience Chinese culture. These typologies of sojourners are discussed in detail in the following sections.



**Figure 6. 4 Sojourning experience for the “re-entry” audience in Chinese theatre**

The immersive cultural and theatrical experience, the interaction with the stage and other audience members, and even the spatial qualities of the theatre itself, stand out from the audience feedback, which have rarely been discussed in the field of theatre and intercultural experience. The fulfilment described by the audience could be considered a manifestation of their recovery from the anxiety caused by the experience of the different culture.

### **6.1 Immersion into the sojourning**

Flow, as Csikszentmihalyi (1991, 2002) argues, is an optimal psychological moment which can bring a person spontaneous joy through a fully immersive experience and involvement in the process of an activity. The flow experience has been studied widely in digital interaction, for instance, digital games (Hsu and Lu, 2004; Voiskounsky, Mitina, and Avetisova, 2004), website browsing (Skadberg and Kimmel, 2004), on-line learning (Shin, 2006) and tourist experience (Wang, 1999; Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987). The role of immersion within a flow experience is considered important for customer satisfaction in experiential consumption. The

flow experience of theatre audiences is briefly mentioned by Pine and Gilmore (1999), in support of their argument regarding the experience economy rather than with a specific focus on the theatre audience experience. Recently, the flow experience of the audience in theatre has been shown to play a vital role in motivating audiences and giving them satisfaction (Brown and Novak, 2007; Walmsley, 2011). The flow experience in the theatre requires immersion, and the start of “sojourney” to a different culture presented by the theatre production. However, the flow experience has never been studied under the circumstance of cross-cultural productions, which are not uncommon in the increasingly global world of cultural exchange. This in and of itself represents a significant gap in knowledge.

Applying the theory to the theatrical experience, the flow experience could be considered part of the reception process. The pre-show activities prepare the audience and when the theatre gets dark, the life on the stage encourages the audience members to immerse themselves in a flow experience, which has been shown to impact positively on their satisfaction (Brown and Novak, 2007). The different contexts of theatre production lead to different reception processes, especially the pre-show activities and the front of house preparation. For example, the productions at the Edinburgh Fringe had barely any pre-show preparation due to the very short (5 minute) get-in time rule of the Fringe, as many shows share the same venue over the course of each day.

Another example is dressing a venue: whereas the Peking Opera marketing team could decorate the front of house in the Echo Arena in Liverpool with banners, they could not do the same in Sadler’s Wells in London due to the venue’s marketing restrictions. Shakespeare’s Globe offers a special Elizabethan experience when the audience steps in, because of the atmosphere the special architecture offers (see Figure 6.5), which other theatre spaces cannot compete with. However, the experience of the theatre is a key element in satisfaction, and the flow experience enriches the overall theatre experience.





**Figure 6. 5 The Outside and Inside of Shakespeare's Globe (photos from the Globe Website)**

The productions studied in this thesis are different due to their inherent “foreignness”. Csikszentmihalyi (1988) implies that unfamiliarity could damage the flow experience. From the sojourner’s psychological perspective, the cultural shock of this difference could cause anxiety which “results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (Oberg, 1960, p. 177). For the audience in a production from a different cultural context, especially the Peking Opera performance, which was the most foreign production of the three, it can be hard to interpret the signs and symbols on the stage at the beginning because they are different from the semiotic traditions the audiences are familiar with. Consequently, the confusion and anxiety, or culture shock, could hinder or prevent the flow experience. The audience, sitting/standing among one another, are in an immersed cultural contact environment, which helps the adjustment process. A high quality performance supplies a high quality cultural contact, as sojourner research indicates. The quality of the cultural contact impacts on the psychological adjustment (Ward, Colleen and Rana-Deuba, 2000). From the audience feedback, the Chinese productions were of high quality, and positive interactions with other audience members led to immersion in the theatre and in Chinese culture.

I was sitting in the front row, and I can see her facial acting, she is Blanche, she is the butterfly, she is so beautiful, the emotion, the face, the dramatization is so [...] This mixture of the superb theatricality with the Asian culture [...]the musicality, and the rhythm of the Mandarin dialect, the language, it just changed it totally, an American drama into a Chinese theatre. [...] I notice that the music is blues, it’s very American [...] but the whole performance, the performance is absolutely emotionally Chinese, Asian, [...]

and the cultural background had been brought into the story. [...] And this is not an American production, this is not a British production like I saw in Manchester: this is an Asian, Chinese cultural take.

(Vivien on the *Poker Night Blues*).

From this description of her experience, Vivien was immersed in the theatrical experience of *A Street Car Named Desire* and the cross-cultural feeling made it special to her. She did not seem like she experienced any cultural shock but actually enjoyed the cultural differences. The reason for this could be her occupation as a professional theatre reviewer and a travel writer, as well as her love for, and familiarity with, the original story. Among the audience participants at the Fringe for the *Poker Night Blues*, the flow experience was expressed frequently, but none of the participants mentioned any uncomfortable feelings coming from the Chinese cultural context. Actually, the different way of story-telling increased the immersive experience somehow, as Anna recalled when she saw the dance at the beginning:

The way people dance [...] at the beginning, they were like fighting swords, and it reminds me something about martial arts in it. Because you could have a lot more violence in the play [...] it's also a component in Asian culture, or the Chinese way of showing a little bit and then leaving the rest to the imagination.

The implicit expression of the violence in the play impressed her and kept her following the story on the stage.

The different style of theatrical expression in Chinese productions, to some degree, increased the audience's immersive experiences. Moreover, the application of Chinese stage traditions seemingly refreshed the theatre-goers' experience of live performance. As Bernard, a professional Shakespearean actor, exclaimed when he recalled a particular scene: "I can't think of anywhere else to experience that Margret was in front of my face, like I was leaning on the stage, and she came! Nowhere else in the world where you can get that kind of intimacy and privilege". The intimate relationship with the stage at *Richard III* could, to some degree, be argued to be due to the uniqueness of the theatre space of The Globe. However, from the Peking Opera performances, in both Liverpool and London, certain

audience members expressed their astonishment at the connection with the stage. For instance, Billy remarked about the performance in Liverpool: “Look at her eyes! That really gets you into it!”. The audiences for Chinese theatre were experiencing a different symbolic system of staging, and they were amazed by the closer relationship between themselves and the stage. This intimacy helped them smoothly interpret the foreign cultural context and immerse themselves in the theatrical experience.

Immersion in the theatrical experience seems to be prolonged beyond the performance. During the interval and after the performance of the Peking Opera and *Richard III*, the researcher spotted audience members mimicking the specific singing style of the Peking Opera (*Richard III* also applied this style), and Christina, who attended the Peking Opera performance in Liverpool, could not help singing the Peking Opera style at home and in the office for more than a month: “I don’t know why, but it rooted in me”. The physical mimics could be easily spotted at the theatre during the interval and after the performance of *Richard III* and the Peking Opera. The audience members interviewed at the Peking Opera performance unconsciously mimicked the singing style and the hand movements from the performance to explain what amazed them and express their excitement.

It is reasonable to assume that these audience members would do the same thing as Christina, mimic the singing style and the movement of the Peking Opera for a certain period of time after the attendance. This prolonged experience echoes Reason and Reynolds’ (2010) research on audiences’ “kinaesthetic empathy” with dance performance. In the Chinese theatre productions in this research, the audiences embodied an “imaginative connection between the self and the other” (p. 71). When talking with the Chinese audience they mimicked the singing and movements. They laughed, clapped and shouted “Hao!” (Bravo) during the performance. The “other” in this research could refer to the foreign performance, or the other audience members, which is discussed in the next section.

The Chinese productions did attract audiences who had existing connections with China and Chinese culture, such as the Chinese immigrants, cross-cultural tourists who had visited China, etc. as discussed in the previous chapter. Chinese immigrants or those who had travelled to China as sojourners, who re-experienced their sojourn through Chinese theatre in the UK, could be considered re-entry sojourners. Pitts

(2016) describes re-entry as a “transitional process of returning and reintegrating into one’s home country after an extended period abroad” (p. 420). In other words, after adjustment to a foreign culture, sojourners have to adjust to the culture they were familiar with. The re-entry sojourn experience in this research is revealed in two circumstances. Chinese immigrants are sojourners in this country, whether with short or long residence they share feelings of missing home. They go to Chinese theatre productions to go home; it is a re-entry journey for wanderers. The British who were sojourners in China have come back to their homeland as re-entry sojourners, and face another U- of the W-curve of sojourney, another re-acculturation process (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963) as illustrated in Figure 6.2. In this circumstance, going to Chinese theatre recalls their experience and memory of China and helps them through the cultural re-adjustment process (see Figure 6.4).

Pitts (2016) provides a more detailed analysis of this process. She insists that, as an extension of the broader and more complex phenomenon of intercultural adjustment, the re-entry process could result in a disruption of the social ties developed in the host country and could even be described as “a grieving process” for their loss of “personal relationships, novel experience and a newly established way of life” (p. 420). To describe the motivation of the British audience at the three Chinese productions as “mourning” their “novel experiences” in China may be too emotional and an exaggeration, but they are looking for a way to share their sojourner experience in China. Pitts (2016) argues that “the need to share” the sojourn experience is commonly expressed by re-entry sojourners in their home country, and going to the theatre to re-experience or simply to immerse oneself in the familiar scenery is a requirement of nostalgia. This closely reflects the Chinese immigrants’ nostalgia for their home country.

Well, just the costumes, something that I’ve seen in China, we’ve been to some famous tourist things, especially in Beijing, like the Forbidden City, palaces, these kind of things, you know, and the show brought me to the scenes like that, yeah, I like that feeling quite a lot (Billy, Peking Opera performance in Liverpool).

Billy’s memory of China was still vivid. He was planning to visit China again, and the traditional scenery of the Peking Opera classic *Farewell My Concubine* brought him back to his sojourn. Similarly, another piece of Peking Opera performed in

London, *Warrior Women of Yang*, reminded Tod of his sojourn in China.

Tod is a regular theatre-goer and he adhered to this routine during his journey in China where he attended a traditional regional opera performance. While he enjoyed the production in London, he could not help but compare it to the similar experience in China: “this is much more aesthetic, much more beautiful, but what I saw in China stimulated my interest to come this evening”. Aesthetically, he had a better experience in London because of the better quality of the production. Ward et al. (2000) argue that a high quality and quantity of intercultural contact benefits cross-cultural adjustment. In this case, the high quality cultural contact Tod had from the stage and the audience members and his experience of cultural contact in China helped him adjust to a different cultural context. Nevertheless, the first impression of the art form he experienced in China “haunted” him—to use Carlson’s (1990) words. It kept reminding him to re-experience his journey in China, even though his sojourn had finished. As he enjoyed the immersive experience in the theatre with flashback of his memory to sitting in the auditorium in China for the traditional performance with other tourists, his satisfaction with his attendance was clearly shown on his smiling face. His experience of Peking Opera in Sadler’s Wells, with the memory of the traditional opera performance in China reflects the impact chain (Figure 5.2), with the previous experience not only impacting his decision making but also significantly influencing the adjustment experience for the re-sojourner.

The flow experiences of the Chinese audience members is complicated by a mixture of nostalgia for the home culture and the new experience of unfamiliarity. Faya, for instance, travelled from Manchester to Liverpool for the Peking Opera performance, as she, a Chinese woman, and her British husband had always wanted to attend a live Chinese performance and this was the ideal opportunity for them. Faya admitted that it was her first time attending a Peking Opera performance, as was the case for many other Chinese audience members in Liverpool and London, but growing up in China means she had encountered this art form quite often, mainly through television: “Before this, Peking Opera was on the TV, you know, they stand and are singing some cuts from a classic piece, [I] never really got into it” (compare the image for *Warrior Women of Yang* in Sadler’s Wells in 2015 to the Peking Opera performance in the Spring Festival Gala on CCTV—Figure 6.6).



**Figure 6. 6** *Warrior Women of Yang* in Sadler’s Wells in 2015 (above); Peking Opera Performance in the Spring Festival Gala on CCTV (China Central Television) (below)

Similar feelings were expressed by May, a middle-aged Chinese woman who came with her family and friends. “As a Southerner, I never knew Peking Opera could be so beautiful, it looked completely different from my memory of it from TV”. Even though this was the first time either of them experienced the art form live, they were familiar with the stories—both staged pieces are widely known in China—and became immersed in the performance quickly, impressed by the beauty of the production:

When I sat down I noticed the screen saying, ‘In China, when you appreciate the performance on stage, we shout “Hao!” which means ‘good’ to the performer. Please don’t be shy to do it if you like the performance’. And I really loved this, it made me more involved in the performance, and we did shout ‘Hao!’ with many others at some points during the performance. I believe this is a real cultural delivery, and I enjoyed it very much, you know, it’s the proper way to appreciate Peking Opera, at some scenes, I felt like I

was in Beijing Tea House (Cha Lou) and watching this with other Chinese. That atmosphere was really Chinese. And it's very funny to see others, even some foreigners, were mimicking the singing style during the interval and after the show, I am very proud of that" (Faya, Peking Opera performance in Liverpool).

As little Perlina said, the atmosphere "grows on" the audience, no matter where they are from. But for Chinese audience members, the immersion of the local British audience made them proud of their cultural roots, which fulfilled one of the motivations of attendance—looking for social inclusion and cultural belonging through cultural engagement, specifically for the ethnic communities in the immigrated countries (Le, Polonsky and Arambewela, 2015). During the performance, the Chinese audiences as well as the producing practitioners, considered their role as that of the "host" for their British peers in the auditorium, despite the fact they usually feel like "guests" in the country.

This hosting relationship is revealed in Matarasso's (2004) research in a rural theatre; even a village hall can show "unique power" by creating intimacy of space and a close relationship and interaction between artists and audiences and among audience members, it is as if the audience host their guests (the performers) at the village hall. In the context of this specific theatre, which carries their home culture, the Chinese immigrants subconsciously immersed themselves in their home cultural context, and "hosting" their British "guests" helped them have an even better experience. When a Chinese audience member saw "the British (she used the words "Lao Wai"— "foreigners" in Chinese) shouting and laughing even louder than us (the Chinese)", they were proud of showing the best of their culture to their new guests, like all good hosts.

It was interesting for the researcher as an observer in the venues to see that the British and the Chinese audience members discussed the performance, the interaction creating a spontaneous and harmonious atmosphere of cultural exchange. According to immigration studies, some immigrants actively try to integrate into the "receiving society" through a process of acculturation and developing inter-group relations (Berry, 2001). Cultural engagement is one approach adopted by Chinese immigrants, the ethnic communities in their receiving society, to achieve their goal of social inclusion (Le, Polonsky and Arambewela, 2015); but at the same time, they

struggle to maintain their cultural roots (ibid.; Berry, 1997, 2001). Under the circumstance of this research, the cultural engagement of the Chinese immigrants actually achieved all goals: social inclusion through interaction with the British audience; nostalgic home return and cultural inheritance through attendance. With the switch of their social roles in the UK society in the theatre, the experience of both British and Chinese was beyond theatrical enjoyment, they became culturally and socially immersed, as they would through cross-cultural trips (Brein and David, 1971; Berry, 2001).

The immersive experience of Chinese theatre in the UK for the audience goes beyond theatrical and aesthetic enjoyment, it is the first layer of sojourner experience: the audience is firstly immersed into the theatre, and the different cultural experience and theatrical expression bring the audience to a sojourner. The social roles of British audiences in their home country and Chinese audiences in the “receiving society”—the UK in this context—have swapped in the specific time and space of a Chinese performance. With the high quality cultural contact, in other words, a high quality artistic production, this immersive experience impressed audiences, no matter where they were from or whether they were familiar with the art form or not. The satisfaction obtained from the immersive theatrical experience impacted on their post-performance behaviour, which is discussed in the following section. However, flow is certainly not the only thing that impacts satisfaction, as the audience members interviewed highlighted. The interaction with the stage and with the other audience members also affects the experience to a large degree, in other words, the interactions with the stage and the other audience members drag the audience deeper into the sojourner and help them adjust to the new culture.

## **6.2 Interactions with the stage and the other audience members**

Audience engagement and participation has been widely discussed in the arts and cultural industries. For instance, Matthew Reason (2010) discusses young audiences’ engagement in the theatre; Helen Freshwater (2009) explores the relationship between audience and theatre which implies a lack of research focusing on the theatre audience; and Stephanie Pitts (2005) has focused over a long period on audience engagement in live performance, specifically live music. One of Pitts’s most significant findings regards the benefits of audiences sharing the artistic



experience with other audience members. For the audience, the enjoyment of live performance is derived from the venue, the performers, the much-loved familiar repertory, new musical challenges or the “audience community” of like-minded listeners (Pitts, 2005; Burland and Pitts, 2012).

This enjoyment of the interactions with the venue, the performance and the audience was mentioned and highlighted by the audience members interviewed in the course of this study. The interactions between the stage and the auditorium, among the audience members, and even between the performing space and the audience, led to better experiences of theatre productions, and in the context of this research, to a more satisfying cultural and theatrical journey.

In terms of the interaction with the theatre space, as discussed in the audience motivation section, trust in the venue, in the cases of Sadler’s Wells in London, Shakespeare’s Globe and Summerhall in Edinburgh, motivated the audience to try new productions with which they were unfamiliar. In return, their positive experience of the space during the performance increased their attachment to the venue. But interaction with the space was rarely mentioned directly by the audience when they discussed their experience. Based on the researcher’s observation on-site, the reality is that the atmosphere created by the front of house decorations had an impact on the audiences’ reception, and either enhanced enjoyment or effected an uncomfortable feeling during the audience journey. Voices saying “wow, I didn’t know this” and “this is embarrassing, this is too Chinese” could be heard in the space among the audience members.

Bernard appreciated the special space of the Globe which created an unusual “intimacy” between him and the performers, as well as the other audience members in the yard. Duncan highlighted his favourite thing about the Globe as the “strong bond between actors and especially the groundlings”, and commented that, due to the Elizabethan features of the yard, the audience “are not stuck in the specific seats forced to face forwards with unchanging neighbours”. The relaxed atmosphere makes the conversations between the audience members easier. Jean recalled her experience in the Globe as “time travel to the ancient time”. Audiences in Liverpool loved the pre-experience of the theatre at the front-of-house area of the Echo Arena. Faya said the banners of the Peking Opera characters in the foyer helped her and her husband to get a sense of what they were going to experience:

With that knowledge, it was quite vague before we actually saw the show, and during the interval, we went to read the banners again and more carefully. [...] It's a very different experience, it's like the venue was trying to help us learn this new thing, and we appreciated it, we had a lot fun, you know, to tell whether the character on the stage was a good guy or a bad guy based on the banner

Because many participants were motivated to attend a production they were not familiar with by their trust in the venue, this created a positive atmosphere to deliver information and enhanced the interaction with the audience. As one of the consequences, when the participants were discussing their interaction with the theatrical space during the show, this could be interpreted as an important element of their positive experience.

Pitts' (2005) research reveals the significance of inter-audience engagement, especially where they have "a clear view [...] of other people engaged in listening" (p. 260). So being immersed in a theatrical experience is not only about what is happening on the stage but also dependent on the people sitting or standing around each audience member. Naturally, certain interactions occur between audience members who attend together, such as families and friends, and these interactions create new shared memories, as discussed in the previous chapter. This echoes Brown and Novak's (2007) findings that positive theatrical experiences enhance socialization and generate positive social bonds. This finding was illustrated by Anna, Jack and Ivy at the *Poker Night Blues* when Anna talked about her flash-back to the film *A Street Car Named Desire*: "there were iconic moments you could actually recall from the American film", at which point the three of them sang "Stella!" and acted as though they were sharing an insider joke. The theatrical experience clearly strengthened the bond between them as friends. For audience members who were initially strangers, the interactions among them created a positive experience, especially when the interactions were between the British and the Chinese. For instance, in the yard of the Globe, conversation and interaction between audience members is easier, which was mentioned by almost every interviewee at *Richard III*. Among them, Duncan described his experience of interaction with the Chinese audience:

The Globe also makes conversations among the audience during the interval very interesting. [...] Chinese speakers near to me explained some of the finer points of the symbolism in the production to myself and others. This was particularly valuable.

In the yard, the Chinese audiences also paid attention to their peers who could not speak their language. As Jiaoyang commented:

because it is adapted Shakespeare, and it's in the Globe in London, and it's costumed in Ancient Chinese dresses and spoken in Chinese, as Chinese, we can easily get into the story. I'm quite curious about the English here, sometimes there is some English among the dialogue on stage, like 'see you', I found it funny, and when I found the English audiences next to me also laughed, and they seemed quite excited about the Peking Opera singing, this also quite amazed me. The feeling was quite different compared to other productions, you know, if you go to an English speaking production in London or Mandarin production in Beijing, the cultural fusion and conflict is very fascinating.

As an international student of English Literature in London, Jiaoyang exhibited a degree of concern about the reaction of the local audience, but the empathy of the local audience and the production released her from her anxieties about cross-cultural understanding.

As *Richard III* is a relatively less foreign production for the UK audience, the empathy among the audience members might not be a big surprise, while the similar finding from the audience at the Peking Opera performance is highly significant. The British audience in their homeland, who became the minority at the Chinese theatre, could not help but notice the majority Chinese audiences' reaction and interconnection to the stage, involving activities like applauding and shouting "Hao!". Some became confused due to the delay in the translation, "even when we are reading the subtitles, what I said is, obviously the Chinese audiences are on to it, because they know what happening before we clap, it's interesting" (Jenny in Liverpool for the Peking Opera performance), but the confusion did not upset the audience, instead some of them considered it a learning process:

I found people actually showing me when to applaud, because I didn't know when to applaud, so I thought that would be something Chinese people showing me. And yes, it is a good experience, it's all learning (Susan at the Peking Opera performance in London).

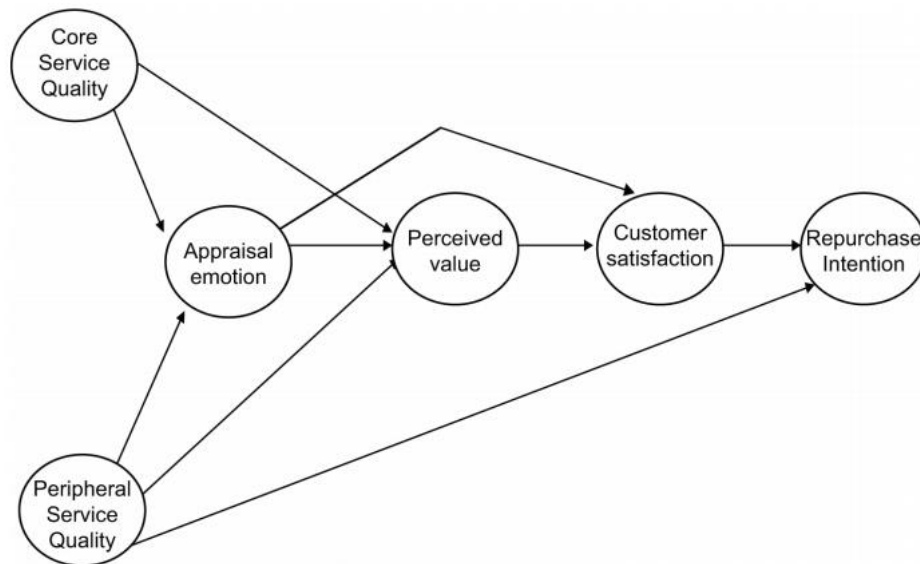
Susan considered the interaction with the Chinese audience as a “connection” and a collective experience shared with many others, whether she knew them or not, which she valued greatly. Meanwhile, Linda noticed that the Chinese audience were “much more Chinese than I would actually see in theatre, and obviously, this is your language, your culture, but everybody was joining in, and enjoying the performance, everybody was participating”. When she overcame the feeling of being “not really sure what was going on”, she did the same as the Chinese: “we followed the shouting ‘Hao!’ and applauding, yes, we enjoyed and we followed”. Instead of feeling isolated from the majority, the British audience quickly adjusted to the different style of theatre smoothly, and enjoyed the new rituals, considering it an interactive learning process.

Because the audience members, whether they were Chinese or British, were motivated by the new cultural experience of the Chinese productions, they were expecting something new from the stage. However, the stage, the audience around, and the venue provided an immersive experience all round through interactions between the stage and the auditorium, between the audiences and the venue, and among the audience themselves, all of these helped the audience immerse themselves deeper into their sojourn. New cultural experiences had been created. Consequently, the majority of the audience fulfilled their motivations through their immersive sojourn in the theatre. But whether their positive experiences would be followed up by an intention to re-attend remains uncertain.

### **6.3 Post-performance intentions**

In the experience industries, satisfaction with the service/product can lead to the intention to re-purchase, and Hume argues that this theory can be applied to the performing arts (Hume et al., 2006; Hume, 2008a; Hume 2008b; Hume and Mort, 2010). Apart from the quality of the core service, the quality of peripheral services, including qualities of accessibility, personnel, reliability, venue convenience and amenities, can directly lead to re-purchase intention (Hume and Mort, 2010) as

illustrated in Figure 6.7. Applying audience satisfaction and re-purchase intention to Chinese theatre in the UK, this model implies that the quality of the production (core service) is not the only element which leads to positive experiences for the audience. The peripheral services, such as the venue, the pre-performance activities, the other audience members and the like could significantly impact the audience's post performance intentions.



**Figure 6. 7 The Significant Pathways and Coefficients (Hume and Mort, 2010, p. 177)**

If we place the performing arts into the context of this research, the audience satisfaction is fulfilled by both their experience of the core product—Chinese theatre productions, and the peripheral services which include the space and atmosphere offered by the venue and the interactions with the other audience members, as described in last two sections. This echoes Swarbrooke's (1995) research relating to augmented products, which has been widely applied in tourism and museum visiting studies (e.g. by Buhalis, 1999; Cunnell and Prentice, 2000; Del Chiappa et al., 2014). As a complement to the core product or service in the experience industries, augmented products can significantly influence the experience and satisfaction of the customer, tourist or visitor. When audience satisfaction has been achieved through attendance positive theatre experience, post-show intentions are not only related to re-attendance intention in the context of Chinese theatre in the UK. From the audiences interviewed, apart from re-attendance, they also expressed intentions

to learn more about Chinese culture, visit China as a physical sojourner, follow future productions of the theatre company, etc. In the context of Chinese theatre in the UK, the audience is not only there to help theatre companies achieve a profit through ticket sales, but also to have a cross-cultural experience and engage in intercultural communication. The experience can embed cultural empathy, challenging cultural stereotypes and promoting cross-cultural understanding, which could ultimately result in a more balanced global cultural exchange and consequently create a sustainable international environment for cross-cultural trade.

### The search for new knowledge

Audiences interviewed from the three Chinese productions all mentioned their interest in learning more about China and Chinese culture, and were even planning to visit China in the near future. This might not be a direct result of the attendance at the Chinese theatre production, but it is undeniable that the positive experience from the performance stimulated their motivation to learn more about it. Just as Tod had been motivated to attend the Peking Opera performance by his prior experience in China, the Chinese theatre audiences' experience in the UK impacted their eagerness to know more about China. As discussed, the audiences' experience of a performance is not limited to the performance itself, it is impacted by the audiences' cultural capital, taste (Bourdieu, 1979), previous theatrical experience (Reason, 2010; Carlson, 2003) and personal history (Barker, 2006). It impacts their theatre attendance decision making process and their experience in the future. In short, audience motivation and satisfaction, to some degree, should be considered as having an impact well beyond the theatre production itself and influencing wider cultural activities. This does not necessarily make marketing a theatre production, especially a cross-cultural theatre production, easier.

Depending on their professional backgrounds, audiences seek different kinds of knowledge about China and Chinese culture. For instance, Eric is a linguist who visited Taiwan in 2014, and plans to learn Mandarin after his positive experience of a Chinese production in Edinburgh. Following his attendance of *Richard III*, Bernard, a professional actor, "would want to see why the director made a certain decision, maybe would go online to find some interview to know more about it".

Linda and Ling came to Sadler's Wells on different evenings, but both expressed their plans to visit China to continue their journey. Ling attended both pieces, and "definitely would like to see more". She added: "we are going to Chengdu next year, I think Sichuanese Opera<sup>5</sup> is different from Jingxi<sup>6</sup>, so after this, we are hoping to see some Sichuan Opera as well, and maybe make some comparison". She planned the journey before attending, but her memorable experience in the theatre definitely stimulated her interest in regional opera in China.

Audience members who want their children to experience their Chinese cultural roots by attending a performance expressed their requirements in relation to knowledge sharing events, which are hard to find. Natasha would like her little daughter to know more about her cultural roots through knowing more about the Peking Opera which Perlina was obviously interested in: "probably the history, and also the visual part, like the make-up, costumes, and also the training process, because I read a review about Peking Opera before, and tried to introduce it to her, [...] the background, the history about how it developed and how it become like this would be really fascinating for both of us".

Most of the audiences came to see the Chinese productions without knowing anything about them. As discussed in the previous chapter, based on the analysis of the inner and outer frames of the audiences from the three cases (see Figure 5.1), the audience of Chinese theatre in the UK, both Chinese and British, lack knowledge in relation to China. They were motivated to attend, and after the performance, the regular theatre-goers, to varying degrees, expressed their interest in continuing their journey and were eager to fill the gap in their knowledge of Chinese culture and Chinese theatre. This was especially reflected in the audience feedback in 2016 when the NCPOC returned to London following its success in 2015. There were audience members who returned from the previous performance who complained about the lack of opportunity to continue their journey and study more about this art form. Somehow, the audience reception for the theatre production from China went beyond the performance itself, and several audience members expected to prolong their sojourn experience well beyond the theatre, which in some cases could even

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<sup>5</sup> A regional traditional Chinese opera, in the Sichuan province.

<sup>6</sup> Another name for Peking Opera

develop into plans to travel to China. Sharing their sojourn experience with like-minded people by attending the post-show events, studying, and sharing their knowledge, marks the continuity of their journey in theatre. The requirements are challenging for the organizations involved (the production companies, the venues, the marketing companies etc.), which could be one of the reasons for inability to foster or organize these activities. However, these events could also be considered an opportunity to explore the market and benefit the organizations, as discussed in the following chapter.

### Brand recognition

The significance of brand has been discussed in relation to marketing studies. Kotler and Scheff (1997) apply classic marketing theories to theatre marketing and highlight the importance of audience loyalty to the brand, which could be one of the push elements in the “black box” of the decision making process. Pine and Gilmore (1999) also discuss the pivotal role of the brand in the experience economy. However, in the context of the Chinese theatre in the UK, the concept of the brand could refer to several stakeholders, for instance, the brand of Chinese theatre companies (e.g. the National Theatre Company of China, the Beijing TinHouse, or the National Chinese Peking Opera Company), the brand of theatre venues (e.g. the Globe, Summerhall, the Echo Arena, or Sadler’s Wells), the production companies (e.g. Performance Infinity, or Sinolink Productions), the festivals (e.g. the Globe to Globe Festival in 2012, the Edinburgh Fringe) and even Chinese culture itself could be considered a brand under these circumstances. Brand recognition by audiences reveals some of the complex challenges of staging Chinese theatre in the UK. For example, it poses the questions of which brand or brands should be cultivated and which parties should take responsibility for developing audience loyalty and building a sustainable brand community.

The theatre company was the brand most commonly recognized by the audiences of *Richard III* and *Poker Night Blues*. Particularly at the Edinburgh Fringe, where the most regular audiences are practitioners in the industry, participants preferred to attend trusted theatre companies. “If we were coming back here next year, I would like to see this theatre company doing a new show, I quite often look at the shows I



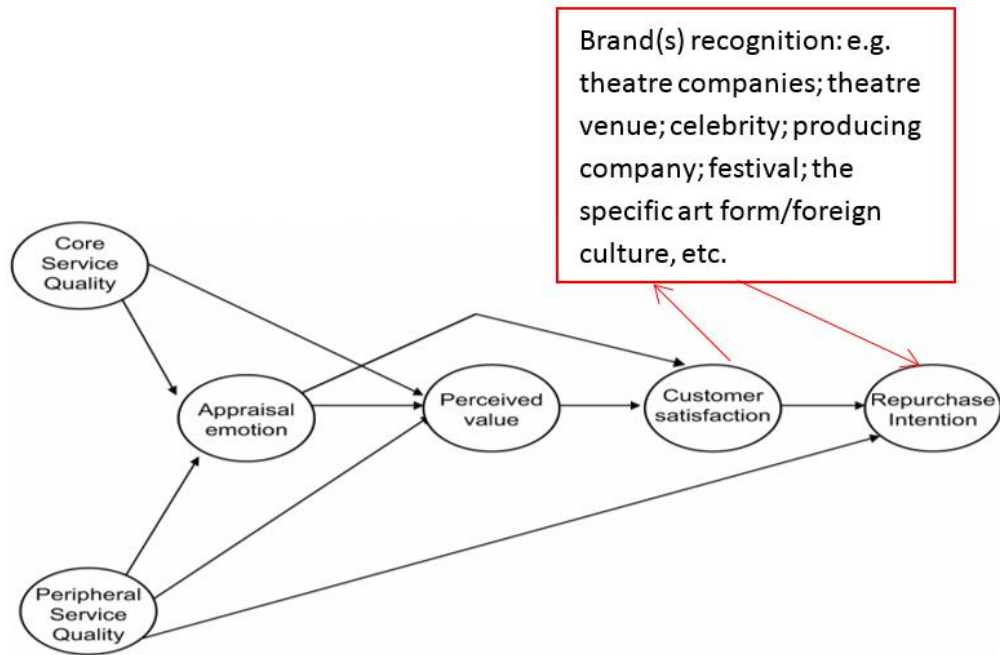
quite enjoyed and see if they are doing something else”, reported Anna, and her friends agreed. Cherry and Eric said they would go to see “this company” if they came back next year. Vivien, the reviewer who gave a five-star review to the show, emailed the author before the Edinburgh Fringe in 2016 to check if “the company” were coming back to the Fringe again. However, for *Richard III*, less brand recognition was afforded to the National Theatre Company of China. Duncan and Bernard were enthusiastic about the high quality of the theatre company and expected to see more productions from “the company” in the future, but the others participants focussed on other brand elements. For example, Dian said that she would like to see another Shakespeare piece directed by the same director. For her, re-attendance would be based on the combination of the company, the director and the Shakespearean theme, rather than any one of these brand factors.

For the Peking Opera performance, recognition of the theatre company was rare. The audiences were more or less astonished by the art form, and they knew that it had been performed by a Chinese national company, but they did not recognize the company itself. However, when the same company toured London again the following year in 2016, more audiences recognized the China National Peking Opera Company as a brand and a hallmark of the quality of the performance. This implies that continuing to expose the brand to the market could contribute to brand recognition and loyalty, and reduce audiences’ perceptions of risk. In other words, without continuing exposure, especially in international festivals, the emerging brand can easily be buried by thousands of other brands and forgotten by the audience. If the Beijing TinHouse comes back to the Fringe after a few years, indications are that their brand and reputation built in 2015 will not really help to remind the audience or contribute to their marketing. This problem was encountered by the Peking Opera marketing in 2015, where the reputation and reviews in 2005 were no help: “after ten years, the audience is completely a different generation, everything has to be started from blank”, Andrew from the marketing company complained.

On the other hand, the venues, especially those in London, always seem to benefit from audience satisfaction with the performance, even if the productions come from different countries. In the case of *Richard III*, the Globe as a venue attracts the Shakespeare audience and the high quality of the performance, in return, increases

its brand awareness among the regular audiences and the newcomers. This is similar at Sadler's Wells, where audiences trust its reputation for international productions, and the Peking Opera performance impressed its regular audience and newcomers. But the roles the Globe and Sadler's Wells play are different: the Globe invites and programmes productions while Sadler's Wells only rents the stage commercially to production companies. However, the audience rarely know the difference, they only remember that they had a positive experience in the venue. In terms of Chinese culture as a brand, the Peking Opera as an art form won general recognition from the audiences interviewed. Many of them assured the interviewer that they "would definitely see it again", particularly in London. The foreignness of the art form was not an obstacle to recognition or appreciation, the aesthetic enjoyment and the new cultural experience of the performance satisfied the audience and motivated re-attendance intention. But the challenge for the production company and the theatre company is how to transfer this recognition of the art form to the specific brand for future development.

Brand recognition could pave the way for Chinese theatre in the wider market from the perspective of theatre marketing. For the Chinese theatre in the UK discussed in this thesis, there are multiple brands engaged. How to balance the recognition of various brands in the project, and more importantly, how to strategically collaborate among the brands to maximize the benefit of the brands and maintain the audience community afterwards, are questions discussed in the following chapter. First, the model of significant pathways of repurchase intention suggested by Hume et al. (2010) (Figure 6.7) could be developed to fit the circumstance of cross-cultural theatre marketing by adding brand recognition before repurchase intention (Figure 6.8). To develop Hume and Mort's (2010) model of significant pathways and coefficients of repurchase intention, the findings discussed in this chapter could add one more pathway to the model, that audience satisfaction could lead to the brand recognition, which helps repurchase intention of other productions within the brand. In the cross-cultural theatre marketing environment, brand recognition is far more complex than regular theatre marketing due to the more participating institutions, which require more sophisticated brand and collaboration strategies.



**Figure 6. 8 The Significant Pathways and Coefficients in the Cross-cultural Theatre Circumstance (adapted from Hume and Mort, 2010)**

#### 6.4 Conclusion

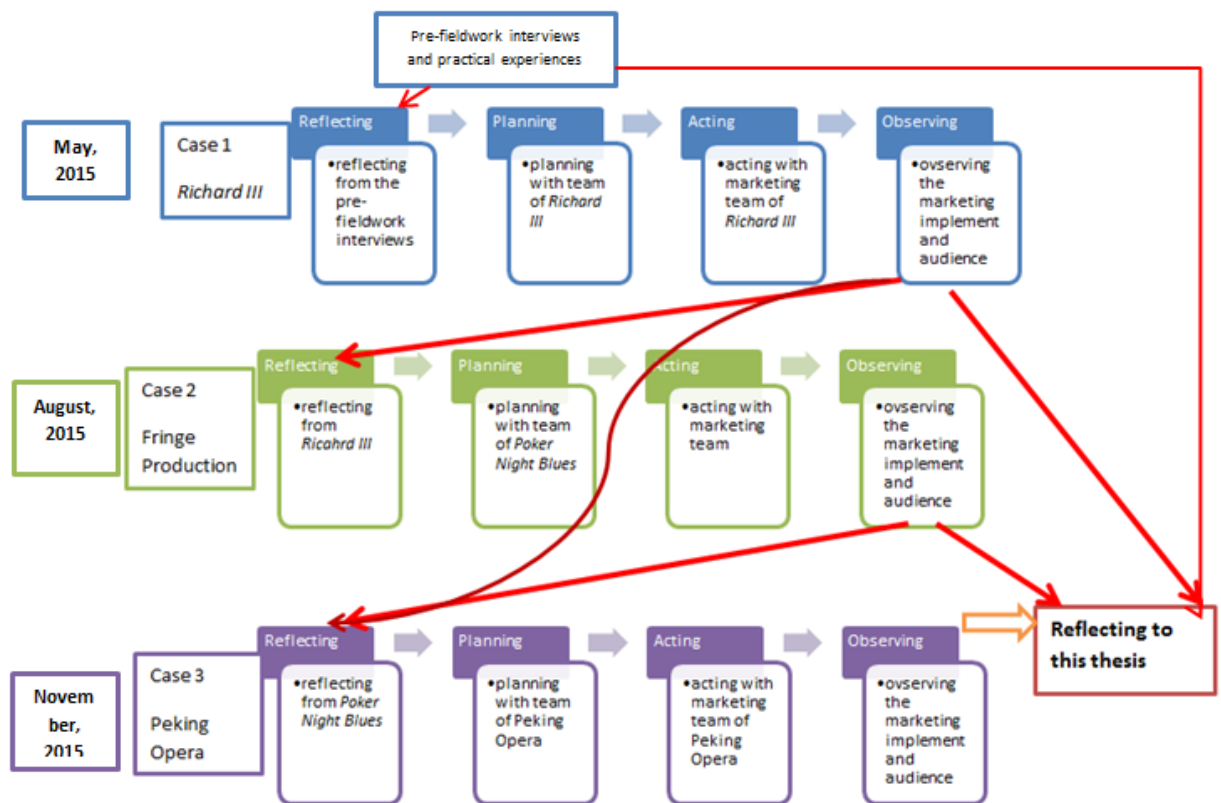
Audience experiences as sojourners in Chinese theatre in the UK is diverse, like the features of audience members in general. They come with different cultural memories, knowledge, cultural capital and taste, which leads to distinct experiences of sojourning in the theatre. There are sojourners who come to experience Chinese culture for the first time; there are re-entry sojourners who have visited China before; and there are Chinese immigrants taking a sojourn back home. Their attendance is based on various motivations which impact on their experiences. However, the immersive experience, culturally and theatrically, of the Chinese theatre productions they attend helps them to adjust quickly to a different cultural context and learn to appreciate the foreignness of their experience. This is a context where the social roles of British and Chinese are switched. The British audience members become the minority in their homeland; they become “guests”, “hosted” by Chinese audience members. This temporary experience strengthens the sojourn experience for the audience and highlights the distinction between attending cross-cultural theatre and the regular theatre-going experience.

Naturally, a positive audience experience would be expected to impact positively on re-purchase intention, including re-attendance and recommendation. However, under the circumstances of cross-cultural theatre marketing, there are often multiple brands and collaborators involved, which leads to particular problems in marketing strategy, including the branding—which brand(s) the audience recognize and are loyal to; the audience development—which institutions should take the responsibility of maintaining and developing the audience, etc. As part of the wider marketing strategy challenges, specifically in the circumstances of cross-cultural arts marketing, these problems require a systematic discussion of how to market theatre productions in different cultural contexts: in the case of this thesis, in the context of Chinese theatre in the UK.

## Chapter 7. Marketing Chinese theatre in the UK

Being true to action research as the methodological approach of this research, the researcher engaged in the marketing and/or production teams of the three Chinese productions in the UK, as a marketing consultant (in the first two cases) or as a production assistant (in the third case). Over a certain time working with these teams and through observation and interviews with practitioners as a researcher, the action-reflection cycle was completed for each production, and the reflections from each case, especially the final one, have been included in this chapter.

In chronological order, the reflections on each production was applied to the subsequent production, as illustrated in Figure 7.1, and this chapter presents the concluding reflections from the action research conducted over the three productions



**Figure 7. 1 Action Reflection as Methodology Applied in this Thesis**

In the previous two chapters, the audiences of Chinese theatre in the UK were discussed, including audience profiles, motivations, experiences and post-performance intention,. Audience understanding, in return, serves marketing and

production, and contributes to better audience experiences in the future. This aim of chapter is to reflect on the marketing strategy of the three Chinese productions studied and compare the expectations of audience members, to reveal the gap between the marketing strategy and the audience reaction to it, consequently suggesting an improved marketing strategy for Chinese productions coming to the UK in the future, and hopefully for all cultural productions marketing themselves in foreign markets.

As illustrated in Figure 7.1, the researcher undertook pre-fieldwork interviews to understand the potential audience segmentations (see Appendix A, Pilot Interview), based on the existing literature, and industry practitioners who had worked with/without Chinese theatre companies before and those from the three studied productions (see Appendix B). Pre-fieldwork interviewees were undertaken in relation to suggested audience segmentation (Chapter 3) based on previous findings. The interviewees have the features: cultural related occupation, theatre-goer, cross-cultural traveller, aged from 19 to 60s. They have various nationalities, but all currently live in the UK (see Appendix A, Pilot Interview). In terms of industry practitioners, along with the 7 team members from the three Chinese productions, there are 2 producers from another Chinese production at the Fringe in 2015, and 3 British regional theatre practitioners who were interviewed before the first case study (*Richard III*) (see Appendix B).

The benefit of implementing anthropological methodological philosophy is that the findings related to marketing strategy come not only from the in-depth interviews but also from first-hand observation and anonymous information sources working with the teams, for instance private conversations, informal interviews where the researcher was asked to “keep it between us”, unpublished reports etc. The different context of Chinese theatre in the UK of the three productions studied in this thesis, offer a relatively comprehensive overview of the current marketing strategy. The three productions in three cities in the UK all applied different marketing strategies, which are described separately and analysed in detail.

Through understanding the audience of Chinese theatre productions in the UK, this chapter reflects the current marketing strategies from the three case studies, exploring possibly better marketing strategies for theatre productions in a different cultural context. Firstly, this chapter describes the gap between the two market

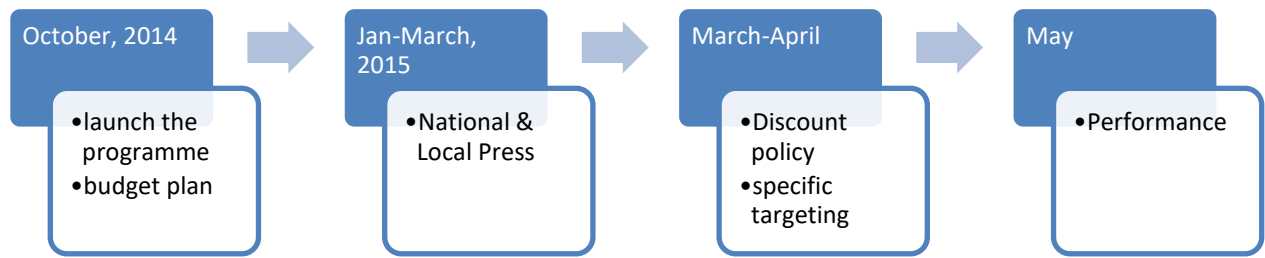
parties—the marketing practitioners (information deliverer) and the audience group (information receiver)—which is one of the reasons the potential audience expressed their disappointment that they “never heard about any Chinese theatre in town” (James, in Manchester). The following section of this chapter suggests an improved marketing strategy to solve the revealed problems of Chinese theatre in the UK. Audience development and strategic collaboration becomes the core of the strategy, and achieving it requires strategic tools, such as pricing, branding, digital engagement and audience education. The AIDA model of marketing is applied, which is discussed in detail in what follows.

### **7.1 Reflection on the marketing strategies**

In this section, the marketing strategies applied by three teams are presented, analysed and compared in order to comprehensively portray the markets and marketing tools currently used for promoting Chinese theatre in the UK.

#### *Richard III* at the Globe, London

Shakespeare’s Globe in London is a well-known sightseeing spot for Shakespearean productions and Elizabethan style playhouse architecture. It attracts Shakespeare lovers as well as national and international tourists. The Mandarin version of *Richard III* was an invitation production in the Globe’s programme in 2015 which was a return visit from the Globe to Globe Festival in 2012. As the marketing manager David explained, *Richard III* was launched with the Globe programme of 2015 in late 2014, and was marketed following a similar timeline to other productions in the programme (Figure 7.2).



**Figure 7. 2 Timeline of the Marketing Process of *Richard III***

The Globe to Globe Festival in 2012 was specially curated for the London Olympics, with 38 works of Shakespeare presented in time honoured theatre tradition from different cultures. The artistic director Dominic Dromgoole chose and invited Xiaoying Wang, a well-known theatre director in China, to bring a Chinese version of *Richard III* to London. In this context, this version of *Richard III* is full of Chinese elements: Mandarin dialogue, stage scenery, costume, Peking Opera style singing, live music etc. (Figure 7.3).



**Figure 7. 3 *Richard III* Stage Photo (the Globe website)**

In contrast to the usual Shakespearean productions produced and presented by the Globe, the language barrier and Chinese elements made this version distinct. For the marketing team, following the STP (segmentation, targeting, positioning) model, audience segmentation was considered a priority, to match the distinction of this production. The result was that the majority of the marketing resources were focused on targeting Chinese communities. “We have three Chinese speaking freelancers to



help translate the marketing materials and deliver the information to the Chinese communities,” confirmed David, the marketing manager. He explained that this was one of the strategies the Globe regularly applied to marketing international productions. For instance, they had Spanish-speaking freelancers for promoting Spanish-speaking Shakespearean productions. In this case, the Globe expected the Chinese freelancers to act as a bridge between the production and Chinese communities, to be specific, to position the performance information to Chinese immigrant clusters, such as Chinatowns. In order to reach wider groups of Chinese communities across the country, the Globe put advertisements in popular Chinese newspapers, obviously targeting Chinese people, especially immigrants and second generation.

Due to the different amount of funding available for press support, this strategy was very different from the one in 2012, which targeted the general public. As David explained, in 2012, *Richard III* was marketed with the festival programme which benefitted from the Olympic Games, and enjoyed huge coverage both nationally and internationally. For instance, the BBC and other TV channels, as well as other media, paid massive attention to the festival three years previously. This meant that the Globe did not have to put a lot of effort into getting coverage but had intensive exposure and mass appeal. “A lot of sales were driven by press in 2012”, David said, “but 2015 was a very different story”. Without the context of the Olympics and the festival, support for *Richard III* in 2015, in terms of marketing, was limited. Under these circumstances, the marketing team decided to put their effort into targeting specific audience segments but were not able to reach the level of same media coverage as in 2012.

The outcomes pleased the team: “four shows, 50% international audiences”. David did not provide any more detailed statistics about the ticket sales. This reflected the researcher’s observations at the Globe, where there was visibly a high proportion of East Asian audience members. It is also indicated by the audience members interviewed. For instance, Harvey said, “it seems like all of the Chinese in town came tonight”. He was at the premiere, when the majority of the audience were Chinese, including a high proportion of guests. The other three shows had fewer Chinese audience members but still a considerably high proportion. To some degree, the Chinese community targeting strategy worked. However, as Bernard, another audience member said, “it deserved a full house”, which it did not get. There were

some mistakes made in the marketing process, especially in the audience segmentation. These will be discussed along with the other two case studies in the following section.

The Globe's marketing strategy for *Richard III* was similar to the other productions programmed, but specifically targeted at the Chinese community. Considering the limited support in national press coverage, they put the majority of their effort into audience segmentation. However, a lack of understanding of Chinese immigrants in the UK, as well as their core audience groups, led to inaccurate audience segmentation which shows an ineffective targeting strategy. This does not mean that the marketing strategy was a failure; the marketing team of the Globe was satisfied with the outcome, and the performance company also achieved all of their strategic targets. The concern here is that the marketing could have been done more effectively with more comprehensive market understanding. For future Chinese theatre at the Globe, or for international productions in general, there is no follow-up audience development strategy: everything has to start from almost zero, as they did in 2015 after the success in 2012. The STP strategy of the Globe worked and fulfilled its goals to some degree. However, the absence of a sustainable audience development strategy prevented reception more effective marketing approach and more durable audience engagement.

#### *Poker Night Blues at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, 2015*

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe (the Fringe) is a completely different market from the other two cases. According to the official report (The Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, 2015), an estimated 2,298,090 tickets were issued in 2015, and that number increased in 2016 (ibid., 2016). Considering the number of visitors who came for the festivals and free events, Edinburgh in August seems like a huge market full of potential attendees. On the other hand, in 2015 there were 3,314 shows in August (ibid., 2015). It is undoubtedly a highly competitive market for any production. *Poker Night Blues* was in this market for the whole Fringe Festival period. Apart from the marketing services supplied by the Fringe Society and the venue (Summerhall), such as programmes and Web information, their first time in Edinburgh the team did not have many resources or tactics for marketing except for leaflets and posters in the Royal Mile, as did thousands of their competitors (see

Figure 7.4). The team finally honed their marketing skills, in late August, when they finally started fitting in to the Fringe atmosphere. As newcomers, they tried their best. The researcher fully engaged in the last week of their journey in Edinburgh. Due to the difficult market situation, personal connection through word-of-mouth was applied by some of the performers.



**Figure 7. 4 Marketing Tricks at the Fringe (Photo by Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images, 2014)**

As the producer, Mr Li<sup>7</sup>, explained, “this is our first time at the Fringe, we come to learn”, especially how to market a small production at an international festival. Speaking of the longer-term marketing strategy, he admitted that staging in the Fringe was a strategy for the marketing campaign in China: “it premiered in China last year, had very good reputation but it was still struggling to sell tickets, I take the Fringe as a platform to win good reputation which could attract market attention in China”. With one five-star review from the *Edinburgh Guide* and a few more positive reviews (one four-star, two three-star and a couple of recommendations in

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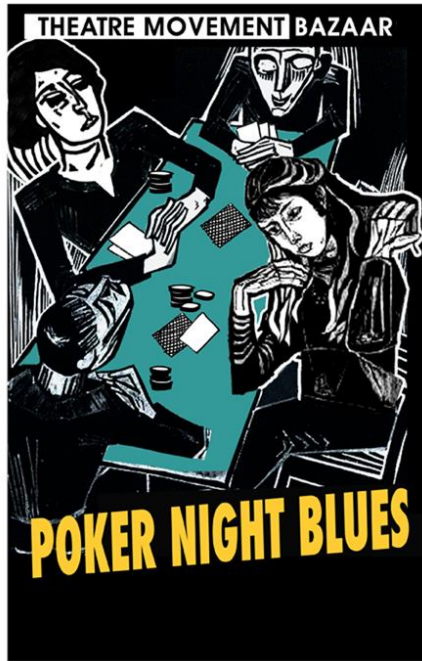
<sup>7</sup> His interview was in Chinese, translated into English by the researcher.

various media), this goal was achieved. The producer frankly admitted that the reactions from the audience and the critics were beyond his expectations: “much better than I expected, I thought we would perform here and leave quietly. The ticket selling is not ideal, but not as bad as I expected”. He believed this was a triumph for a Chinese spoken production in the Fringe, even though *Poker Night Blues* was officially categorized as physical theatre. This is true when considered for a marketing campaign for a forthcoming China tour, but for the marketing effort at the Fringe, it might have been better to use established marketing tactics and approaches. More generally, as a Chinese contemporary production at a festival, it made a positive start to brand building; but it was only a start, and failed to develop a sustainable brand.

The production could certainly be considered as a success from the perspective of audience satisfaction. The majority of interviewees said that there should have been more people at it. Vivien, the reviewer from the *Edinburgh Guide* who gave it five stars, said, “I’m so sorry to see there wasn’t a larger group of audience there, it deserves more, I hope my review will bring more audiences in the next few days”. From the observation of the last week of the performance, there was no dramatic increase in attendee numbers after the review was published, but the attendees showed great satisfaction and surprise about the combination of a Tennessee Williams story, physical theatre and a cultural fusion between last century America and contemporary China, which they did not expect. This unexpected surprise for the attendees revealed the information that was missing from the marketing materials. In both the poster and the leaflet ( Figure 7.5), there is no clue for the audience to link the show either with the classic play *A Streetcar Named Desire* or physical theatre, the two biggest hooks for the attendees interviewed. Indeed not even the Chinese elements or the fact it was a co-production between China and the USA were mentioned.

As Anna, a member of the audience, said: “*Poker Night Blues* could be anything, you know, if we had not met her [one of the performers in the show], we would never know or be interested in it”. She said she only recognized the original story in the middle of the play. Even though there were details in the Fringe programme (see Figure 7.5) and the Summerhall Programme (Figure 7.6), it is hard to imagine that the majority of Fringe audiences would check the programme in detail, like Vivien did (but mainly because her job as a reviewer required it). Even for audiences who

go through the Fringe programme each year, as Guan regularly does, the key information was not clear enough to catch their attention, which resulted in the production being buried by thousands of other productions. For instance, Guan expressed his enthusiasm for supporting Chinese productions in the festival, but this show did not catch his attention at all. The information presented and emphasized could be the reason that the show did not receive the public attention and audience numbers it should have.



Poster



Fringe programme



**Figure 7. 5 The Official Marketing Materials of the Production at the Fringe (supplied by the production company)**

## Poker Night Blues

Beijing TinHouse Productions / Theatre Movement Bazaar

- Venue: Cairns Lecture Theatre  
- Category: Dance & Physical, Theatre,  
- Age Suitability: 12+  
- Times: 17.05 (65 mins)

Aug 

5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M



In Mandarin with English supertitles

In *Poker Night Blues*, Tennessee Williams' masterpiece, a Streetcar Named Desire, is undone, dismantled and distilled to its essential elements. Heightened physicality, dance, humour and an original text blend together to create this intense, touching and steamy fusion between East and West.

*Poker Night Blues* combines the energies and talents of the US-based theatre company, Theatre Movement Bazaar and Chinese-based Beijing TinHouse Productions. This highly stylised production merges two theatrical traditions to create a new form for contemporary audiences.

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### REVIEWS

- "The performers are well-trained and work well together. There are moments that you are totally engaged and want to make the journey with them." - BRITISH THEATRE GUIDE - [Link](#) @   
★★★★☆
- "*"Poker Night Blues"* - intelligent, elegiac, vividly-imaginative musical-theatre dramatises Blanche's tragic tale afresh with charismatic performances and poetic lyricism." - EDINBURGH GUIDE - [Link](#) @   
★★★★★

### SHARE



### SEARCH

Show / Performance

### AUGUST 2015

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	-	-	-	-	-	-

### FESTIVAL NEWS

29 NOVEMBER 2016  
Fringe 2017: Applications now open

29 AUGUST 2016  
Summerhall Festival 2016: The Curtain Falls on an Amazing Fringe

26 AUGUST 2016  
Summerhall Festival 2016: Summerhall scoops an unprecedented 10 out of 19 Fringe Firsts

### THEMES

- Beyond Borders Scotland
- British Council Edinburgh Showcase
- Earlier and Later
- Northern Stage
- Made In Scotland
- Nothing Ever Happens Here...
- Paines Plough @ The Roundabout
- Offsite Performance

### INFO & SUPPORT

- Box Office Information
- Box Office Terms & Conditions
- Accessibility
- Location

Figure 7. 6 Screen Print from the Summerhall Website (captured by the researcher)

However, even Mr Li said that the main market for the production is in China; but they did tailor the show to suit the Fringe. The production was co-produced with Theatre Movement Bazaar, a company rich in experience of the Fringe and other international festivals. When the producer decided to bring a production to the Fringe, he contacted friends in the USA to co-produce the project. The director, Tina, who is based in Los Angeles, held a different view from the producer. She was optimistic about the audience reaction to the production, saying: "The main difference is the different languages". She continued:

but the making and presenting of theatre is universal. [...] People interested in new approaches to theatrical storytelling. [...] the interaction of the old and new, is what interests me, also the audience,

Based on the audience members interviewed and discussed in previous two chapters, the attendees of this production shared the same feelings as the director. The storytelling and the theatrical experiment of the production itself were attractive enough to encourage attendance, but the majority of the audience interviewed had come to the show unaware of these distinct features. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that if more people had been informed that the production was an experiment in storytelling and a cultural fusion of East and West based on Tennessee Williams' masterpiece, the audience numbers might have been significantly improved.

In summary, *Poker Night Blues* relied on sending out leaflets and posters to attract an audience, and used a PR agency to reach theatre reviewers. Undoubtedly, this marketing strategy is adopted commonly at the Fringe and is necessary for a production, especially newcomers, to garner press coverage and audience attention. However, only three out of thirteen audience members interviewed were motivated to attend by the leaflet they received or the poster they saw. The vague performance information and communication strategies without clear targets or hooks, and, more importantly, the lack of word-of-mouth recommendation, could be improved based on audience reflection, as discussed in more detail in the following section.

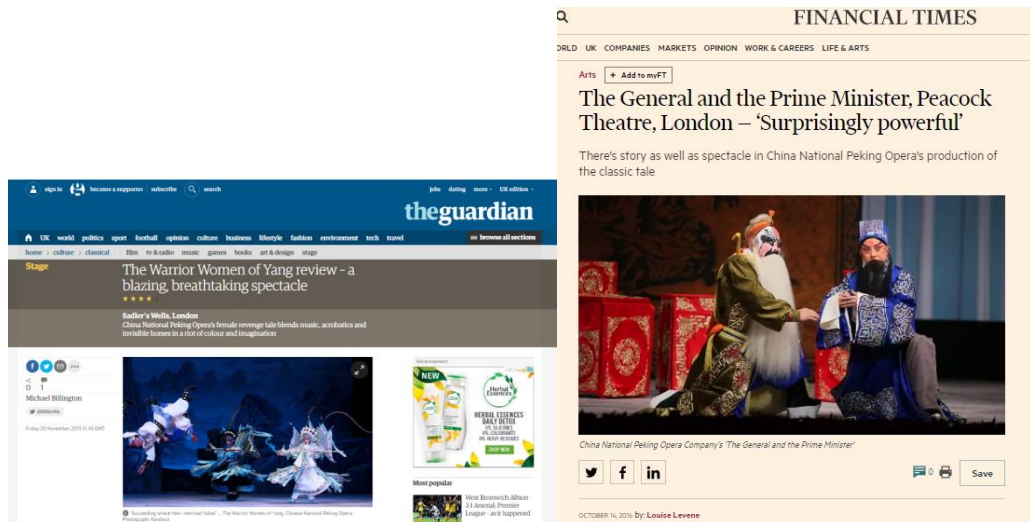
#### Peking Opera Tour of the UK, 2015

The distinctive aspect of the third case from the other two is that CNPOC is a nationally funded company running a commercial tour in a foreign market. Unlike *Richard III*, which was an invited production programmed by the venue, CNPOC's tour in 2015 was produced by a UK-based production company using commercial approaches instead of taking an amateur or diplomatic perspective. Compared to *Poker Night Blues* at the Fringe, CNPOC did not perform at an international festival and the tour had a much larger investment by the production company. The two pieces of classic Peking Opera balanced a relatively story strong, quiet performance (wenxi in Chinese) (*Farewell My Concubine*) and a visually strong, martial art performance (wuxi in Chinese) (*Warrior Women of Yang*). This was part of the strategy of the producer, Kevin, and the artistic director of CNPOC, Mr Yu, who believed that this would help attract a wider spectrum of audience.

This strategic programme was applied the following year, when the two pieces chosen were *The General and The Prime Minister* and *White Snake*. The former is related to political combat in ancient China and full of philosophical insight. According to Kevin it is considered to have a “lack of market attraction” even among Peking Opera fans in China. The latter is a well-known folk tale, a love story between a snake spirit and an intellectual. The edition used was readapted a few decades ago for the specific purpose of promoting Peking Opera in the Western world. It turned out that this strategy, the combination of entertainment and insightful cultural depth, worked positively in winning recommendations from the national press in the UK and provided an impressive cultural experience for the audience.

In terms of reviews, both in 2015 and 2016, the performances received highly positive feedback. Two typical reviews in each year are from *The Guardian* by Michael Billington (2015) and *Financial Times* by Louise Levene (2016) (Figure 7.7). Both highlight the universal value and the insight of the ancient Chinese stories as well as the stunning virtual treatment. Billington (2015) found “feminist overtones” and discussed the influence of Chinese staging tradition in the Western theatre since Brecht, and its meaning today. Meanwhile Levene (2016) highlighted the metaphor of the play to the contemporary world, especially the current British government. For Kevin, the producer, as well as a Peking Opera trainee and fan, appreciation of Peking Opera beyond the spectacle and custom means recognition by the mainstream British theatre industry. Kevin believes this is vital for the continuing market development of Peking Opera in the UK. The PR strategy of pitching to the national press worked well in building the recognition and reputation of Peking Opera in London.





**Figure 7. 7 Reviews in the National Press (screenshot by the researcher)**

Targeting the mainstream market, the marketing team put a lot of effort into approaching the mainstream performance press in the UK. Andrew Greer, from Target Live, a West End live events marketing agency with clients such as the *Lion King* that worked for the Peking Opera project in the early 2015, recalled that when he started work on this particular project, he was panicked by the challenge: “Different from the West End productions, which we regularly do, Peking Opera is completely alien to me, as well as the live performance press and the audience”. He admitted that:

the first problem was, technically, Peking Opera is not opera, even we call it opera, but they are so different from each other, and it’s not theatre either, not dance neither musical, I didn’t know how to fit it in a certain category in the current system. You know, I had to contact every category of press, like opera, theatre, dance, music, you just name it, and got a lot of rejection, because they believed that Peking Opera was not their area.

Even so, eventually they managed to get reviewed by the national and local press in 2015, including by *The Guardian* and *The Evening Standard*, and some other specific dance and music journals. In 2016, they benefited from the outcomes of 2015, and the press coverage became much easier. As Kevin reported, “it’s much easier and we cut a lot of budget in this area, you know, we got contacted by the media to report and to review, can you image this change?”.

However, Nick, who took over Andrew's work in 2016, experienced almost the same panic and all the work Andrew had done had to be started again by a new person. The lack of continuity in project management in the PR agency did not help the marketing or branding, which frustrated the production team. The press strategy in 2015 worked well, at least in London, in terms of attracting the mainstream theatre-goers and theatre critics, and the benefits have been indicated to last much longer. Andrew expressed his regret that the positive feedback in 2005 when the CNPOC first visited London could not be continued: "we couldn't actually use it to make any effort nowadays, it's an entirely different generation of audiences in London now". The huge budget dedicated to national press in the marketing strategy worked well but also led to a financial deficit for the whole project in 2015, which could only be paid back if it could be developed into a long-term project. This, at this moment, is almost an unachievable goal for many Chinese theatre companies. For example, all the marketing effort input into *Poker Night Blues* at the Fringe in 2015 could be considered wasted in the following years if the same team or brand did not perform at the Fringe again.

Apart from targeting the mainstream market through the national press, pre-show activities were part of the strategy of audience engagement and raising public awareness. As suggested by the researcher, the marketing team planned a series of events for raising market awareness. The first was in early May 2015, at the Museum of Liverpool. The production team recruited a small team of amateur Peking Opera performers in the UK to run a workshop accompanied by three clips of live performance, on the ground floor of the museum. They also organized a small scale exhibition relating to Peking Opera history and Chinese musical instruments, etc. (see Figure 7.8). When the performance company arrived in the UK, Liverpool City Council arranged a welcome party for CNPOC. A short live performance was organized by the marketing team (see Figure 7.9), aimed at attracting local media. Directly after it, the marketing team cooperated with the Confucian Institute of the University of Liverpool to host a workshop led by the professional Peking Opera artists from the performance company, including performers, musicians, dressers etc. (Figure 7.10). However, these combined efforts did not have a significant impact in Liverpool, which led to the cancellation of another workshop in SOAS, London.



**Figure 7. 8 Exhibition and Performance at the Museum of Liverpool (images by the researcher)**



**Figure 7. 9 Live Performance at Liverpool City Council (image by the researcher)**



**Figure 7. 10 CNPOC Workshop at the University of Liverpool (image by the researcher)**

Pre-show activity is suggested widely in the academic literature (e.g. by Pitts, 2005; Walmsley, 2011; Carlson, 1990) and is increasingly expected by the audience. However, how to engage potential audiences before a production remains challenging. In the case of the Peking Opera in 2015, the activities at the museum in May 2015 did attract public attention, but it was far too early before the performance in November 2015, which meant it contributed little to ticket sales in Liverpool. A

visitor interviewed later admitted that he did not buy a ticket even though he had planned to:

While I have to say I forgot it for a while, I knew it's sometime in the winter, [...] and I wanted to go with my mom, but you know, I just moved here, work keeps me busy and a lot of different things keep coming up, when I sort of remember to check it out, it's already gone!

Another interviewee at the activity in the museum, Leslie, did book a ticket for the performance, but "it got cancelled! I had really high expectation about this show, but I couldn't make the other dates!" It was shame that the attendees of the workshop in the museum did not turn out to be actual audience members for various reasons, but the art form did impress them. There was not a big group of attendees for the CNPOC led workshop at the university, which disappointed the Chinese artists and the marketing team. The high quality introduction to Peking Opera was appreciated by the attendees, who were mainly North of England based academics in performing arts, music, Far East Studies etc.. The marketing team deeply regretted trusting the Confucian Institute to take full responsibility for marketing the event instead of marketing it professionally. However, the marketing skills were not the only thing to blame. According to the audience members, post-show activities are preferred to pre-show activities. If the activities planned could have been arranged two weeks ahead of the performance, the museum activities conducted closer to the show, and the CNPOC led workshop arranged after or in the middle of the tour period, there might have been a different outcome. Unfortunately, in 2016, the strategy did not carry on. Bev, the project manager, said with great regret, "in an ideal situation, we'd love do these activities, even tour it before the show, but it costs too much, within this limited budget, we could only do this much".

In terms of city choice, in 2015, the deal between Sinolink Productions and CNPOC was that it had to be a UK tour which covered at least two cities. Liverpool, as Bev said, was not the first choice but a compromise. She recalled her frustrated experience in pitching a venue outside London:

My first choice was Edinburgh, rich in culture and it has the tradition of international productions, like London, but it was too late, we couldn't get any space there, and we were nobody back then, which made everything even harder, venues don't trust us. After Edinburgh, I tried Manchester, you

know, a big city in the north with a big Chinese community. And again, the time wasn't on our side, we couldn't get any slot at that period there. And then Liverpool, not a bad choice then, is also a big city, solid Chinese community. [...] Liverpool City Council was incredibly helpful and was willing to help, I actually don't know why, even now, we tried everything, but just didn't sell the tickets.

Two shows in Liverpool were cancelled, and only about 60% of seats were occupied for the remaining two performances. A certain number of tickets were sent out free or at a big discount. In the following year, 2016, London was the only city they performed in. The producer concluded that “maybe people outside London are not ready for Peking Opera yet”. This might be true, but Kevin also admitted that, “after Liverpool, I don't completely trust British marketing and PR people in this project, they don't really know the selling points of it”. Previously, Kevin had full confidence and trust in the marketing and PR team, which was full of British people with experience in the West End: “I trust them, I leave all of the marketing stuff to them, they are professional and they know the market”. After Liverpool, Kevin became involved in the marketing campaign in London, attracting Chinese communities, and did the same in 2016. The fact is, the marketing team led by British practitioners who consider Peking Opera alien to the mainstream audience could not achieve the full market potential experienced by *Richard III* in the Globe. The failure of Liverpool is not too hard to understand. The marketing strategy partly worked in London, but it did not determine the right audience segments in Liverpool. Even with generous support from the city council (Marketing Liverpool, Liverpool Vision), the promotional activities remained ineffective. The British audience members interviewed were mainly from the city council or received information from friends who worked at the city council. In other words, the efforts put into the public marketing—a big proportion of the budget—did not work. The audience suggested a few frequently used information sources, such as local radio: “I drive to work daily, I basically quite rely on radio, if they were saying something coming to town, I would keep it in my diary”, Billy's mother said. She got her ticket from her daughter who worked for the city council. The difference between the London audience and a regional audience was not factored in to the marketing planning, even though the production team hired a local Liverpool marketing company. This does not mean Liverpool, or the other cities outside London are “not

ready for Peking Opera”, as an audience member from Hull said: “if opera in Italian could sell in Hull, I can’t see why not Peking Opera”.

There are two other factors that led to the disappointing outcome in Liverpool. The first is the venue chosen, the Echo Arena, which is for commercial hire, and regularly used for concerts. According to the audience members interviewed, they do not often go to the Echo Arena; the Empire Theatre and Everyman Playhouse are their regular choices and they receive communications directly from them. Like Sadler’s Wells in London, there is a solid audience for the venue which the Echo Arena could not compete with. The second factor, which also damaged the marketing effort in London, is that in 2015 the team agreed with Target Live that to market Peking Opera as opera—even though all of them share the idea that it is not opera—and follow the pricing policy. Andrew said, “Peking Opera is such an old and elegant art form, if opera could sell tickets at 80 quid, so does Peking Opera, you have to show that it is high quality and a rare opportunity, and people will buy!” Kevin did not contest this because in China, CNPOC’s performances, especially those led by Mr Yu Kuizhi and Ms Li Shengsu, could go for more than a thousand yuan (about 100 GBP) and sell out quickly. He expected the fame of the two Peking Opera stars could attract the Chinese audience to pay more. Unfortunately, but not entirely surprisingly, in Liverpool, the audience (who came for opera) were confused, because it was obviously different from what they expected. The box office statistics showed that the top price tickets hardly sold. After Liverpool, they offered a better discount on the higher priced tickets for London, to make it affordable for the new experience seekers. In 2016, the ticket price at the Peacock Theatre was no higher than £45. The marketing team learnt that Peking Opera in the UK market is still an entirely new experience, level 7 for foreignness of cultural production (see Figure 2.1). Cheaper tickets would be an obvious way to stimulate attendance, and lower the risk of the venture.

In short, in 2015, the Peking Opera marketing strategy followed West End tradition in order to attract a mainstream audience and raise the attention of the public. Cooperation with local marketing and PR companies achieved many goals. The positive reviews and large amount of national press satisfied every stakeholder and contributed to the audience appeal in London. The targeting of the British mainstream audience had the benefit of attracting a Chinese audience as well, and this continued to contribute to the marketing effect in 2016. The attempt to create a

Chinese cultural environment for the audience contributed to audience satisfaction, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, the pre-show activities were not managed properly which led to a poor outcome. This frustrated the marketing and production teams and led to the cancelation of similar activities the following year.

The limitation of being a commercial tour rather than a government subsidized project, as well as the lack of official supportive statements from either government in 2015, restricted the Chinese press support and prevented the production from getting commercial sponsorships from Chinese companies in the UK to make up the deficit. Consequently, the marketing strategy had to concentrate on mass marketing, such as Tube advertisements, and cut audience education and engagement activities. This had not changed in 2016, even when Mr Liu Xiaoming, the Chinese Ambassador to the UK, spoke highly of it in public.

All these issues lead to the question of who should take responsibility for developing audiences in the cross-cultural theatre marketing context. Chinese Government-led cultural activities are frequently considered propaganda, as intimated by the theatre-goers interviewed at the Fringe, but private production companies can rarely afford the costs of overseas performances. Sinolink Productions and Beijing TinHouse Productions, without any government funding, did not recover their investment in the performances: indeed two years of performances left Sinolink, in deficit. It seems unreasonable to ask private companies to invest in audience development strategies, especially in relation to public engagement and audience education. Some of the venues, like Sadler's Wells in 2015, did not even want to get engaged in marketing, nor even in audience development. "Sadler's Wells as a company does not promote any of its hires, including Chinese shows", said Kelly, Event Manager of Sadler's Wells, who had worked with a couple of Chinese companies. Apart from the macro policy environment, there are a few shared lessons to take from the marketing strategies of the three cases, which highlighted the divergence between the audience/market and the marketers.

## **7.2 The divergence between audience and marketers**

It would be unfair to compare the three productions directly in terms of which is more successful, due to the different market and marketing contexts, but the



comparison among them does illustrate the existing marketing strategy of Chinese theatre in the UK, and to some degree, the marketing context in the UK for Chinese theatre productions. As discussed in Chapter 5, the three productions attracted similar groups of people: theatre lovers and cross-cultural experience seekers. The two productions in London attracted a significant group of Chinese immigrants. The shared audience interests should, to some degree, lead to similar strategic marketing campaigns that attract and stimulate motivation, which could include highlighted marketing information (hooks or selling points), communication approaches (promotion), and audience development and engagement. This section analyses the marketing strategies of the three case studies using the STP (segmenting, targeting, positioning) model.

### **7.2.1 Audience segments**

Among the three productions, the marketing teams were all satisfied with the outcomes in terms of ticket sales, and the features of the attendees basically matched what they expected from the marketing campaign. In summary, the audience segments of the Chinese theatre productions studied in this research can be categorized into the following target groups: regular theatre-goers who are familiar with theatre and use trusted information sources; cross-cultural travellers who are looking for new cultural experiences; Chinese culture lovers who are interested in Chinese culture (e.g. literature, language, history) and/or have Chinese friends; and Chinese immigrants who would like to see high quality Chinese performances for reasons of nostalgia and cultural heritage.

These audience features for Chinese theatre productions in the UK match the culture segments suggested by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, which is the largest cultural strategy and research agency in the UK. Among the eight culture segment categories (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2016), the audience for Chinese theatre described above could be categorized as “essence”: well-educated and highly-active in cultural engagement and feel culture is essential for self-fulfilment and challenge (theatre-goers and new cultural experience seekers); “stimulation”: attracted to unusual, spectacular and experiential cultural events with friends (new cultural experience seekers); “enrichment” appreciates and admires culture that is acknowledged for its excellence and chooses cultural activities that fit with their interest in nature and

heritage and lets them experience nostalgia (Chinese cultural lovers and Chinese immigrants). As the report shows, these segments represent high motivation for taking risks on new cultural activities, which not surprisingly constitute the main audience segments of Chinese productions in the UK. However, the audience segments for new theatre experiences, like the Chinese productions in this thesis, discussed in the literature review are more diverse. Young audiences are the vital missing segment in all three case studies. To attract the other two significant audience segments, Chinese immigrants and theatre lovers, there are appropriate activities in the strategic marketing process which are discussed in detail below.

### The missing young audience

In contrast to the mainstream theatre audience who are aged (Baumol and Bowen, 1973), younger audiences consist of young adults with education in related fields such as theatre, arts, Chinese culture etc. and the generation younger than 35 who work in the cultural and creative industries. The young non-attendees interviewed, like James (see Appendix A, Pilot Interview), are willing and eager to experience new culture. This absent group of people, common to the three productions, but in different contexts, feel less alienated by performances from different cultural contexts based on their background (performance and/or Chinese study), and this sense of familiarity can have a significant impact in terms of experience and consumer behaviour (Carlson, 1990; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Park and Lessig, 1981). In order to understand this audience group, nine in-depth interviews with people who have these features were undertaken beyond the three studied cases (see Appendix A, Pilot Interview).

All interviewees expressed a strong interest in engaging with Chinese theatre. Ying works as an arts curator of contemporary Chinese visual art. She moved to England from North America and tries her best to attend Chinese performances in order to remember her childhood in China. She recalled:

when I was growing up with my grandfather in China, I spent a lot of time with my grandfather, he introduced me to Beijing Opera, and he likes to sing the sort of the songs he knew from Beijing Opera, and I was around, and I know a little bit about Beijing Opera. [...] But I did attend some sort of Beijing Opera group in London, called Kungju or something, and it is based

at SOAS I think, they put the performance on at different venues sometimes, and once they put it in the British Museum which I went to see. They don't have performance very often, maybe like once a year or twice a year, or something, and I try to go to there. I'm sort of quite interested in it, and I like opera.

For Ying, Peking Opera and traditional Chinese opera provide a cultural connection to her childhood, and she is keen to attend more. But where to find information about these events has bothered her since she moved to the UK: "unless you look very hard, it is very hard to find the information of this kind of event, even in London, where I think is most of these things happen". None of the three cases' communications had reached her when the researcher followed up after the fieldwork. The main information source for her is word-of-mouth.

The same enthusiasm is shared by the other British participants who are related to Chinese culture to some degree. For instance, James majored in Chinese Studies at the University of Oxford and did an exchange year in China. His brother and sisters work in the theatre industry, which has encouraged him to become a theatre-goer. When he was in China, he attended local performances from time to time. However, back in London he admits that: "I'm sort of isolated from Chinese culture again, I can't find sources about it, the same with my friends who went to China with me". His family members pass him theatre information in London but very little about Chinese theatre. The interviewees who live in London complain about the lack of Chinese performance there, let alone outside the capital city.

For the interviewees working in the cultural and creative industries, the cultural differences in the products excited them. Bond is a musician and specifically interested in world music. He has an impression of Chinese drum performance from TV but no other information or experience, although he "would love to hear more similar things". Joy studied art history and has been a freelance curator since graduation: "I travelled in China when I was younger, the life and culture there was very different and impressive [...] I never get any chance to experience that again in the UK". The novel experience of different cultures is considered an inspiration for the young artists: rather than avoiding the risk of the unfamiliar, they actually travel to embrace foreignness. A sojourn experience in their homeland has the potential to stimulate their motivation to attend Chinese theatre.

There is an interest in, and demand for, Chinese culture among the younger audiences who love Chinese culture and/or the arts. However, they were the audience segment absent from the auditoriums of Chinese theatre in the UK in 2015. This absence of youngsters is caused by various problems related to marketing strategy.

In *Richard III*, the Globe's marketing team did not consider the young audience, including student groups, as a target segment. "Unfortunately, it's in the summer season again, students are all out of town", David responded to the suggestion of targeting students, especially international students, and the same resistant attitude is taken to the suggestion of attracting tourists. The concentration on the "Chinese immigrant" segment strategy meant that the Globe team pushed away other audience segments. It does make sense to target a Chinese audience for Chinese productions, however this "straightforward" strategy stopped marketing information being delivered to other segments who are potentially highly interested in it, and could be potentially developed into a loyal audience for Chinese productions as well as for the Globe itself. Audience members like Jiaoyang, who received information coincidentally from a Chinese social network and invited her British friend, excitedly expressed their enthusiasm about the Globe and the production. She, and those sharing similar characteristics, such as arts/literature students, theatre-goers and international students, could easily be maintained and become a core audience group. Consequently, in the longer term, it would save much work for the marketing team to explore these unknown markets. In concentrating predominantly on Chinese immigrants, the marketing team at the Globe missed other potential audience segments.

At the Fringe, rather than saying the marketing strategy missed any particular segment, there was no segmentation strategy whatsoever for *Poker Night Blues*. The limited marketing budget with no specific target groups could be blamed for the poor ticket sales. The focus on the press and receiving reviews of the play was sensible and necessary, because good reviews are seen at the Fringe as "the only effective way to make it stand out from thousands of productions", according to Joanna, the agent of *Poker Night Blues*. However, the reality is that the audience who were supposed to be attracted still did not come despite the five-star review. Potential audience members like Guan, a Chinese PhD student in Edinburgh who, as he claimed, "always keep budget for Chinese productions, especially the self-funded

contemporary, experimental productions”, never noticed or heard anything about this “contemporary, experimental” physical theatre from China. Pia, a performer in the festival, was willing to explore new theatrical experiences but only from a trusted source. Anna and her friends, who, just like Pia, were engaged in the Fringe as practitioners, were motivated to attend eventually due to the information exchanged in person with a performer from *Poker Night Blues*.

If there was more information targeted at young practitioners through word-of-mouth the way Anna received information, it might have led to higher audience figures. Sam and Tom attended a South African production and were looking for new theatrical and cultural experiences from the Fringe, but were against the government supported traditional Asian productions which were “quite obvious and eye-catching in the Royal Mile” as they were afraid they could be “tourists oriented and maybe with some propaganda”. *Poker Night Blues* was neither “traditional Asian” nor “government supported”, and the contemporary and physical characters of the production matched what they were interested in, which means they could have been attracted and convinced to attend.

The Fringe is an extremely competitive market where productions are desperate to stand out. At the same time, audiences are in the same situation, eagerly looking for the right productions. Instead of relying on convincing unknown and undifferentiated tourists passing the Royal Mile who were not necessarily interested in a combination of Tennessee Williams and Chinese culture, more effort could have been put into introducing the production properly to theatre lovers, young students and Fringe practitioners.

Compared to the other two productions, the production and the marketing team of Peking Opera had a clearer audience segmenting strategy and tried to apply it in 2015 and 2016. The core target market was “mainstream British audiences”, which Kevin, the producer, believes “have more tolerance of cultural difference and are more familiar with different stage traditions”. More importantly, as a Peking Opera fan, he does not want this art form to be only appreciated by Chinese fans: “it’s beautiful, and CNPOC is the best, I feel like it’s the right time, after ten years absence of it in this country, a real high standard performance could attract British audience to enjoy it”. On one hand, Bev, the project manager, and Andrew, the marketing manager, agreed with Kevin about this segment, but on the other hand,

they remained concerned about the foreignness of the art form for the British audience. Apart from the core audience segments, which matched the demographic figures of general theatre-goers, Bev agreed with the researcher's suggestion of encouraging a younger audience. The young volunteers engaged in the team were all filled with admiration for Peking Opera and encouraged their friends to buy tickets. This should be a positive sign that an audience development strategy targeted at younger audiences could work.

The effort put into this audience development strategy included a special discount for students, and contact with hundreds of education institutes in relation to the performance in 2015. However, the outcome was disappointing, which frustrated the team, who came to the conclusion that youngsters are not interested in this old art form. As discussed, this conclusion is cursory. The volunteers who encouraged their friends to attend and the mind-changing nature of the show expressed by the young Chinese immigrants, such as Faya, shows the potential of the young audience segment and the potentially long-term impact of their engagement. However, the reality was that there were very few students who attended or even received the performance information. The attempt at including a younger audience by the Peking Opera team should be highlighted, even though the outcome was poor. Their approach of building connections with universities could work, with the right contacts (e.g. opinion leaders and ambassadors) and platforms, but in the first year, financial constraints prevented the team from investing more in this segment. There was no specific student strategy applied in 2016. As a commercial project, it might be unfair to require the production team to target a young audience and consider their requirements of a new cultural experience, which again highlights the challenge of who should take the responsibility for developing and maintaining this emerging market.

In short, none of the Chinese productions studied here managed to attract a young audience segment, and some did not even aim to achieve this. Youth is one of the key features of innovators and early adopters of innovation (Kolb, 1997; Kolb, 2005; Tajtáková and Arias-Aranda, 2008). Considering that Peking Opera represents a new product in the British arts market, innovators are of vital importance in the attempts of marketers to develop sojourners and explore their new experience (Preece, and Johnson, 2014). However, in professional marketing practice, young audiences are often neglected in general. More importantly, even if the marketing teams had

attempted to target a younger generation segment, they would have struggled to find the right approach, as discussed in the targeting section.

### Positioning

In practice, the marketing team of *Richard III* and the Peking Opera tour were correct to target Chinese immigrants as a key marketing segment. However, how to position Chinese theatre to this segment remains a strategic challenge.

As discussed, the Globe team was keen to target Chinese communities and recruited two Chinese-speaking volunteers to communicate the marketing messages deep in the relevant communities. As a result, there were a large number of Chinese audience members. However, this approach could be questioned from one perspective: How many of this segment actually paid for their tickets remains unknown—because the Globe would not share this financial information. From the researcher's private sources, there was a considerable quantity of guest tickets sent out in various ways, including to Chinese associations, the Chinese Ambassador, etc. This phenomenon has troubled producers who encounter Chinese productions in the UK for a long time, and the Peking Opera encountered the same challenge, as discussed in detail later.

The number of Chinese attendees does not equate to the number of Chinese ticket buyers. If this is the case, what is the value of putting effort into attracting a Chinese audience? The Chinese communities targeted were not clearly specified by the marketing team. To be specific, the Chinese-speaking freelancers engaged, according to David, were second generation Chinese immigrants. He did not clarify which languages they speak, Mandarin or Cantonese, which could make a huge difference. The language used in *Richard III* is Mandarin, which is the official language in China, while Cantonese is the dialect in Guangdong Province and Hong Kong, as well as some regions of South East Asia. In the 1990s, the majority of Chinese immigrants in the UK were from Cantonese areas, but now there are more Mandarin speaking Chinese immigrants in the UK, who, the researcher observes, are younger, more highly educated and more willing to pay for cultural activities. In other words, they are more inclined to pursue the goal of social inclusion (Le, Polonsky and Arambewela, 2015). Which Chinese communities the marketing team are trying to target should be clarified and to apply different approaches. Without

this distinction, attempts to target the Chinese community would be equivalent to targeting European immigrants: the segment is far too vague and undifferentiated.

For the Peking Opera marketing team, in the opposite way, Chinese was not the key segment targeted, but it turned out that the number of Chinese attendees was surprisingly higher than expected: approaching 40% in 2015 and even higher in 2016. Kevin the producer is himself a Chinese immigrant who has lived in the UK for about 15 years and is strongly against specifically targeting the Chinese community:

We both know that the Chinese don't regularly go to the theatre, it's just not our thing. And I'm not saying this proudly, I don't think Chinese in this country want to actually buy tickets to see a Chinese show. I've seen too much that Chinese are waiting for free tickets from someone they know. I personally got requests for free tickets from Chinese I know. [...] We both know how companies from China work in this country, no marketing at all, send out free tickets, grab some foreigners and take some photos for report, done. And now the fact is, no Chinese wants to pay for a ticket! I don't want this, I'm not going to spoil them this time, buy the ticket or just not come, I don't mind! (interview in 2015).

Even though Kevin made such a big statement, at the very last he did compromise and offer certain free or discounted tickets through his Chinese social networks after the box office failure in Liverpool. The outcome was that slightly more Chinese than British people attended in 2015 in London, which surprised the whole team, and this was even more apparent in 2016, when the box office reported more Chinese tickets buyers too. In other words, after 2015, more Chinese audience members were willing to pay for tickets.

The Chinese family the researcher talked to in 2016 expressed their pride in the fact that their "national treasure is actually being appreciated by the British" and they had bought tickets for the whole family as well as the teenage daughter's best friend's family. Kevin confirmed in the follow-up interview in 2016 that more Chinese groups came to see the performance in 2016:

After the great reputation of 2015 and the approval from Ambassador Liu, Xiaoming, more Chinese felt that inviting their British friends, co-workers and bosses to see Peking Opera was a good thing, they finally found a



chance to show real Chinese culture [...] it's not something embarrassing anymore. [...] [Before the CNPOC tour in 2015] 'free ticket sending' and poor performance had lasted for years, people actually don't even want to go to see Peking Opera even with a free ticket, you know, it's unbearable (interview in 2016).

More Chinese ticket buyers does not mean that Chinese immigrants in the UK have suddenly transformed into theatre-goers, but attending a "high quality" performance from the home country with a "good reputation", and one which was "approved by the ambassador" and "a big trend last year", taking place "in a well-known venue" fulfilled their requirements for a cultural event. The result of the two years' performance in London shows the possibility of Chinese communities in the UK being targeted as a ticket-buying target market, with a proper segmentation strategy.

At the Fringe, the absence of the Chinese audience is not uncommon among the thousands of productions, but for a Chinese show, it could be different. *Poker Night Blues* had the possibility of attracting Chinese international students like Guan, who care about Chinese culture and are regular cultural participants. Guan said in Edinburgh, "there are a lot of 'pretentious people' who go to theatre and cultural events to show their social network that they are different from the others", and *Poker Night Blues* matches their standard of choosing a theatre to go to: Chinese production, self-funded and contemporary. For Chinese international students in Edinburgh, presenting themselves as global cultural participants is a way to show off and position themselves in a certain social group with higher taste and better cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979). On-line social network sharing could be an effective way to reach out to a big society in Edinburgh, but the reality was this group of "pretentious people" did not receive the information, or they were not counted as a segment by the marketing team. There are approximately 9,000 Chinese students studying in Scotland, of which 3,400 are in Edinburgh (Edinburgh Tourism Action Group, 2016). The number of Chinese students in the UK reached about 35,700 in 2017 according to The Complete University Guide. This is not a small group for a Fringe production, and the cultural connection makes this segment easier to target. Neglecting this segment was not a smart move by the team.

Chinese communities in the UK are more complicated and diverse than British marketers expect. Certainly, there is huge potential to segment them for Chinese

productions, but without understanding who they are, what the distinctions are amongst them and how to target them, the segmenting of Chinese immigrants can be too vague and inaccurate. Identifying the communities (international students, new immigrants, families, Mandarin speakers, Cantonese speakers or both, etc.) should be the first step considered by the marketing team, followed by how to target them.

### Misunderstanding the mainstream audience

The mainstream audience refers to general theatre-goers who match the demographic profile shown by previous studies (Baumol and Bowen, 1973; Throsby and Withers, 1979), but also includes mainstream cultural participants who are not significantly different from theatre-goers. As a key segment of the general theatre market in the UK, they were positioned differently in the three cases, but the audience reaction to the marketing strategy revealed a misunderstanding of this segment in all three cases.

As mentioned briefly, the segmentation strategy for the Globe was essentially to target the Chinese community. The mainstream audience, especially the audience who regularly attends the Globe's productions was not considered an important segment by the marketing team for *Richard III* because "there are massive differences between this Chinese production and the others, you know, it's artistically different, and also the language is also a huge barrier" (David, interviewed in 2015). David believed that the differences of *Richard III* would alienate the Globe audience. On the contrary, the audience interviewed, as discussed in Chapter 5, were motivated by the "newness". The marketing team underestimated the willingness of their regular audience to try new cultural experiences. The theatre-goers, most of whom are also cross-cultural tourists, could be identified as cultural omnivores (Roose, van Eijck and Lievens, 2012; Peterson and Kern, 1996; Maguire, 2015), which as Meamber (2014) points out, represents a key characteristic of postmodern audiences: they are open to the unknown, a fact which many theatre marketers and producers have not yet fully comprehended. The theatre-goers interviewed in this case study were highly impressed by the production; their high engagement and feelings of fulfilment and satisfaction improved their loyalty towards the Globe. As a segment which regularly seeks out new productions and

subscribes to theatre communications, targeting this group is not as hard as targeting the Chinese community, which made the neglect of this segment unwise.

The marketing team of the Peking Opera held a completely opposite attitude toward the mainstream audience: their priority goal was reaching this segment. However, in 2015, the British marketing team did not understand what the mainstream audience expected from a foreign production. In Liverpool, the venue choice and the categorization of Peking Opera as “opera” prevented it from reaching the main audience groups in the city,. In London, the explosion of marketing communication in the national press was targeted directly towards the mainstream audience.

However, the cultural foreignness of Peking Opera implies that it could only reach a niche market. The generalization and vagueness of the segment called mainstream audience shows a lack of strategic sophistication. As revealed in Chapter 5, the audience segment that is the mainstream market for Peking Opera shares the features of regular theatre-goers, cross-cultural tourists and Chinese cultural learners, and in many cases, they overlap. This means that focusing on these smaller audience segments might make the marketing more effective. However, the lack of sophisticated sub-segments of the mainstream audience led to an imbalance in marketing input and output in 2015. Therefore, the marketing strategy in 2016 was conservative towards the mainstream audience segment; instead, the marketing team highlighted the Chinese community segment.

The argument here is not to criticize the investment in developing the Chinese audience in the UK market for Chinese cultural productions, but to fully understand each segment before making the decision to target or indeed neglect any potential segment. Targeting the mainstream audience is a crucial strategy for Chinese productions in foreign markets in order to make them visible to the local audience, and to increase the effectiveness of marketing spend. Rather than giving up on the segment, gaining a deeper understanding of the group and finding the niche sub-categories of the segment could maximize the outcomes of marketing input.

In terms of the Fringe production, there was no clear audience segment strategy. Street promotion was the main approach applied. Even under these circumstances, finding the right segment would have helped to make the marketing more effective. Marketers need to ask themselves who the mainstream audience is for a Fringe production. . The tourists who pass the Royal Mile might be large in number, but

would hardly be the majority of the audience. From the researcher's observation from three years' Fringe experience, the people queuing at the Half Price Hub and the box office, people drinking in the courtyards of Summerhall, The Assembly Rooms, The Pleasance, etc. are the ones most familiar with the Fringe, and the regular theatre-goers outside the festival are the ones willing to spend on theatre attendance rather than sightseeing. To have a clearer audience segmentation strategy, which does not require massive financial input, would help the production to reach its actual audience.

In short, audience segmentation strategy is about understanding the production and the audience it could attract. Whatever the outcome of the ticket sales, segmenting the audience based on the characters of the production at an early stage would help greatly in terms of box office performance as well as audience engagement and satisfaction. Audiences are so different and complicated that a vague category, like the Chinese community or mainstream audience, can easily mislead the marketing strategy. Understanding the audience is not easy but requires marketing and academic research and empathy. In the three cases studied here, the marketing teams made assumptions about their potential audiences rather than listening to them, which ultimately prevented the marketing strategies from being more effective.

### **7.2.2 Targeting approaches**

The motivations for attendance expressed by the audience members interviewed were discussed in detail in Chapter 5. In short, the common motivations for all three productions transpired to be the desire for a new cultural or theatrical experience, the reputation or brand of the performance venue or producing company, or a recommendation from a trusted word-of-mouth source that assures the quality of the performance and lowers the risk of novelty. Alongside these core drivers of attendance, social cohesion, nostalgia, and cultural inheritance were also mentioned as motivating factors by both British and Chinese audiences, although these differed from production to production.

It is noteworthy that none of the marketing teams from the three productions explored or captured these motivations. The non-attendees who expressed a strong interest in Chinese theatre were also excited about new experiences and inspired by cross-cultural differences, but very few received any marketing communication

about the Chinese performances. The marketing messages the attendees decoded were different from what the marketing teams intended. This could indicate that the marketing teams not only did not, but also did not want to, conduct enough research about the potential audience of the productions, and did not understand how to stimulate the audience segments that they did target.

The AIDA model, which refers to the communications transmission process of attention (A), interest (I), desire (D) and action (A), has a long history of being applied in advertising and marketing to develop marketing communication strategies (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999; Rawal, 2013). The AIDA model was developed from the so-called “hierarchy of effects” model (Lavidge and Steiner, 1961), which indicates that the customer goes through six stages (awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction and purchase) to process an advertisement. There might be a lot of criticism of the “hierarchy of effects” model and AIDA model from various angles, but in this section the AIDA model is applied in order to analyse the effectiveness of the marketing communication of the three productions from the audiences’ perspective, and to understand the effect of advertisements for Chinese theatre in the UK. Before the discussion of each case, the decision-making process of one member of the audience of the Peking Opera in London vividly presents the divergence between what pushes the audience to take action and what the marketing team assumes. Ding, a young Chinese theatre practitioner living in London, has a strong family tradition of attending and appreciating Peking Opera. She describes her decision-making process as follows:

When I saw the poster in the tube station (Figure 7.11), I thought it was just another amateur performance, you know, in London, it’s not uncommon. I attended one once and thought my mum could do better! So I just walked away and did not pay any more attention. [...] until later, my friend who works with the team said Yu Kuizhi and Li Shengsu would lead the cast, and I just said ‘wow!’ They are the superstars, come on, my mum would be so jealous!” (Interviewed in Chinese in 2015).



**Figure 7. 11 Peking Opera London performance advertisement in London (photo credit: Xinhuanet.com)**

To deconstruct whole process of receiving and decoding advertisement information, Ding was attracted (A) by the advertisement and showed interested in it (I), but the advertisement information itself (Figure 7.11) did not stimulate her desire (D) or push her to take action (A). On the other hand, the information she got from her friend—word-of-mouth—attracted her (A), interested her (I), and the core information of the leading cast stimulated her desire (D) and she acted to buy the ticket and attend (A). The differences between these two information delivery processes are the advertisement platform (underground billboard advertisement versus word-of-mouth) and the highlighting of the information content (Peking Opera versus Peking Opera stars). These differences can be seen in each case.

In terms of the AIDA model, from the “attention” phase, the marketing team went down the wrong path. The pre-fieldwork interviewees expressed their interest and desire for Chinese performance, but hardly received any information about it. The unclear segmentation strategy discussed above could explain this. For all three cases studied here, the audiences that attended rarely noticed the performance through the marketing advertisements, especially those at the Fringe. The performance information did not reach audiences the right way, leading to the burial of information, and no action stimulated by the information. Word-of-mouth, which is often not strategically planned by marketing teams in advance, turned out to be the most frequently mentioned way of receiving information.

Indeed word-of-mouth is generally considered to be the most effective marketing tactic, yet it is the least understood marketing strategy (Misner, 1999). Studies relating to customer satisfaction, customer community building, on-line social networking, etc. have been published intensively since the 1990s (Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels, 2009; Anderson, 1998; Kozinets, Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner, 2010; Silverman, 2011 etc.). Even though these studies are undertaken from different perspectives, there is a good deal of scholarly consensus about the significant impact of word-of-mouth on consumer behaviour and satisfaction.

Unlike marketing research into word-of-mouth on the internet, co-called eWOM, the audience interviewed for this thesis regarded word-of-mouth as “recommendations from friends”. For *Richard III* and the Peking Opera tour, word-of-mouth seemed like an inevitable approach to delivering the information to the audience, but the attendees actually received and were motivated by it. To be specific, audience members like Harvey received information from a friend but, more importantly, his friends who attended *Richard III* in 2012, strongly recommended it. The same happened to Huw, another audience member of *Richard III*, who said he heard people around talking about the show in 2012, so when he received the information in 2015, he decided to go along. The good reputation from previous attendance impacted the new audience. The audience expressed their eagerness for a new cultural experience, and reliable information sources and a trusted brand lowered the risk, consequently helping the decision-making.

*Richard III* in 2015 naturally enjoyed positive marketing conditions from its earlier run in 2012: high national press coverage, large audience numbers, positive reviews, and a positive news story. In 2012, the costumes for the show did not arrive on time, and the whole performance was performed without designed costumes. All of these stories were remembered in 2015, and some of the previous attendees wanted to see the production again (such as Duncan), while others recommended it to their friends (like Harvey’s friends) which saved a lot of effort for the marketing team in 2015. But David assumed that audiences would not necessary want to see it again, and so he targeted different groups. Maintaining previous and existing audience members is a more effective marketing strategy, not only based on word-of-mouth marketing but also the impacting familiarity in audience decision-making (Coupey, Irwin and Payne, 1998; Ha and Perks, 2005). Chinese theatre productions in the UK market in

general are foreign and unfamiliar, the audiences' memory and familiarity are precious marketing advantages that no marketing team should neglect.

Unlike the Globe's marketing team, the Peking Opera in 2016 enjoyed the benefit of a good reputation built through mass media reviews, and they improved the audience experience (e.g. by offering limited opportunities for the audience to go on stage and interact with the actors). In 2015, the outcome was improved with a lower marketing budget. The fact that the venues (Sadler's Wells in 2015 and the Peacock Theatre in 2016) do not share audience information with the production companies makes audience development extremely hard. In 2016, the returning audience from the previous year complained about losing the connection with the performance. How to change this situation and maintain the continuity of the marketing communication with the audience is a challenge which again leads to the research question: Who should take responsibility for maintaining and developing the audience? So far, in the case of Peking Opera, none of the stakeholders has committed to this challenge.

For Fringe productions, apart from comedies and some significant productions with phenomenal success, like *Counting Sheep* in 2016, word-of-mouth is crucially important for any new company. For instance, Guan is specifically enthusiastic about Chinese productions, Pia loves Tennessee Williams, Edmund likes physical theatre and contemporary productions etc., and none of them were aware of this production in which they might have been interested. They would go to productions their friends recommended even though the productions were new to them. According to the AIDA model, the marketing effort of *Poker Night Blues* could not even achieve the first phase—attention. Attendees like Eric and Charley “went through the programme twice” and then noticed it, which demonstrates that marketing information can be so easily buried and missed. The argument here is that the marketing information (or “hooks”) which could possibly attract, interest and motivate attendance were not sufficiently highlighted in the marketing materials to grab the attention of the target audience.

The reason Chinese productions were ignored and largely invisible in the UK market might be that the marketing teams misjudged the motivating factors for the audience. This misjudgement was not only for the Fringe productions, which generally have a low marketing budget, it also applied to the other two productions.



This implies a gap between the marketing team and the potential audience, which unfortunately is the same for the marketers and the attendees. This gap, and the misjudgement of the market by the marketing practitioners, is not an unresolvable problem. Audiences are willing to talk and share their interests, motivations and experiences. Sitting with them during a show and listening to them during the interval could easily update the marketers' data about their targets. However, it seems nobody takes the time to do this, instead they assume who the audience might be and what information could attract them.

Lynne Conner (2004) argues that “the true” audience enrichment programmes “individualize the people who make up the audience” (p. 12). Conner (2016) highlights the importance of the hospitality that the audience feel from the arts institution as the key to retaining the audience and motivating repeat attendance. Audience engagement in theatre marketing practice, as presented by the three cases, has a long way to go to “truly” engage their audience and enrich their experience. The first step might be sitting among the audience to experience what they experience, as Conner did.

In conclusion, the marketing teams of the three productions, in all the market contexts, neglected their audience to varying degrees. Specifically, they underestimated the influence of word-of-mouth in audience decision making: attract the attention (A), interest them (I), stimulate their desire (D) and finally take action (A). The marketing teams also neglected the attraction of the Chinese productions as a new experience for the audience. The marketing teams considered them alien to the market, but the characteristics of cross-cultural theatrical experience (e.g. cultural fusion of Tennessee Williams and Chinese performance tradition, or Shakespeare with home grown Chinese culture), traditional Chinese arts (e.g. Peking Opera), and new theatrical experience (e.g. open air space at the Globe, unfamiliar theatre manners at the Peking Opera) turned out to be the highlights of audience experience, and encouraged their (re-)attendance intentions. These findings suggest that expecting elements like “Chinese” or “Mandarin version” in the marketing materials to motivate attendance would not make the production stand out from competitors. Tailoring marketing information based on the characteristics of the productions, such as the Ancient Chinese feminist features of *Warrior Women of Yang*, or the “cultural fusion between America and contemporary China” (Peter, interviewee at *Poker Night Blues*), would sharpen the core features of the

productions to target the right audience segments, as discussed in Chapter 8. In short, Chinese theatre productions in the UK market are on the culturally foreign side of Carlson's (1990) model, which makes the marketing challenging. However, the challenge could be overcome through better and deeper audience understanding and through rigorous research rather than assumption.

### **7.3 Myopic marketing input versus long-term audience strategy**

“The main aim of coming to the Fringe is to bring the reputation here to raise the market interests about this production in China [...] the main focus is the Chinese market” (Mr Li, the producer of *Poker Night Blues*). As Mr Li frankly admits, the real aim of international touring is to assist the marketing in China. This somewhat cynical strategy is not uncommon among Fringe companies from China. Santuoqi, another company the researcher worked with, has been using the same strategy in Edinburgh and Avignon for years, namely using the “international festival” as a marketing asset to promote their productions back in China. As Joanna explains, “not everybody in China can tell the Edinburgh Fringe and the Edinburgh International Festival apart; for the audience, they only receive the information that the production was a big hit in Edinburgh, they don't necessarily want to know more details, it works in this way in the Chinese theatre market” (informal conversation, 2015).

As a market oriented company without any national funding, it is reasonable to adopt this strategy to maximize the marketing effort in China: China has a bigger market than the Fringe and does not encounter the cultural dissonance. This strategy has not only been applied by Chinese companies at the Fringe: Frey and Pommerehne (1989) introduced a similar strategy among American producers, who would launch shows on Broadway only to make profits from national tours afterwards based on the reputation of a successful “Broadway production”.

Likewise, in the Chinese context, producers like Mr Li invest in staging productions at the Fringe with the expectation of making a profit from touring China afterwards.

While Beijing TinHouse was in Edinburgh, none of the company knew what would happen next. Mr Li did not have any plan for returning to the Fringe in the short-term, and the reputation the production had earned had already met his expectations.

Keeping it at the Fringe was not his plan. Santuoqi attended the Edinburgh Fringe and Avignon Festival consistently, but failed to develop a significant reputation. The main reason might have been the productions' quality, but the flawed branding and marketing strategy (the same as *Poker Night Blues*), especially the lack of a long-term plan in developing the market, led to hasty preparations for the production each year. Even though Santuoqi presents at the festival each year, the discontinued marketing strategy prevents them from achieving a better reputation or a better prepared marketing campaign. Consequently, each year, the marketing campaign has to start from the very beginning. Productions like *Green Snake* at the Fringe in 2014, which was a nationally funded production, are beyond the scope of this thesis because success in the UK market, or more specifically, the festival, was not their aim. Staging at an international festival ticked boxes for the funding authority, which the company was satisfied with.

For private production companies at the Fringe, the one-off feature of the performance impacts the marketing strategy, especially in audience development and branding. Consequently, after years of presenting at the Fringe, there are still audiences, especially frequent theatre participants like Edmund or Sam and Tom, who believe that Chinese productions at the Fringe are “tourist oriented” or even “propaganda led”. Marketing investment turns a disappointing result and has little impact on the audience, when the reputation of one production is not continued or remembered.

The actual attendees of *Poker Night Blues* interviewed were mostly regular Fringe goers (apart from Eric and Cherry, who were from Germany and were attending the Fringe for the first time, but went to theatre festivals in Europe frequently) or worked in the theatre industry. They recognized the quality of the production and the name of the production company, and expressed their interest in following future productions. Mike, a producer based in Scotland, said:

It's a perfect Fringe work, I mean it matches the time limitation, the small venue [...] it needs to polish, to develop if they want to tour it for sure, but it has the potential [...] I will keep an eye on their works and will go for them again next year.

But there is no “next year”. The reputation and the memory of *Poker Night Blues* or Beijing TinHouse will easily be buried by thousands of other creative productions at the Fringe in the subsequent years if they do not present work.

Outside Edinburgh, where Chinese national companies are willing to market themselves, there is the same situation: a lack of long-term planning which seems to conflict with the vision of developing a global audience. After 2012, the National Theatre Company would never have considered coming back to the Globe in 2015. In 2005, CNPOC could not believe it took ten years to get back to the London stage. The overseas performances of national subsidized companies seem random and to lack strategic planning. Joanna, who has a rich experience of working with Chinese theatre productions in London, mainly for diplomatic purposes with national funding, complains about the short-term thinking. The lack of knowledge of programming on the part of Chinese companies makes her work much harder. Joanna provides an anonymous example, a nationally funded dance theatre production. The production company informed her to book the whole tour a couple months ahead, which meant she needed to arrange the venue, ticketing, marketing, accommodation, etc., every detail of the tour, with very short notice. Under these circumstances, there was no possible way to programme the production into the performing season at any regular presenting venue. The solution was to hire a venue, and spend the very limited budget on marketing. Most tickets were given to Chinese communities for free. This unstrategic approach damaged the audiences’ expectations of Chinese theatre. The longer-term purpose of subsidizing arts overseas—increasing China’s national image—could not be achieved.

Joanna has concerns that these short-sighted activities damage the reputation of Chinese cultural productions in the UK market:

It will definitely damage the market, [...] the local audience, if they’ve never been to China, or they’ve never seen any Chinese shows, if they saw a very good one, they wanted to see more, it creates some kind of hunger in the market, they want to give another try, they want to pay attention to see another production. But unfortunately, if they saw a very bad show, I don’t think they will give another try [sic]. The London market is crucial. So it’s definitely a damage [sic] to the market, and to the future, in this market, it’s

definitely a damage, it makes the forthcoming Chinese productions even harder to market themselves (Interviewed in 2014)

The three Chinese productions studied in the thesis have led to the indication that high quality leads to positive audience experience and satisfaction. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the Fringe audiences interviewed showed their impression of Chinese productions, and the other audiences interviewed outside the Fringe context also shared their experience of Chinese theatre in the festival from memory. For instance, Serlina, an audience member of *Richard III*, recalled her experience in Edinburgh of a traditional Chinese performance: “I was quite little back then, my mum brought me, I’m not sure it was Peking Opera or not, the only thing I remember is it was awful! I couldn't bear it [...] I don't think I would be interested in it again [...] but the adopted of Peking Opera singing in this production was quite a success”. Edmund, who lives in London and whose mother is a scholar in Chinese Studies, strongly dislikes home-grown Chinese productions due to the impression of “propaganda” beneath the productions. Before Kevin decided to produce Peking Opera himself, he was a big fan of traditional Chinese theatre, specifically Peking Opera. He is sick of “top” companies’ “poor” performances:

It’s a shame, you know, they (the artists that come to the UK) are good performers in China, the companies that can get money from the government to perform in London could not be bad, but while they were here, the organizers, the ‘leaders’, no matter who they are, want to save money for other things, like shopping, sightseeing, [...] they don’t care about performance quality [...] I left in the middle of a performance, a very famous one, [...] it’s unbearable, such a waste! [...] since then, I never want to see any of them, I’d rather fly back to China to see it. (interview in Chinese in 2015).

The “damage”, to use Joanna’s word, to the market impacts especially those who are actually interested in Chinese performance, and the damage lasts, as Serlina and Edmund experienced. The memory of the negative experience of Chinese theatre did not fade, and not many people would try again, as Serlina did, to go to *Richard III*, to re-judge the memory.

Audience experience is valued from various perspectives in marketing studies and practice: the relationship of customer experience to brand loyalty (Mascarenhas, Kesavan and Bernacchi, 2006; Biedenbach and Marell, 2010), or satisfaction (Berry, Carbone and Haeckel, 2002; Chen and Chen, 2010). Apart from the widely acknowledged general marketing research, the audience experience is highlighted in the cultural industries, for instance, museums or performing arts. As discussed in Chapter 3, Hume et al. (2007) point out the influential impact of audience experience on re-purchase intention in the performing arts. Carlson (1990) goes further, underlining the fact that the memory of the experience of a production can last, and impact the audiences' cultural engagement in the future. The experience and the memory brings familiarity to the brand, which leads to the trust and loyalty of the consumer to that brand (Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels, 2009; Campbell and Keller, 2003). In the Chinese theatre experience context, the findings in Chapter 6 demonstrate that the memory and experience of the audience, for the attendees of the three Chinese productions studied, impacts their ticket purchase behaviour. More importantly, their experience of the production, enhanced by the new experience and memory, stimulates their intention to repurchase, or visit China someday, or just understand China better. For the non-attendees, their memories of China, Chinese culture or previous Chinese theatre attendance somehow stopped them from exploring more. That is why, for potential audience members like Edmond, Sam and Tom, convincing them to experience Chinese theatre, even for free, is much harder.

Audiences have long memories; this is the fact that marketers neglect, especially for Chinese theatre in a foreign market where the special experience is sometimes considered "a lifetime experience". For audiences, it is hard to tell which company produced an event, or whether it is government funded or self-funded. They only care about the quality, and remember their experience of it. This memory and experience could easily be extended to the Chinese theatre, or Chinese culture in general. The myopic marketing and management of Chinese theatre staged in the UK negatively impacts on the memory of the audience. Luckily, the three cases studied in this thesis did care about the market, and also about high quality performance, which led to the generally positive feedback from the audience. However, their lack of knowledge of the audience, or the audience as individuals, as Conner (2016) highlights, limits their further impact of audience maintenance and development in the UK.

It is hard to deny that many Chinese theatre companies based in China do not care about performance quality or audience experience: the UK market is just a one-off stepping stone for them to either tick a box for a funding requirement from the government, or market the event as being by an “internationally established company” in China to earn a larger market share. Unfortunately, it is never a one-off in this market, from the macro or long-term perspective. Negative experience is remembered by audiences and all Chinese theatre companies that want to explore the UK market are impacted. Worse, not only the audience but also the co-producers remember the negative experience with Chinese companies in the UK.

From the perspective of industry stakeholders, such as venue managers, marketers, producers etc., Chinese companies are hard to work with. For instance, Adam, an artistic director of a significant regional theatre in England, had an “unpleasant” experience with a Chinese regional theatre when planning a co-operation:

The challenging aspects concerned the fact that the bureaucracy and hierarchy of the company seemed to outweigh the creative priorities of the project [...]. To be frank, I’m still not entirely clear exactly what the company is/was looking for from a collaboration with us. Their biggest priority at the end of the meeting we had when we discussed the future seemed to be about them achieving profile within the UK (London and Edinburgh). [...] I had a very undeveloped view of Chinese theatre before my visit there. In some ways, my visit reinforced my preconceptions, as the experience was of a heavily bureaucratic and institutionalized organization.<sup>8</sup>

The divergence between Adam and the Chinese partner was their different versions of the project, and Adam obviously had strong opinions about the operating style of the Chinese company. Even though he admitted during the interview that it could be quite different if the company was from Beijing or Shanghai, he feels wary about working with Chinese companies following this negative experience.

Kelly, the Event Manager at Sadler’s Wells, has worked with several Chinese productions, including the Peking Opera tours in 2015 and 2016. In the early stage

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<sup>8</sup> The companies named in this conversation is concealed at the request of the interviewee and the name has been changes to protect anonymity.

of this experience, she had trouble dealing with the cultural differences in managing the collaboration, including the Chinese audiences' behaviour. But in the interview in early 2017, she admits: "Now that I have experience with these companies I can anticipate this, so it's much easier now than it was when I first started". Due to the co-production contract, Sadler's Wells offered a venue rental agreement, and Kelly did not engage in any marketing campaigns of the Chinese productions she worked with, but she observes: "There usually is an appetite for Chinese theatre, dance, opera, however as there is so much choice in London, every show must be spectacular in order to attract an audience".

For many Chinese national companies, this reality is hard to understand: "We are a national company and Chinese traditional performance is so rare, of course people will come", as a Chinese theatre company manager opined in a private conversation. The Chinese market and theatre review culture in China, which is regularly paid to praise the productions by the theatre company, have spoiled the companies and led to an unclear understanding of the competitiveness of foreign markets. Worse, they are often unwilling to understand the market principles or the situation of an unfamiliar market.

For instance, a Chinese theatre manager who came to theatre managing training in the UK in 2016 told the researcher in a private conversation: "What we regularly do to market a production is apply a mechanical marketing format and pour the information to the audience". For Kelly, the experience of working with Chinese companies, especially the consistent relationship with CNPOC and Sinolink Productions, has improved her impression of Chinese companies; but before this, her impression of Chinese companies was that they were "unprofessional" and "hard to work with". On the flip side, her experience reveals the damage of the one-off attitude shared by many Chinese companies while cooperating with venues. Theatre always involved cooperation between different parties: the performance company, production company, venue, marketing and PR company, etc. Being a "hard to work with" party does not make the cooperation process run smoothly. This lacks acknowledgement among Chinese companies, because there are no forward plans, and nobody knows whether the collaboration is going to continue or not, which leads to an unwillingness to study the market, fit into the market, or mention the "individual audience".



#### **7.4 Conclusion**

The discussion in this section aimed to make the point that myopic project planning, especially in aspects of audience development, limits, or even damages, the further development of Chinese theatre in the UK. Adam frankly pointed out that “programming this work without a major investment in audience development strategies would be extremely challenging”. Unfortunately, most Chinese companies have not yet made the necessary investment in marketing, not to mention audience understanding and development. For the national subsidized companies, their policy constrains them with a lack of willingness to study the foreign market, a result of one-off projects. For private companies, their financial situation limits the longer-term promise.

The Peking Opera project, suggested by the researcher, and agreed by the production company and performance company, plans to carry on the reputation and brand from 2015, with the purpose of making it the first profit-making commercial project in the next five years, starting from 2016. As for the other two companies, the National Theatre Company of China can hardly plan any overseas performance without the permission of the central government, and for the Beijing TinHouse: Fringe is done and there is no plan to return to it; the stage and market for *Poker Night Blues* is in China now. To constantly explore the UK market is a challenge beyond their capability and ambition. It might be too ambitious to require all Chinese companies to aim to develop a long-term UK market, but the one-off strategy and cynical attitude that comes with it should be changed, not only for the attendees for their own productions, but also for the Chinese theatre in the UK in general.

This once again returns us to the research question: Who should take responsibility for audience development in the context that most companies only plan one-off tours? Based on the discussion above, the collaboration strategy and IMC model are proposed as suggestions, and are discussed in the following chapter.

In summary, the discussion and critiques of the divergence between marketing and the audience are not meant to deny the achievements of any of the three Chinese theatre companies in the UK market, but to encourage generic improvement as part of a long-term and strategic marketing approach in the future. The findings

discussed in this chapter highlight the lack of marketers' understanding of the market, audience segmentation, and marketing communications. In addition, one-off, myopic project management leads to a cynical and unethical attitude of unwillingness to learn about market or industry principles, or to fit into the market. This has already negatively influenced the audience experience and local co-operators, and damaged the further development of Chinese theatre in the UK. Exploring a market which is culturally different is challenging, and it is unfair to ask one Chinese performance or production company to take full responsibility for it. The following chapter analyses the possible marketing strategies for Chinese theatre companies in the UK, or any foreign market. It also presents the conclusion and findings of the thesis.

## **Chapter 8. Conclusion and recommendations**

Following the requirements of action research, in 2015 the researcher deeply engaged and took action with three Chinese theatre productions in the UK in different market situations: programmed invitation performance in the Globe, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and a commercially run Peking Opera in Liverpool and London. Through planning, acting, observing and reflecting on the experience of the three cases, this thesis profiles the market environment of Chinese theatre in the UK through an extended study of three productions, and reveals the divergences between the marketing and production teams, and the audience members, under the circumstances of cross-cultural theatrical experience and marketing.

Based on an understanding of the audience in the cross-cultural context, the deficiency of the current marketing strategies indicates an almost willing misunderstanding of the audience and a lack of knowledge of cross-cultural theatre marketing among practitioners. Considering this unsatisfactory marketing strategy and misunderstanding of the audience in the industry, this thesis proposes a more effective marketing strategy for theatre productions in a foreign culture context from the perspectives of practical application and theoretical analysis.

As the conclusion of the thesis, this chapter briefly reviews the findings from the fieldwork with the existing literature in order to address the initial research questions. How can we improve the marketing strategy for Chinese theatre in the UK? In order to answer this, understanding the audience is pivotal. Who are the audiences/sojourners? What motivates their attendance? What kind of experience do they have? What are the post-performance intentions of the audience? How to target them?

Based on the findings regarding deeper audience understanding, the second part of this chapter proposes a marketing strategy for Chinese theatre productions in the UK, and other foreign markets, and concludes with a theoretical analysis of cross-cultural theatre marketing, specifically based on audience research. Finally, the limitations and further research opportunities related to this topic are discussed.

## **8.1 Original contribution**

Marketing theatre in a different cultural context is not new in practice, but is discussed very little in the literature (Kay, 2014). Audiences' experiences of theatre productions from a different culture are fundamentally different from those from their own culture. Sojourning is a concept borrowed from the field of tourism to describe the audience experience of foreign theatre productions in their homeland, but it also describes audiences who are sojourning in a foreign culture and attend theatre productions from their own country, such as the Chinese immigrants in this thesis. This thesis argues that it is vital to understand sojourners in order to inform strategic theatre marketing in a cross-cultural context, and the findings of this study, based on action research with key stakeholders, fill a significant gap in knowledge regarding cross-cultural theatre marketing. There are implications here both for professional theatre management practice and for the theoretical development of arts marketing and strategic arts marketing. Hopefully, this thesis will start a discussion in the area of cross-cultural arts marketing that will increase the mutual understanding of Chinese and British theatre and wider culture.

The key findings of the study are briefly concluded as follows.

### **8.1.1 Who are the sojourners of Chinese theatre in the UK?**

The three cases explored in this thesis represent three different models of Chinese theatre in the UK as well as three UK theatre markets for foreign productions: the venue programmed production (*Richard III*), the festival production (*Poker Night Blues* at the Edinburgh Fringe) and the touring commercial production (Peking Opera in Liverpool and London). Each production attracted different audience groups, but in general, there were some common characteristics and audience segments who attended these Chinese productions in the UK which could be used as a reference for forthcoming productions to target sojourners.

General theatre-goers, cross-cultural tourists, Chinese culture lovers, and Chinese communities were commonly in the audiences of all the productions, apart from the Fringe, where Chinese communities were notably absent. Across the markets, the audience members with these characteristics were keen to be sojourners, temporary residents in a foreign land (Sobre-Denton and Hart, 2008), or, in this case, in a

foreign culture in their homeland. In other words, for theatre marketing, the key target audience segments could include the regular theatre goers, new arts and cultural experience seekers and the Chinese immigrants. Sojourners are often ignored by marketers and have thus far been neglected by arts marketing scholars. The findings about the audience of Chinese theatre in the UK with the features of sojourners firstly suggests a model for understanding the cross-cultural theatrical experience that has the potential to explain the immersive experience of cross-cultural art and even the general cultural experience of new art no matter which cultural background they are from. As argued by Grau (1992), cultural purity is a myth, nowadays even more so. Artistic creation, more or less, is about applying something *new*. The sojourn experience could enable researchers and institutions to understand the audience, and their experience, better.

In short, according to Bennet's (1997) theory of the inner and outer frames of the audience, Chinese theatre productions in the UK attract an audience, either Chinese or non-Chinese, with knowledge and experience of theatre in general. However, knowledge and experience of Chinese culture, to some degree expressed by the audience, was not significant (Figure 5.1). In the other words, the audience for Chinese theatre productions in the UK are firstly the regular theatre-goers, and specifically those with a strong interest in experiencing foreign culture. On the other hand, age, gender, nationality and knowledge of Chinese culture do not emerge as significantly different among the audience. In short, the audience attracted by Chinese productions are not limited to those deeply related to China, Chinese culture, the theatre or culture participants. Cultural omnivores (Peterson, 1992) are the core potential audience of theatre productions from other cultural contexts. The findings of the sojourning experience from both British and Chinese audiences reflect the audience segmentations of experience seekers and theatre goers who are open to new experiences with knowledge of theatre and different cultures.

Moreover, the willing to be "sojourners" in the homeland is a motivation that theatre and arts marketers should not neglect. The novelty of cross-cultural arts works is not only a challenge to marketing, but also could be the marketing hook for the right group. In the context of increasing cultural exchange, the findings from this thesis highlight the importance of continually updating audience knowledge, and offering more opportunities for the audience to be sojourners, for theatre marketing practitioners as well as academics.

### 8.1.2 What motivates attendance?

Most attendees of Chinese theatre in the UK are general theatre-goers whose theatre-going motivations, deduced from existing studies, are emotional, intellectual, social, edutainment, escapist, aesthetic, self-esteem enhancement, novelty and hedonism (e.g. Walmsley, 2011; Swanson, Davis and Zhao, 2008; Nicholson and Pearce, 2001), their motivations to attend Chinese theatre in the UK are very similar to other theatre-going motivations. However, it is worth highlighting here that there are a few motivations which are specific to Chinese theatre in the UK. These specific motivations are absent in the current literature but were clearly expressed by the research participants.

For example, willingness, or even enthusiasm, to engage in new cultural and theatrical experiences, was the most frequently mentioned motivation for attendance by non-Chinese audiences. In contrast to the findings in arts marketing and consumer behaviour studies, which highlight the importance of familiarity in decision making (e.g. Throsby, 1990; Cox and Cox, 1988; Park and Lessig, 1981; Monroe, 1976; Coupey, Irwin and Payne, 1998), the attendees for cross-cultural theatre are seeking something *new*. The new experience of the cultural difference and unfamiliar stage traditions (apposite to all three productions), and the representation of familiar stories (*Richard III* and *Poker Night Blues*) as well as the experiment of cultural fusion on the stage (*Richard III* and *Poker Night Blues*) are elements that motivate the action of attendance. As the AIDA model explains, the newness of Chinese theatre in the UK effects interest, which translates into desire, and finally triggers the action of ticket buying and attendance.

The motivations for Chinese audiences in the cases of *Richard III* and the Peking Opera were slightly different: nostalgia and cultural inheritance were frequently mentioned, which obviously the non-Chinese audience rarely shared. Considering the nature of the productions, classic pieces presenting traditional Chinese arts, the willingness to experience the home culture in a host society, and the desire to show their cultural roots to the second generation, and indeed to British friends, colleagues, and even strangers, are understandable. It is worth mentioning that in 2016, when the Peking Opera toured back to London, more Chinese people expressed a motivation to share their experience with their British friends and co-

workers than in 2015. This might be interpreted as indicating an increase in Chinese immigrants' cultural confidence and the process of social inclusion through Peking Opera attendance.

Even though the desire for new experiences motivates attendance, assurances of performance quality, from various perspectives, mitigates the risk of trying out something new. The reputation of the venues (Shakespeare's Globe, Sadler's Wells, Summerhall), the "national" performing companies (National Theatre Company of China, China National Peking Opera Company), the cast (CNPOC), and friends' recommendations (word-of-mouth) all boost audience confidence in going to see an unfamiliar production.

In short, as the participants revealed, audiences often look for something new from theatre-going, and Chinese productions in the UK fulfil this requirement; however, this is dependent on certain assurances of performance quality. It is notable that this desire for newness and the avoidance of risk were ignored by all three marketing teams in the cases studied. As arts and cultural marketing finally enters its post-modern phase, specifically in a cross-cultural context, avoiding the unfamiliar elements in a marketing campaign appears to be both impersonal and outdated. The challenge is how to present cultural novelty and stimulate audience motivation.

### **8.1.3 The audience experience**

"New" and "different", in general, are the epithets that encapsulate audiences' expectations as sojourners in the theatre, but impressive surprises for the audience heighten their experience of Chinese theatre. Interaction was one surprise from the performance tradition. Interaction between the stage and the audience through immersive theatre brought the audience on a cultural journey to China, which they did not always expect. More importantly, the interactions among the audience contributed greatly to the positive quality of the experience. Shouting "Hao!", applauding with Chinese audiences in the Peking Opera auditorium, and milling around discussing the performance with Chinese and other audiences during the interval and after a performance deepened the participants' understanding and appreciation of their cultural experiences. This finding confirms Bennett's (1997) theatre reception theory that the audience experience is more than the production itself: the venue and other audience members also influence the ultimate experience.

Moreover, the theatre venues of the Chinese productions in the UK create micro societies, where the social roles of Chinese and British audiences seem to swap. Outside the theatre, the British are the hosts and represent the mainstream in society while the Chinese are the guests and a cultural minority; but in the theatre, the Chinese audience, as well as the Chinese artists, automatically play the role of hosts and the mainstream. For Chinese audiences, explaining the cultural and theatrical customs to the British in the UK reminds them of their home life and enhances their feeling of social inclusion. While for the British audience, the interaction with “local residents” helps them through the cultural shock of the sojourning experience. This atmosphere was more distinct in the auditorium of the Peking Opera performance in 2016, possibly because, after the satisfaction and fulfilled feeling in 2015, the Chinese audience became more confident in playing the role of host, while the returning British audience became more sophisticated in interacting with the stage and the Chinese. Both audience communities engaged therefore in a developmental learning experience.

Aesthetically, high quality performances and unfamiliar stage traditions satisfy attendees no matter where they are from, but immersion and interaction in a foreign cultural context increases participants’ overall satisfaction. These findings confirm the findings of existing studies into the sojourning experience (Lysgaard, 1955; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Church, 1982) and theatre experience (e.g. Brown and Novak, 2013). The social inclusion and social role-swapping in the theatre in a different cultural context presented as a surprise for the sojourners, and represented social roles in society for the audience, which, to some degree, contribute to the social inclusion of the immigrants in the host society. Le, Polonsky and Arambewela (2015) note the relationship between cultural engagement of immigrants and their cultural inclusion, and the findings of this thesis confirm this broader cultural insight.

#### **8.1.4 The post-performance intentions of the audience**

A positive experience and satisfaction pertaining to theatre attendance generates eagerness to further explore Chinese culture and theatre. The post-performance intentions expressed by the participants could be summarized as the urge to travel to China, discover more about Chinese culture/arts/history, attend more Chinese



cultural events, and follow future productions of the theatre company. In other words, this study demonstrates how a positive audience experience can increase interest in Chinese culture. The post-show intentions of the Chinese theatre audiences in the UK could be considered an impact of cultural engagement and inclusion, from a cultural studies perspective. Engagement in foreign culture increases audience interest in understanding cultural differences and encourages them to explore more novel cultural experiences. Recognition of the performance company after attendance indicates the success of the branding effect among the audience, even if the performance company did not strategically plan for this in advance.

However, the post-performance activities which some participants expected to be organized by the production company, performance company or venue, were not provided effectively. Post-performance activity is argued by scholars to be an effective way to improve the satisfaction and prolong a positive experience (Walmsley, 2011; Heim, 2010). The lack of this part of the marketing process from the three Chinese productions studied not only disappointed the audiences, but represented a missed opportunity to deepen their engagement. Unlike the marketing practitioners' plan, post-performance rather than pre-performance events are more attractive to attendees. Lynn Conner (2013; 2004) insists that the role and goal of "art talk" is ultimately audience enrichment. The willingness to prolong the experience commonly expressed by the audience is highlighted by the research findings, but obviously neglected by producers and marketers. Arts marketing theory should therefore be cognisant of the vital role played by post-performance activity.

### **8.1.5 Marketing activity**

In accordance with the action research methodology, the researcher engaged and took an active advisory role in the marketing teams of the three productions studied in the thesis, and collected data from her observation and interaction with her fellow team members. Based on the analysis of the marketing actions of the three productions and the targeted audience segments, the marketing communication contents and approaches did achieve the aims of the respective marketing strategies. For example, the Globe's marketing team focused on the Chinese community and

used Chinese speaking volunteers and the Chinese media to deliver information, which generated a considerable amount of Chinese attendance. The Fringe production wanted to achieve a good reputation in the festival rather than strong box office numbers and therefore deployed traditional generic street promotion and focused on attracting reviews. Consequently, they achieved five positive reviews, one of which was a five-star review, which everyone in the performance company was happy with. The Peking Opera team, which aimed to achieve the appreciation of the mainstream audience in the UK, hired a West End PR and marketing agency to run its marketing campaign, which managed to attract mainstream national press. In this sense, the three cases studied were satisfied with the marketing outcomes.

However, the *Richard III* production did not effectively deliver the information to the existing audience of the Globe, in which the Globe audience expressed their interest. The lack of knowledge of Chinese communities and their theatre attendance behaviour led to the absence of Mandarin-speaking Chinese families and young Chinese students, who were willing to pay for the tickets for the Peking Opera performance. *Poker Night Blues*, on the other hand, did not have targeted audience segments or a clear marketing promotion strategy, which saw their information buried among 3,000 other shows.

As the audience at the Fringe reported, the most trusted information source is word-of-mouth. Peer review, especially in a context where the majority of the audience members are theatre practitioners, has a direct impact on audience decision-making but this was completely overlooked by the marketing team. The Peking Opera team, underestimated the enthusiasm of the Chinese community for high quality traditional Chinese arts, and this impacted the box office negatively. The West End theatre marketing strategy led by the British did not fully present the advantages or uniqueness of the production, and did not attract the targeted audience as successfully as expected.

Moreover, all three marketing teams failed to engage younger audience groups. In terms of the possible audience segments for Chinese productions, instead of undertaking comprehensive market research, they assumed that the Chinese community would represent the core audience of the Mandarin version of *Richard III*, and that mainstream audiences would be interested in Chinese opera etc. The complacency of the marketing team in terms of the production, the market and the

audience, prevented them from fully understanding who their audience might be, what might attract them and how they might be convinced to buy tickets.

In short, even though all the marketing staff interviewed expressed that they were happy with the outcomes of their respective campaigns, there were a lot of missing aspects, which should be considered in order to improve the marketing strategy in the future. A myopic marketing vision seems to limit the ambition and motivation of the key stakeholders to put more effort and resources into organizing post-performance events and prolonging the audience experience, engendering long-term audience development. Consequently, the lack of continuity can damage or endanger the reputation a brand or production has earned, and if a production tours the UK a few years later, or indeed if another Chinese production tours the UK, the marketing planning has to start from the very beginning.

These findings lead to the suggestion of long-term audience development as a marketing strategy for Chinese theatre in the UK. More generally, from the policy making perspective, as the British Government is keen to push cultural diversity (Arts Council England, 2013) and has plans for long-term cooperation across cultures (British Council, 2017), guiding a long-term audience development and engagement policy across-cultural boundaries and among various institutions should be encouraged at a policy and managerial level. Through policy, longer term cooperation as a strategy in audience development and market exploration could be applied to practice.

## **8.2 Recommendations**

Marketing theatre in a cross-cultural context is never an easy proposition in an increasingly globalized world, but this increasingly significant topic has barely been discussed in the academic literature. This in itself presents us with a significant gap in knowledge, in particular regarding the understanding of how audiences engage with theatre (and perhaps the arts more broadly) from another cultural context. In the four-year research period covered by this thesis, global cultural exchange has increased, and being “international” has become one of the features that each party wants to achieve. Arts venues and festivals want to present international work, while

performing companies seek international stages, and, crucially, audiences look for new theatrical and cultural experiences—as this thesis discovers.

Through the nuanced understanding of the audience of Chinese theatre in the UK presented throughout the course of this study, this thesis proposes that collaboration in marketing strategy in the context of marketing Chinese theatre in the UK should be considered by the engaged parties across the two countries, embodying marketing and branding theories from business studies, arts and cultural heritage studies and cross-cultural tourism studies. This interdisciplinary collaborative marketing strategy would include integrated marketing communication (IMC), especially interactive IMC, co-branding as a marketing tool to develop long-term audience relationships which engage the stakeholders of production companies, performance companies, venues, festivals and other performance platforms. “Audience exchange” (Pitts and Gross, 2017), has been used as a method to facilitate discussion among the audience about unfamiliar arts in order to understand the audience and evaluate their cultural participation. As a proto-theory and method, it is suggested from a cultural policy perspective, in order to encourage diverse audience experience and collaborative arts organizations.

Before any discussion of marketing strategy, the artistic quality of a given production is core to the efficient application and outcome of the marketing strategy. The impact of production quality on audience experience and satisfaction with their sojourn experience is clearly evidenced in Chapters 6 and 7, which echo findings in relation to quality of experience in cross-cultural tourism (Chen and Chen, 2010) and business studies (e.g. Meyer and Schwager, 2007; Ha and Perks, 2005; Park and Lessig, 1981). Satisfaction with the experience, in this thesis, refers to foreign theatre productions’ impact on repurchase intention in the performing arts (Hume, 2008), and familiarity, recognition and preference for a brand (Cox and Cox, 1988; Park and Lessig, 1981; Monroe, 1976; Coupey, Irwin and Payne, 1998 etc.).

In other words, in order to develop a sustainable audience for international work in a foreign country and create a strong, highly recognizable brand with a high reputation, the quality of the productions should be the primary factor, before the planning of the marketing. Even though there is no one standard evaluation criterion for theatre productions, ensuring the quality and understanding the production before bringing it to a new market should be the priorities of the production

process—whether it is a commercially based private project, a festival production or a government-led diplomatic project.

When making a decision of whether to attend a new production from a foreign culture, such as a Chinese theatre production with no known names in London or at the Edinburgh Fringe, apart from the excitement and eagerness for the new experience, finding something familiar within the foreignness has emerged to be one of the key motivations for attendance. The venues covered in this study (the Globe and Sadler's Wells in London, and Summerhall in Edinburgh) are key tourist attractions in their own right, and assure high production values to some degree. A positive experience of a sojourn in these kinds of spaces is rewarded by audience loyalty to the venue.

This thesis thus recommends a collaborative strategy. In detail, the production company, the British venue and the performance company from China should strategically collaborate in marketing and branding, in order to achieve the aim of marketing the specific production, but in the longer term aim to develop a solid audience group in the UK for Chinese theatre. For the cooperating partners in the UK, this collaborative strategy would provide international content which could strengthen the connection between the current audience and the theatre, and attract a new audience to the venue. Moreover, combined with the “audience exchange” method, this collaboration could extend to other institutions across arts genres, to enrich the audience experience of various art forms from various cultural contexts, consequently, achieving a diversified cultural experience for the audience while engaging new audience segments for each partner.

In this process, co-branding and IMC would be the two key tools used to achieve these marketing goals. Following Washburn, Till and Priluck's (2000) definition, co-branding involves pairing two or more branded products or entities to form a separate and unique brand. In this thesis, it refers to pairing two or more theatre companies to present a coherent theatre production in a new market. As a popular marketing strategy, co-branding has proven its ability to form a synergistic alliance in which the sum of the two valuable brand names is greater than the parts (Rao and Ruekert, 1994). One of the core challenges for Chinese theatre in the UK is the lack of brand recognition. The audience does not know what to expect from this new theatrical journey. There is generally no recognition or familiarity with the

production company or the performance company among the British audience. As a touring production, maintaining the exposure of the brand in the new market, despite the position of Chinese theatre in the UK market shown in the Ansoff matrix (Figure 3.2), and building the brand (Monroe, 1976; Park and Lessig, 1991) in the short time period of the performance, seems unreal. Co-branding with a renowned local brand is a practical way for a Chinese theatre company in a foreign market to show familiarity to the audience. For the best known brands in the UK market, findings show that the co-branding strategy improves brand equity and the perceptions of consumers, regardless of whether the partner is a high or low equity brand (Washburn, Till and Priluck, 2000). This implies that co-branding can be a win-win strategy for both Chinese and British companies looking to improve the audience experience and build audience demand. The audience reflections from the cases of Peking Opera and *Richard III* support this suggestion: if Sadler's Wells and the Globe had cooperated more effectively with their respective Chinese performance and production companies in terms of co-branding and collaboration in marketing, the outcomes of the two projects might have been significantly improved.

The strategy of collaboration requires sharing and the integration of resources, especially marketing resources, by the participants. This reflection comes from the three cases in relation to marketing and demonstrates the lack of strategic collaboration among the participants, which results in a waste of marketing resources and effort, and limits the overall marketing impact. The definition of IMC, from the American Association of Advertising Agencies (1989), Duncan and Caywood (1990), Schultz (1991), Schultz and Schultz (1998) and Kliatchko (2006), has developed from "one sight, one sound", to a strategic business process, highlighting audience focus as one of its pillars (Kliatchko, 2008). However, the core of IMC is a strategic approach to planning, creating and coordinating consistent messages and channels. As has been revealed in the course of this study, this is missing from the current marketing strategy of Chinese theatre in overseas markets.

In order to market Chinese theatre in the UK, the marketing focus must be on audience targeting. The production company, performance company and venue should work together to coordinate the message communicated to the audience. Through this, the resources of the venue (channels to the audience, and the quality promise for new audiences), the reputation and appeal of the performance company among Chinese communities, and the resources of the production company, would

be embodied in one coordinated, consistent and solid voice that would maximize interest amongst the potential audience.

Co-branding and IMC could possibly contribute to the continuity of audience development in a foreign market after a tour has completed in the country. One dilemma encountered by Chinese theatre when developing a local audience in a foreign market is the one-off character of the projects. After the theatre company has left, no matter how impressive the sojourn experience was, the audiences' memory will fade over time, and is unlikely to last until the company returns. When or whether the company will return is often unknown. Co-branding and IMC as tools of a collaborative strategy help keep the memory vivid and elongate the experience for the audience through the British partner institutions that maintain the audience while the Chinese partners apply updated content. Consequently, the effort of recalling the memory of the existing audience is saved and new audiences are attracted through the social network. Slowly, a solid audience group for branded Chinese theatre could be built and maintained.

However, the missing and uncertain part in the collaboration strategy is the policy makers. As discussed, the British Council and Arts Council England are keen to support and develop cultural diversity and cultural cooperation. In terms a collaboration strategy specifically for Chinese theatre in the UK, the current cultural policy context offers a positive environment in which to cultivate this strategy. The realistic question is how to consistently apply the policy to practical cross-cultural management across institutions, which is too complex a topic to discuss here, and is thus an area that would benefit from future research.

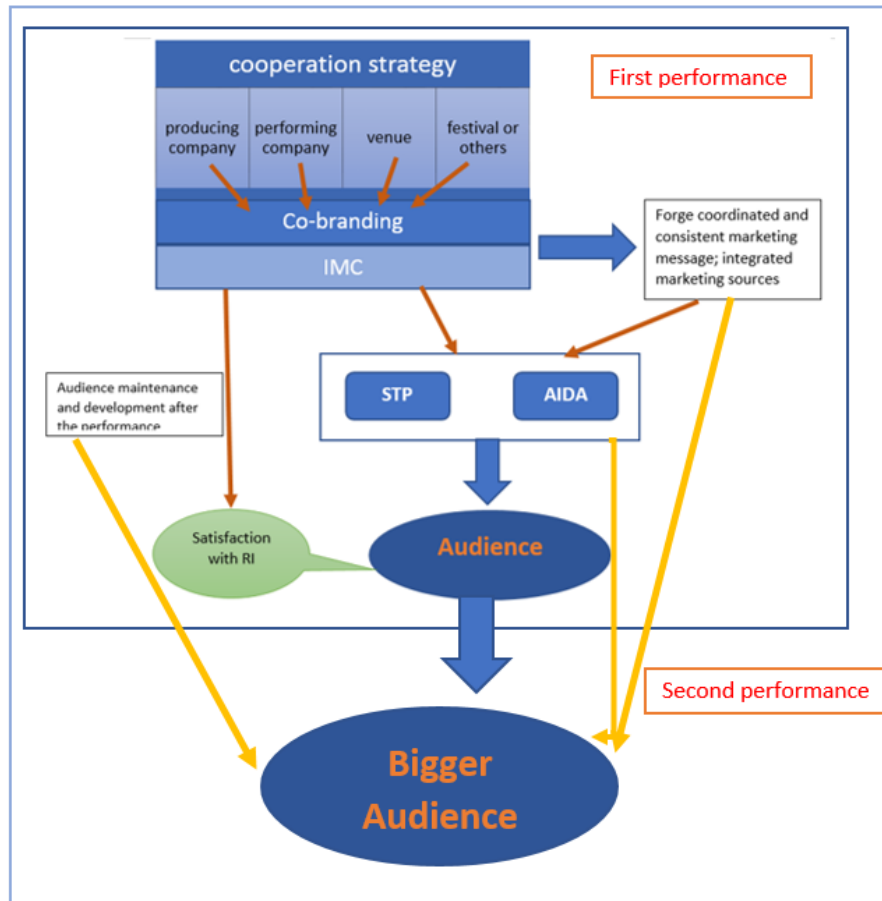
In the festival context, the co-branding and IMC tools of collaboration are widely used to promote new productions. For example, the Big in Belgium programme hosted by Summerhall could be considered a successful showcase for emerging Belgian theatre companies, but also a strong coherent brand for Fringe audiences. Chinese productions at the Fringe have the possibility of branding themselves in this way through strategic collaboration. However, this strategy in the festival context requires a high-profile producer or production company with solid subsidy from government. Problematically, as revealed by this thesis, subsidy by the Chinese Government can cause the suspicion of propaganda, among both audiences and artists.

Chinese cultural policy in relation to overseas markets is not the key topic of this thesis. However, as reflected by the audience members interviewed, Chinese cultural events have always been considered one entity, which means the positive or negative experience of one Chinese theatre production leads to a good or bad impression of Chinese theatre in general. Whether the theatre company likes it or not, other Chinese companies' performances impact the audiences' reaction to future marketing communications, their decision making, and their ultimate experience in the theatre. There is therefore a strategic and ethical responsibility to take a longer-term perspective.

Government subsidized projects could also serve to improve the impression of Chinese theatre. The cultural diplomacy strategy of the Goethe-Institute (Germany) and British Council (UK) are good examples for the Chinese Government in terms of how to softly build a national cultural image overseas. In this research, further discussion of government subsidy from China is intentionally lacking. For the audience, the Chinese culture is not the main motivation for their attendance, a high quality theatrical experience is, which goes against the aim of the "Chinese culture goes out" slogan of the Chinese Ministry of Culture.

To develop an audience in the long-term without government subsidy makes collaboration among the participants more important. Through co-branding and IMC, audience segmentation, targeting and positioning (STP) can be made more effective. The findings regarding the characteristics of the audiences attracted to Chinese theatre, along with the suggested targeting of the younger generation, STP strategy, AIDA model and audience reflection, reveal the effective information channels to motivate the audience to take action. With this understanding of the audience, plus strategic cooperation among the participants, more effective audience recruitment, development and engagement should be achieved over time (see Figure 9.1) and benefit future productions. Audience development through the process of cooperation, on the other hand, would contribute to the recognition of the brands which impacts theatre-going decisions and preferences (Park and Lessig, 1981; Monroe, 1975). In other words, the audience becomes loyal to the brand.





**Figure 8. 1 Collaboration Strategy**

The process of long term audience development through collaboration strategy illustrated in Figure 8.1 requires input from every engaged partner. From the first performance, the key stakeholders, namely the performance company, production company, venue and others, should cooperate and use the tools of co-branding and IMC to integrate their resources to maximize the marketing effort. Through STP and the AIDA model they should deliver information to the target audience segments and stimulate their motivation to take action in order to experience the sojourn. Satisfaction with the experience for the attendees would lead to re-attendance intention, and the collaboration strategy would require the engaged institutions to work on maintaining the audience and refreshing the experience and memory until the next performance. The word-of-mouth from the retained audience group, along with the new marketing campaign, means that subsequent performances would grow, and this virtuous circle would continue and help Chinese theatre in the UK to achieve its ultimate goal of audience development.

In short, a collaboration strategy is suggested to help Chinese theatre interact in the long-term with their audience in the British market and consequently develop solid audience groups. Compared to relying on short-term project-based marketing and PR agencies, longer-term strategic collaboration among stakeholders would help them more effectively understand the character of the production and find the most suitable audience segments. However, all in all, its aim is building long term relationships between the audience and the Chinese theatre. Marketing then becomes the strategic process of inviting the audience to this sojourn and achieving audience enrichment.

### **8.3 Reflection on the research process**

Reflecting on the research process of this thesis as an action researcher is not easy. The whole process has been a journey for me. There are so many lessons for me to take away in terms of theatre practice and audience research. During the journey, there were many people who helped and encourage me, confirming the value of the research topic. As a self-funded independent researcher, this journey has made me confident to continue.

As an action researcher, I had no fieldwork guide or handbook to guide my journey. The first lesson I learnt was to listen carefully to conversations, in and out of meetings. Unlike in-depth interviews, where there is a period of concentration on the conversation with the interviewees, action research asks for 24/7 researcher alertness, and private conversations sometimes express more than interviews would.

Another lesson I learnt as an action researcher is the vital role of networking. The theatre industry in the UK is a small and often introspective network, in which people know each other. The network has helped me to win the trust of the interviewees within the industry and also my co-workers. As an insider, a team member, the researcher had to have certain knowledge of, and connection to, the industry to get deeper access and insight into the organizations. The deeper the connection the researcher has with the team, the better the observational data.

Finally, following Tim Ingold's call to research while performing real work *with* people is extremely hard. On the journey, I have become less naïve. Taking action for minor change and planning for the longer term *with* people, is what the action

researcher can do to change the real world. And during the practice and research, the suggestions and plans I made actually had been applied and led to changes in the reality, which is very encouraging for me as a researcher as well as a practitioner. To actually achieve the goal of balancing the cultural exchange between the East and West, or even making the Chinese theatre visible to audiences in Western markets requires a lifelong input of taking action *with* people, and constantly observing, reflecting and evaluating.

When reflecting on this specific journey, there were also a few regrets and things I might do differently next time; firstly, connecting the three case studies better. In this research, the three cases are relatively independent. If the audience of *Richard III* could be informed about the Peking Opera in London, the interviewees in the potential audience categories could be engaged in a performance as attendees, and provide another in-depth interview. The findings would be richer and be a reference to the “audience exchange” method. Secondly, I might spend longer in the field to extend my network in the industry in the UK. Instead of focusing on the UK industry, I looked for fieldwork opportunities with Chinese performance companies at the beginning of the research, and it turned out to be a waste of time. Otherwise, the research would have a more comprehensive view of the industry. Lastly, I might have been more firmly engaged in the planning process, offering suggestions from an academic point of view. My lack of confidence as a junior action researcher and PhD candidate held me back from engaging more deeply in the productions, which I deeply regret. A firm voice as a researcher with knowledge and understanding of the industry would make the role different from what I played, and might have led to better outcomes.

Action research is circular, and should keep evolving. My first journey as an action researcher has been a success. There are certainly many flaws and immature decisions that I made, but these have been reflected upon and will be improved in my next research plan.

#### **8.4 Research limitations and future research**

The limitations of this research stem not only from the qualitative methodology but also the choice of cases. The character of qualitative methodology and the case study

method leads to a limited application of the findings of this research to the general situation of understanding the audiences of foreign productions and the marketing context of theatre production in the cross-cultural market. As discussed, it is hard to deny the researcher bias from action research where the researcher is fully engaged with the marketing teams of the cases. Excluding theatre productions within the UK with a cultural diplomacy purpose leads to a lack of understanding of this large section of Chinese theatre in the UK market.

This study attempts to understand the situation of theatre productions in a foreign cultural context from the perspectives of audience engagement and strategic arts marketing. The limitations of the methodology and case selection lead to suggestions for future study on this topic. The findings about the audience for foreign theatre productions and marketing strategies in this context from this thesis could be widely tested on forthcoming theatre productions through qualitative or quantitative methodologies. The audience for theatre productions from different cultural contexts, and how to market theatre productions in a foreign market, are not the only challenges for Chinese theatre in the UK. Whether the findings could be applied to all theatre productions in overseas markets, is a research topic for the near future, for instance British theatre in Asia, especially as live theatre becomes a trend in Asia. How does cross-cultural audience experience, trans-media experience and other Asian theatre in Western markets differ from Chinese productions?

In regards to the suggestion of a collaborative strategy, more longer-term observation and action research could be applied to Peking Opera, to understand whether it works or not. More ambitiously, how the collaboration strategy applies to different arts genres in engaging the audience in cultural activities, could be valuable research for academics and practitioners. “Audience exchange” between arts organizations has been suggested as a method to understand audiences (Pitts and Gross, 2017), but co-branding among the arts institutions in a city could apply the idea of “audience exchange” in practice, sharing and integrating resources to encourage the audience to engage in new artistic experiences.

In summary, through action research, comprising audience interviews and the development of three case studies, this research fills a significant gap in the theory and management practice pertaining to arts marketing by addressing the specific challenges of marketing theatre productions in a cross-cultural context. The

suggestion of understanding the audience of foreign productions in their homeland as a sojourning experience offers a new and distinct concept to aid the understanding of audiences experiencing “foreign” or unfamiliar work. The portrait of the audience and the findings regarding their motivation, experience and post-performance intention contribute to the analysis and critique of existing arts marketing strategies and a more effective approach in this specific marketing circumstance is suggested, based on significant empirical research with key stakeholder groups.

With the steady rise of globalization and the heightened awareness of social issues across the world in terms of cross-cultural understanding, promoting theatre and other art forms across cultural boundaries might present a way to dispel the fear of misunderstanding of other cultures. To achieve this aim, this thesis, hopefully, encourages cultural managers and policymakers to accelerate cooperation among cultural and artistic institutions within, and outside, the UK.

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**Appendix A**  
**Information about Interviewees—Audience**

<b>Case</b>	<b>Name<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Interview language</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Theatre-goer</b>	<b>Cross-cultural traveller</b>	<b>Attendee at</b>
<b>Pilot Interview</b>	Ying	Early 30s	F	arts curator	English	Canadian Chinese	Y	Y	Peking Opera
	Bond	Late 30s	M	musician	English	British	N	Y	N
	Chris	Late 30s	F	theatre designer and academic	English	Greece	Y	Y	Peking Opera

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<sup>1</sup> All of the interviewees are anonymous, the names listed here are not their real names.

Case	Name <sup>1</sup>	Age	Gender	Occupation	Interview language	Nationality	Theatre-goer	Cross-cultural traveller	Attendee at
	James	19	M	undergraduate student	English	British	N	Y	N
	France	60s	F	Chinese study academic	English	British	Y	Y	Richard III at 2012, Peking Opera
	Joy	20s	M	freelancer	English	British	N	Y	N
<i>Richard III</i>	Frank	Early 30s	M	N/A	English	Chinese	N	Y	
	Harvey	30s	M	Chinese to English translator and publisher	English	British	Y	Y	
	Huw	50s	M	freelance	English	British	Y	N	

Case	Name <sup>1</sup>	Age	Gender	Occupation	Interview language	Nationality	Theatre-goer	Cross-cultural traveller	Attendee at
				editor					
	Jean	Early 30s	F	arts administrator	Chinese	Taiwanese	Y	Y	
	Jiaoyang	19	F	literature student	Chinese	Chinese	Y	Y	
	Serlina, Her mother Dian and her friend John	30s, 60s and 60s	F*2, M*1	Serlina works for ACE, Dian retired and John is an actor	English	British	Y	Y	
	Duncan	50s	M	linguist and	English	British	Y	N/A	

Case	Name <sup>1</sup>	Age	Gender	Occupation	Interview language	Nationality	Theatre-goer	Cross-cultural traveller	Attendee at
				translator					
	Bernard	60s	M	retired lawyer, now an actor	English	British	Y	Y	
	Yelin and her son	30s and 6	F	N/A	Chinese	Chinese	N (occasionally)	Y	
<b>Edinburgh Fringe— Poker night blues</b>	Edmund	Early 30s	M	actor	English	British	Y	N	
	Pia	30s	F	actress	English	British	Y	N	
	Jack, Ivy and Anna	30s	M, F*2	theatre related	English	New Zealander	Y	N/A	



<b>Case</b>	<b>Name<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Interview language</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Theatre-goer</b>	<b>Cross-cultural traveller</b>	<b>Attendee at</b>
	Mike	40s	M	theatre producer	English	British	Y	N	
	Eric and Cherri	Early 30s	M, F	academic in linguistics and theatre studies	English	German	Y	Y	
	Mary	40s	F	blogger	English	Irish	Y	Y	
	Peter and his partner	60s	M, F	Business man	English	British	Y	Y	
	Ryan	60s	M	retired academic	English	British	Y	Y	
	Guan	20s	M	PhD student	Chinese	Chinese	Y	Y	

Case	Name <sup>1</sup>	Age	Gender	Occupation	Interview language	Nationality	Theatre-goer	Cross-cultural traveller	Attendee at
	Tim	N/A	M	freelance theatre critic	English	British	Y	N/A	
	Sam and Tom	Late 30s	M, M	N/A	English	British	Y	Y	
	Dianna	60s	F	retired	English	British	Y	Y	
	Vivien	60s	F	reviewer, travel writer	English	British	Y	Y	
<b>Peking Opera-- Liverpool</b>	Billy and his mother	20s, 60s	M, F	works for non-profit organization ; retired	English	British	Y	Y, N	
	Faye	20s and	F, M	n/a	Chinese and	Chinese,	Y	Y	

Case	Name <sup>1</sup>	Age	Gender	Occupation	Interview language	Nationality	Theatre-goer	Cross-cultural traveller	Attendee at
	and her husband John	60s			English	British			
	Jenny and Lily	40s	F, F	works for non-profit education organization	English	British	Y	Y,N	
	Linda and her mother	20s and 50s	F	student in history, N/A	English	British	Y	N	
	Sammy and Marian	60s	F	N/A	English	British	Y	N	
<b>Peking</b>	Ben	19, 55	M, F	student in	English	British	N	N	

<b>Case</b>	<b>Name<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Interview language</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Theatre-goer</b>	<b>Cross-cultural traveller</b>	<b>Attendee at</b>
<b>Opera-- London</b>	and her Mother			history, N/A					
	Ling and her husband	40s	F, M	N/A	English	Singaporean , British	Y	Y	
	Natasha and her daughter Perlina	30s and 10	F	yoga teacher, student	English	Russian and half Chinese	Y	Y	
	Sarah and her daughter	60s and 30s	F	retired, and teacher	English	British	Y	Y	

Case	Name <sup>1</sup>	Age	Gender	Occupation	Interview language	Nationality	Theatre-goer	Cross-cultural traveller	Attendee at
	r Linda								
	Tod	60s	M	Lawyer	English	British	Y	Y	
	Tom, Jerry and Chinese friends	30s and 40s	M*3, one Chinese female friend	working for government , NHS	English	British, Chinese	Y	Y	
	Chinese families	30s and under 10	FandM (mixed, about 3 families )	N/A	Chinese	Chinese	Y	Y	

**Appendix B**  
**Information about Interviewees—Practitioners**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Engaged Production(s)</b>	<b>Visited China?</b>	<b>Interview Approach</b>	<b>Interview Language</b>
Joanna Dong	30s	F	Chinese	Producer	Performance Infinity	Richard III; Poker Night Blues	n/a	face to face	English
Amy Letmen	30s	F	British	Creative Director	Transform Festival	n/a	N	Skype	English
Steve	50s	M	British	Stage Manager	PCI, University of Leeds	n/a	Y	face to face	English
Anna <sup>2</sup>	30s	F	British	Marketing Manager	regional theatre venue	n/a	N	face to face	English

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<sup>2</sup> Used pseudonym as the interviewee required

Adam <sup>3</sup>	50s	M	British	Director	regional theatre venue	n/a	Y	email	English
David	30s	M	British	Marketing Manager	Shakespeare's Globe	Richard III	N	face to face	English
Tina	40s	F	American	Director	Theatre Movement Bazaar	Poker Night Blues	Y	email	English
Yanda Li	30s	M	Chinese	Producer	Beijing TinHouse Theatre Company	Poker Night Blues	n/a	email	Chinese
Kaka	40s	F	Chinese	Producer and Actress	Yanyan Theatre Company	n/a <sup>4</sup>	n/a	face to face	Chinese
Derek	30s	F	Singaporean	Director	Yanyan Theatre Company	n/a <sup>5</sup>	Y	face to face	Chinese

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<sup>3</sup> Used pseudonym as the interviewee required

<sup>4</sup> She participated in the Fringe in 2015 with another Chinese production: *Titus*

<sup>5</sup> He participated in the Fringe in 2015 with another Chinese production: *Titus*

Kevin Zhang	40s	M	Chinese	Director and Producer	Sinolink Productions	Peking Opera Tour	n/a	face to face	Chinese
Bev	50s	F	British	Production manager	Sinolink Productions	Peking Opera Tour	Y	face to face	English
Andrew Greer	30s	M	British	PR	Target-live	Peking Opera Tour	N	phone	English



## **Appendix C**

### **One sample of interviewee**

#### **Sample of Interview questions:**

Please answer the questions as follow:

1. Could you please introduce yourself, what you are doing at present, your education background, your hobbies, etc.
2. Why did you decide to study China?
3. Please describe your experience in China. What did you do there? How long you stayed? What was the most impressive thing, etc.
4. Do you still remember your impression of China and Chinese culture before your visited China, could you please describe it in detail? Where did you get them? And how did it change since you visited China?
5. Regularly, what kind of cultural events you would like to attend in London? How about Beijing? Did you attend any interesting events in China?
6. When you back from China, what do you miss most? Do you try to do something to keep this link with the experience of China? What would you do?
7. Could you please describe an event you attended in the UK which linked to China or Chinese culture (apart from your study). Where did you get the information? Why did you decide to attend it? How was it? Did you go alone or with your friends? How did your friends think if you went with friends? Did you recommend it to your friends? Why or why not?

8. What do you think about Chinese theatre? Did you ever notice any Chinese theatre in London? Would you like to attend any Chinese theatre here? What kind of Chinese theatre you would like to attend?

### Sample of Transcript

Q: 第一个问题就是先介绍一下自己。

F: 我叫 WEI Han, 我是中国人, 我到英国来了一年了, 我是来读硕士的, 我的专业是对外汉语, 我今年九月份刚毕业。

Q: 你上次看京剧的感受?

A: 第一呢, 我觉得非常难得能够看到这么好的大师级的表演, 我觉得在英国这边很少能看到这么好的表演, 然后我看的过程中觉得这个京剧是不是做了修改了, 原本是 4 个小时的版本现在修改成了两个半小时, 浓缩了精华, 让故事更加简洁, 我觉得挺好的。另外就是这是我第一次听京剧, 以前在我的印象中京剧就是在电视中看到的那个样子, 一些人在那里唱啊, 怎么样怎么样, 但是每次在电视里看到时候就是断章取义的觉得没什么意思, 这次坐在现场静下心来从头到尾看整个故事, 看这个情节跌宕起伏, 就觉得挺好, 用这种形式把以前的一些故事, 一些经典的历史典故呈现出来挺吸引眼球的, 因为这些不仅仅只是说故事, 也运用了很多技巧, 比如说唱啊, 一些动作啊, 挺好的, 另外我觉得非常精彩的一点就是他们的服饰非常的精致, 布景也是非常精致的, 看得出来是花了很大的功夫的。另外就是刚开始的时候的介绍挺好的, 开场前大屏幕上就说“在中国看京剧的时候如果你觉得好的话要大声说好”。我觉得这种文化的传递, 可以让我们更 *involved*, 每当我们看到好的时候就叫一下好, 就特别的有氛围, 这个就是传统的看京剧的方式, 自己也在慢慢的接触这种文化的过程之中。另外就是觉得, 他们那个唱法挺有意思的, 然后有些唱法很好玩, 后来大家下来都在说那个“哎呀”的那个唱法, 觉得是京剧的标志吧, 就是慢慢地去了解这个传统艺术。

Q: 看完之后, 你会想对京剧有更深入的了解吗?

A: 想啊, 挺想的。比如说当时在大厅外面有一些展板, 上面有介绍花脸啊, 生旦净末丑啊, 我们看着就觉得挺有意思的, 看完之后接着回去看下半场我们就在看这个到底是什么脸, 那个到底是什么角儿, 然后就是这样慢慢的了解, 还看他们的那些服饰, 看他们的那个鞋子, 他们穿的那种那么高的鞋子, 挺想更多的了解的。

Q: 会不会觉得在国外看国内的东西更有感触?

A: 其实倒也没有特别大的感触, 但是会有一点感觉就是机会非常难得, 但是在看的过程中并没有觉得跟在国内看一些东西有太大的区别。

Q: 会让你想家吗?

A: 其实还好, 但是我觉得有一点可能是因为我是重庆人, 如果让我看一些关于重庆的一些东西我可能就会想。我觉得如果是哪些经常在国内看京剧的人, 或者是北京人, 在这边看到京剧应该就会想家吧。而对我来讲这完全是相当于一个新的东西, 所以现在还处于那种好奇的阶段, 还没有特别深的感情, 还在建立联系的那个阶段我觉得。

Q: 你会在看戏之前跟你先生科普一下这个戏的一些历史背景之类的东西吗?

A: 会的会的

Q: 他什么感受?

A: 他觉得很有意思, 他觉得这个故事很有意思。我就跟他说还有一些没演出来的, 比如说最后楚霸王怎么死的呀, 然后怎么样怎么样, 然后他就说原来是这样的啊, 他就觉得很好奇, 很有意思, 但是他就会问为什么没有演出来啊怎么样怎么样, 他当时看完之后就说什么京剧会流传这么久, 这么古老的一种东西能够这么久的流传下来, 它跟现代的文化很不一样, 它为什么能够传这么久, 它最开始怎么来的, 他就在想这些东西。他对中国文化比较感兴趣, 所以他有时候就会想这些东西。

Q: 我知道你们还看过神韵, 所以你们平常会特地找一些这样的中国相关的文化活动去参加吗?

A: 会的。

Q: 出了神韵你们还参加过其他的吗?

A: 其他的就是这边的一些还有日本的一些, 还有英国的苏格兰的一些演出。因为我们就是很想看中国文化嘛, 但是目前我们有时间也会注意去找, 但是到目前看到的就是神韵和这个京剧了。

Q: 神韵你是通过什么渠道获得信息的?

A: 神韵一个是在网站上, (she asked her husband about how did they find Shenyun), 神韵是这样子的, 他们有自己的推销的 volunteer, 他们在很多个点有自己的推销员, 就跟法轮功一样, 哈哈, 然后我们当时是路过 andale 商场, 就拿到他们发的那个宣传册子。但是我先生之前有在网站上看到他们的演出信息的 (talked to her husband)

H: oh yes, I found the information from the royal exchange theatre website. And then one day when we passed by, a very kind and decent man stopped us and told us about the performance, and showed us a brochure, it looked very professional

A: 他们有那个特别精美的小册子, 不对, 是大册子

H: very expensive

Q: did you get the brochure for free?

H: no!

A: we paid a lot. For the Peking Opera brochure, we paid only 7 pound.

H: we paid 10 pound for shenyun one

A: more than 10 pounds! We didn't buy it 我们没有买，因为太贵了。

H: oh no, we did buy it,

A: oh we did 我们买了，然后看完回来之后我老公说想把它烧了。我都忘了。

Q: 是因为货不对板吗?

A: 对呀对呀，然后我老公说我现在看到它就想把它撕了

H: we thought it would be very good

Q: 所以神韵相对来讲不是一个好的 experience?

A: no, no, very awful

H: I complained to the theatre afterwards

Q: 为什么会有这种感觉呢?

H: why did I complain?

A: why did you feel like that?

H: well, I didn't mind if I knew what I was paying for, I won't complain, but they didn't tell me exactly what it would be like, they didn't tell me the background of falungong, for me, I felt like they cheated me, the advertising was not correct

Q: what did they advertise?

H: they advertised there would be lots of ancient Chinese dancing, tradition, that sort of things

A: and professional dancers with great skills

H: something like you never have seen in China before as well

Q: so you were expecting something purely cultural related performance, dance?

H: yes, exactly. They did have some ancient dancing, but they mixed it with falungong, whatever

A: and the dancing was not that good

H: yes, the dance wasn't that good as well

A: they told us it must be the best, one of the best, you know, the very high level of performance, but we felt like alright, medium level, even maybe less than that.

Q: like amateur dancers?

H: yes

A: their skills are not that good, 那个编舞也很不好，就是集体舞，没有说有故事情节啊，或者由一个人单独舞蹈然后其他人伴舞，都没有，全是集体舞，跟我们想象中的完全不一样，因为在一些舞蹈作品中就会呈现中主角是谁配角是谁，讲一个故事，他们都没有，就是集体舞，就是一群人出来跳舞

H: I think they are very good at advertising

Q: so you felt like they cheated you?

H: yes, definitely, I think we saw a few people left in the middle of the session, that was a bit interesting, but we didn't. Then I complained, and I got the reply, the director of the theatre, they said no others complained and they tried to comfort me, but my point was it's not what it advertised to us, which was really important for me.

Q: so you would never go to see that again?

H: shenyn? No, definitely not. Now I know what it is about, you know, I don't have problems about what they believe, it's their issue, but they didn't tell me anything about Chinese culture which was the point I went

A: In their advertisement, they didn't say anything about their religion, but it was full of it in the performance, that's why we were not happy about it, what we expected was culture, and what they showed us was not

H: more about propaganda, so, that was quite interesting, I mean interesting because I didn't know anything about falungong, and after the performance I did search it, and I felt like it's not a religion maybe, I think their organization is very good at hiding bad reviews in the internet.

A: and I have to say the advertisement did work, after I attended it, now I know the main spirit of the falungong, it's like 真善仁，上次习主席来曼城，然后我看到一群人在那边静坐举着牌子真善仁我就知道是法轮功了，他们的这种方式真的是有效的，但是对于我们来说我们是不愿意接受的，就是如果你在之前就跟我们说在演出中你会做这些东西那我们会考虑看要不要去，这就跟他们的信仰没有关系，但是他们什么都没说，然后我们就是在毫不知情的情况下被灌输这些想法，就很不舒服。

Q: 骗子

A: 对!

Q: 神韵事件之后, 你跟你老公会不会对整个英国的中国演出都不信任了?

A: 也不是说会对整个行业失望, 但是会在决定去看之前更仔细在网上搜索信息, 比如说到底这个演出时从哪里来的, 有哪些演员啊, 在网上看看有哪些评价这样, 因为神韵的那个我们当时是一点都没有查, 就觉得他当时那样讲的还不错那我们就去看吧, 因为一般就觉得在那个 **royal exchange theatre** 的表演都不会太差嘛, 就比较相信他们, 然后就去了。以后可能就会更加慎重去看这些东西。

Q: 你刚刚说你跟你老公也会去看一些英国当地的演出或者是苏格兰的演出, 这些演出信息是从哪里得到的呢?

A: 有的时候是朋友说的, 有的时候就是在网站上看到的, 有的时候是 **facebook** 上曼城的 **events** 的那个主页, 它有时候就会告诉一些信息, 然后还有那些 **theatre venue** 的网站上, **time to time** 就会去看一下, 然后觉得有兴趣的就去。

Q: 什么会让你感兴趣, 会想去?

A: 我觉得会让我感兴趣的就是比如说英国的传统的东西, 比如说音乐剧啊, 就是之前自己没有看过的东西吧, 其实很多就是我之前都没有看过但是在中国特别有名, 但是都没有看过现场, 所以这边如果有机会可以看到现场就会想要取现场感受一下, 然后像什么芭蕾啊, 天鹅湖, 红河谷, 踢踏舞, 这一类的东西就会去看。

Q: 那你参加这些演出的目的是什么? 为什么想要去?

A: 其实有的时候是我根本什么都不知道, 他定了票了, 我就跟着去了, 有的时候是我想去看的, 比如说那个红河谷, 还有那个天鹅湖, 因为这个在中国的名气很大嘛, 基本上每个人都知道嘛, 我也没有去看过现场, 然后就觉得很有意思就想要去看一看它到底是个什么样的, 因为其实对我来说我对芭蕾不是很感兴趣, 怎么说的, 它是很美, 但是我没有看出特别的地方, 在电视上看的时候我是那种感觉, 我就想说看现场是不是会不一样, 然后我就想去现场看看到底是什么感觉。然后另外就是它的那个红河谷的时候, 是觉得那个是传统嘛, 是苏格兰的一些特别的东西, 然后就想要去特别的感受一下, 然后我就觉得挺好看的, 很 **enjoy**。就是觉得自己对有些东西就很感兴趣嘛, 就会想去现场看一下, 因为有的是喜欢, 有的是名气大想要去看看究竟是怎么回事。

Q: 那你看英国的这些演出的动机会不会和去看中国演出, 比如说京剧, 会不会不一样? 或者说享受的过程, 享受的东西会不会不一样?

A: 我觉得会有一点不一样的, 是因为我觉得看中国文化的东西的话是因为我老公想去, 他非常喜欢这些, 所以我就陪他去, 我是这样的, 当然我自己也

喜欢，但是没有看国外的演出的 **motivation** 那么强烈，因为毕竟我自己是中国出生中国长大的，很多东西即使我没有现场看过我也在电视上看过的呀，所以中国来的演出我就不会觉得有什么特别的特别之处，但是我老公就不一样，他是觉得中国文化非常的特别的。但是对我来说，虽然我也在电视上看到过一些英国的传统的表演，但是我既然已经来了这边，有机会可以现场看到这些演出这些艺术，我当然会对这些当地的表演更有兴趣，更想去看。主要就是这样的，对于中国文化，我是秉承的向我老公介绍中国文化的这种态度去的。但是比如说像京剧这样的我也没看过，我也不熟悉，所以我就跟我老公一样非常的 **enjoy**，也觉得非常不错，但是最主要的目的还是介绍它给我老公看。

## Appendix D Ethical Approval Form

Performance, Governance and Operations  
Research & Innovation Service  
Charles Thackrah Building  
101 Clarendon Road  
Leeds LS2 9LJ Tel: 0113 343 4873  
Email: [ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk)



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

Fan Wu  
SPCI  
University of Leeds  
Leeds, LS2 9JT

### **PVAC & Arts joint Faculty Research Ethics Committee University of Leeds**

13 June 2018

Dear Fan Wu

**Title of study**            **How to improve the marketing strategy for Chinese performance in the UK?**  
**Ethics reference**        **PVAR 14-041**

I am pleased to inform you that the above research application has been reviewed by the Arts and PVAC (PVAR) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and following receipt of your response to the Committee's initial comments, I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion as of the date of this letter. The following documentation was considered:

Document	Version	Date
PVAR 14-041 Ethical_Review_Form_Fan WU.docx	2	22/12/14
PVAR 14-041 04_Participant_information_sheet_Fan WU.doc	2	22/12/14
PVAR 14-041 02_Participant_consent_form_Fan WU.doc	2	22/12/14
PVAR 14-041 fieldwork_approval_form_Fan WU.doc	1	03/12/14
PVAR 14-041 fieldwork_risk_assessment_Fan WU.doc	1	03/12/14

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted at date of this approval as all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAmendment>.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited. There is a checklist listing examples of documents to be kept which is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAudits>.



We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to [ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Blaikie  
Senior Research Ethics Administrator, Research & Innovation Service  
On behalf of Dr William Rea, Chair, [PVAR FREC](#)  
CC: Student's supervisor(s)

## Appendix D

### Sample of signed consent form from interview

School of Performance and Cultural Industries



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

#### Consent to take part in "How to improve the marketing strategy for Chinese performance in the UK?"

	Add your initials next to the statements you agree with
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated (27/08/2015) explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	M.G.
I agree for the data collected from me to be used in relevant future research in an anonymised form.	M.G.
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change.	M.G.

Name of participant	M. GRIFFITHS
Participant's signature	<i>M. Griffiths</i>
Date	23/08/15
Name of lead researcher	Fan WU
Signature	<i>Fan Wu</i>
Date*	23/08/2015

\*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/ pre-written script/ information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

Project title	Document type	Version #	Date
"How to improve the marketing strategy for Chinese performance in the UK?"	Consent form	1.0	20/12/2014