GAZING AT HAW PAR VILLA

Cultural Tourism in Singapore

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Abstract

Tourism is an important and growing industry in Singapore. Studies on Singapore cultural tourism have generally focused on three major sites: Chinatown, Little India and the Malay Village. The Haw Par Villa tourist site has not been examined in recent years. The case study of Haw Par Villa offered here demonstrates how changing times in Singapore have affected the popularity of tourist sites in an island nation. This article discusses the decline and potential rebirth of Singapore's Haw Par Villa theme park in the context of cultural tourism, placing a special emphasis on Urry's concept of the 'tourist gaze'. Multiple methods were used in gathering data for this study: a survey conducted in Singapore of both local residents and foreign tourists; participant observations of Haw Par Villa; and a thematic content analysis of tour guide books and online documents pertaining to the site. Our analyses suggest that Haw Par Villa represents a treasured past of Singapore, although one in danger of fading away with the changing interests of newer generations of tourists.

Key Words

Tourism, Singapore, tourist gaze, cultural tourism

Introduction

Tourism is an important revenue-generating industry for some islands and island nations (see Royle, 2009) whose competitiveness is dependent on their "size, structure, and quality of tourist attractions, infrastructures and super structures, and the destination's management capabilities" (Croes, 2011: 432). In Singapore, tourism is an important and growing industry (Ramchandani, 2012). According to the Singapore Tourism Board (STB, 2013), Singapore received S$23 billion in tourism receipts in 2012, which is a 3% increase from 2011 and more than three times higher when compared to the amount in 2003.

Studies on Singapore cultural tourism generally have focused on three major sites: Chinatown, Little India, and the Malay Village (eg Phua, Berkowitz and Gagermeier, 2012; Chang, 2000). In the late 1980s these three areas were earmarked as historical sites, representing three distinct and major ethnic groups in Singapore. Other cultural

sites, like the Chinese and Japanese gardens and Haw Par Villa, are some distance from popular tourist destinations and require a greater sense of determination for tourists to visit them. Among these sites, Haw Par Villa is of particular interest because of its history and its dramatic rise and fall as a tourist site that features Chinese culture. The promotion of particular cultural sites may vary over time as newer and more popular sites are established. For example, the recent opening of casinos in Singapore is a way to attract new and different tourists, although the casinos are not without their controversies (eg Ooi, 2005). This case study demonstrates how changing times in Singapore have affected the popularity of tourist sites in an island nation.

In this article, we examine the current state of Haw Par Villa as a tourist attraction. In order to do that, we first provide an overview of Singapore tourism in recent years and a brief history of the development of Haw Par Villa. Then, we describe our data and methodology. Finally, we present our analysis and discuss its implications. In our discussion, we highlight the complexities of Haw Par Villa as a tourist site in Singapore.

Tourism in Singapore

Singapore is an island nation located at the gateway of Southeast Asia. Its 2010 census reports that the population is currently about five million, of which are 26% are non-residents (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2010). 74% of its population self reported as Chinese, 13% Malay, 9% Indians and 3% Others. For this small nation, tourism is an important source of income. Singapore's emergence in the international tourism sector is relatively recent, with tourism only registering on the government's radar in the mid 1960s after Singapore's economic value as an entrepôt and industrial city began to wane. During this time, tourism was seen as "an avenue to generate employment and enhance infrastructural development" (Chang, Milne, Fallon, and Pohlmann, 1996: 291-294). Along with the obvious economic value, though, Ooi argues that the tourism industry "played a central role in shaping Singaporeans' own understanding of their national and ethnic identities" (2005: 250). Keeping up with the times, STB reports that, "[f]or Singapore to continue to excite and appeal, she has to constantly evolve to present new and engaging travel experiences" (2010: online).

Singapore's tourism brand has gone through several iterations in the past few decades in response to changing tourist demands and as a reflection of the country's continued diversification and commitment. Over the years, STB has been leveraging the country's limited natural resources and short history to promote Singapore as a tourist destination. In earlier years, Singapore designated several places as ethnic cultural sites, serving both to promote cultural diversity and tourism. 2010 saw the launch of Singapore's casino resorts as major tourist sites. STB pledges "to lure 17 million visitors to Singapore and triple tourism revenue to S$30 billion by 2015" (Bennett and Chen, 2009).

According to the STB Overseas Visitor Survey (2013), the most visited paid-access venues among tourists were MBS Skypark, Night Safari, Sentosa, Singapore Flyer and Universal Studios Singapore; while the main sites with no admission fee were Chinatown, Little India, Marina Bay, Merlion Park and Orchard Road. Once hailed as constituting "a rich heritage of Chinese culture" (Teo and Yeoh, 1997: 199), Haw Par Villa used to be a very popular tourist attraction. In 1984, Haw Par Villa was the fourth most popular tourist attraction in Singapore, visited by 31.3% of all visitors to Singapore

(Nirman, 2000: 53). However, Haw Par Villa lost its popularity among both local and foreign visitors from the mid-1980s. Clearly, Haw Par Villa is now no longer a major tourist attraction, not making the list of top tourist attractions on sites promoting Singapore tourism (eg World Tourist Attractions, 2011; www.singapore-vacation-attractions.com, 2013).

The History of Haw Par Villa

Tiger Balm Gardens, commonly referred to as 'Haw Par Villa', is a nearly century-old theme park located on the south western side of Singapore. The theme park was created by Chinese businessman and philanthropist Aw Boon Haw, who created and marketed the wildly successful Tiger Balm with his younger brother Aw Boon Par. The villa residing within the gardens was actually Haw's gift to his business partner and brother, Aw Boon Par. Construction of the villa and the surrounding gardens began in 1935 at a staggering cost of US$1.95 million. While the majority of the permanent installations were completed by 1937, Aw Boon Haw's nephew (Renuka, 2002) or son (Brandel and Turbeville, 1998), depending on the source, continued to add and maintain the gardens even after Haw's death in 1954.

Figure 1 - Map of Haw Par Villa (Christian Fleury, 2014)

Figure 2 – The majestic entrance to Haw Par Villa theme park (photograph by Voon Chin Phua, 2011)

Aw Boon Haw's intent in creating the public gardens remains unclear. Some historians conclude that his primary motivation was a concern that Chinese immigrants would forget their own culture after living overseas and mingling with westerners. Therefore, as the story goes, he included morally educative tableaux depicting cherished traditional stories in order to maintain a sense of Chinese national heritage. Still others believe the park was yet another one of his clever advertising schemes — this idea being largely derived from the park's namesake product, the Tiger Balm heat rub (Brandel and Turbeville, 1998). Regardless of his intent, the park undeniably emphasises Chinese myths, legends and Confucius' teachings.

The content of the gardens tends to evoke several different reactions. Renuka comments on the garden's ability to convey traditional Chinese stories in a "modern, Western way" (2002: online). Brandel and Turbeville reflect this idea by commenting that the gardens "mingle traditional and modern, Eastern and Western motifs" (1998: 109). The latter may largely be a result of Haw's son including the 'International Corners' after his father's death, including but not limited to Japanese sumo wrestlers and a version of the Statue of Liberty with an Asian-looking face. Straying from the style of the depictions, Brandel and Turbeville further comment that the gardens "delight, soothe, and frighten in just the right proportions" (1998: 14). These varying sentiments have been captured in several websites and blogs commenting on the eccentric Singaporean theme park, although recent commentary has tended to accentuate the park's gruesome and horrific elements such as the Ten Courts of Hell (Discario, 2010; Hemmy.net, 2008).

The Rise and Fall of Haw Par Villa as a Tourist Site

In its early days, Haw Par Villa was a popular and free public park. Teo and Yeoh report that people visited Haw Par Villa to "[learn] from and [appreciate] the tableaux on Chinese history, mythology, and folklore which they took to represent the heritage of the majority ethnic group in Singapore" (1997: 204) as well as to use it as a leisure spot. In STB's attempt to salvage "the loss of the island's oriental mystique" in the 1980s, Haw Par Villa became:

> a showcase of Chinese heritage [as it] fell under the 'Exotic East' theme. The board's recommendation was to turn the park into a 'high-tech entertainment' center… while at the same time adapting modern technology for Asian culture to create a Chinese mythology park. (Teo and Yeah, 1997: 199)

The STB outsourced the park's operation to an international corporation, which proceeded to commercialise the park, adding live attractions and theme-park rides.

The park's commercialisation was a resounding failure, causing losses in the millions of dollars (Renuka, 2002). One reason for its decline was that the static presentations of mythological events had become outdated. Younger generations now expect entertainment that is more technologically sophisticated. In addition, younger generations may also have become less familiar with the mythological events and Confucius' teachings as the educational system in Singapore changed over the years (Lim, 2004). While attempts were made to upgrade Haw Par Villa to a technology- and capital-intensive theme park; the provision of live performances and adventure rides created high operational costs that could only be covered by charging an admission fee. Singapore simply did not have the critical tourist mass that could afford to pay such high admission fees. Teo and Yeoh (2001) posit that the hiring of foreign consultants who did not consider local conditions resulted in miscalculations of costs and revenues. As a result, the STB resumed operation and returned the park to its original status as a public amenity. "Since STB took responsibility for the park on April 1, 2001, there has been a threefold increase in visitors. More than 70 percent of visitors to the park are tourists, primarily from China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia and Taiwan" (STB Annual Report 2001-2002). While the glory days of packed sidewalks are probably behind the park forever, several writers and bloggers have expressed appreciation for the return of the park as a public venue, thus more clearly reflecting its heritage as a philanthropic gift from a cherished resident (Brandel and Turbeville, 1998).

The Tourist Gaze and Haw Par Villa

There is little systematic reporting on the extent to which Haw Par Villa has changed over the past decade and how it currently stands as a tourist attraction. This lack of interest indicates that Haw Par Villa is no longer a popular tourist destination and that tourists' tastes have changed. Nevertheless, Haw Par Villa remains a historical cultural landmark in Singapore. In this article, we are interested the current views of Haw Par Villa as a tourist attraction in this island nation where new tourist sites are constantly being developed to capture more tourists in this ever-changing industry. In Urry's (1990a) terms, should tourists visit to gaze at Haw Par Villa? Urry (1990a) developed the concept of tourist gaze in his analysis of tourism:

> *What makes a tourist gaze depends upon what it is contrasted with, what the forms of non-tourist experience happen to be. The gaze therefore presupposes a system of social activities and signs which locate the particular tourist practises, not in terms of some intrinsic characteristics, but through the contrasts implied with non-tourist social practises, particularly those based within the home and paid work.* (1990a: 2)

In addition, Urry (1990a: 144) argues that **"If** an ethnic group living in an area is sometimes constructed and presented as a visitor attraction, another way of expressing this is to say that ethnic differences, the 'exotic', may sometimes function as a 'theme'" (ibid: 144). Examining the case of Haw Par Villa, we can argue that representations of Chinese culture are considered a thematic attraction for non-Chinese tourists. Even for Chinese tourists, the idea of overseas Chinese renditions of Chinese cultures may appear foreign and thus are both familiar and exotic at the same time. Anticipation is important in choosing a particular site (sight) for the tourist's gaze: "[s]uch anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices… which construct the gaze" (Urry, 1990b: 26).

Several studies have used this concept in framing their research. Bai argues that, cultural traditions "have become mere raw materials in the construction of ethnic identities, which are mediated by official terminology as well as by the effects of the tourist gaze" (2007: 225). However, Bai also posits that the gaze is not unidirectional, "It presents a chance for domestic tourists to gaze at foreign tourists and consume a foreign atmosphere on the Chinese territory" (2007: 253). Moufakkir (2011) reverses the concept and studies how cultural distance affects Dutch hosts' views on German and Asian tourists. Researching solo female tourists, Jordan and Aitchison (2008) suggest that the mutual gaze and the local gaze are as critical as the tourist gaze in understanding gendered power between tourists and the locals. As a constructive critique and further expansion of Urry's tourist gaze, Perkins and Thorns (2001) argue that tourist performance may better capture more diverse involvements among tourists instead of focusing primarily on the visual. In her study of food tourism, Everett posits that it "provides an interesting embodied dimension to the way that the 'gaze' is conceptualized; it is an experience that can only be pursued if one goes beyond visualism" (2008: 345). MacCannell (2001) argues that the tourist gaze is conceptually deterministic even though it focuses on the consumers instead of the producers and proffers the idea of the second gaze "that is capable of recognizing the misrecognition that defines the tourist gaze" (2001: 30). The second gaze "may be more interested in the ways attractions are presented than in the attractions themselves" on tours (ibid: 36).

In the latest rendition of tourist gaze, Urry and Larsen have expanded the concept of the gaze to include service work and rethought "the tourist gaze in the light of this performance turn and of a broader Goffmanian dramaturgical sociology" (2011: 189). Incorporating the idea of performance turn in tourist gaze, they attempted to address the criticisms of tourist gaze generated from its inception more than ten years ago. "The performance turn highlights how tourists experience places in multi-sensuous ways that involve bodily sensations and affect" (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 190). However, while they incorporated new ideas and expanded how the visual is an important aspect of tourism, they retain the gaze as their central approach in examining and understanding tourism.

In this article, we uses the concept of the tourist gaze to develop an analytic framework where we specifically examine how Haw Par Villa is discussed and constructed as a tourist attraction. This is an important question in the context of land-scarce island nations where profitable land use sometimes conflict with cultural and historical preservation. However, it is important to note that if we take it literally, the concept of the tourist gaze seems to favour the dominance of the visual sense over other sensory engagements (Urry, 1992a, 2001). While the increasing growth of complex tourism practices and experiences means a visual approach is inadequate to address how space is experienced multi-dimensionally (eg Everett, 2010); this concept suffices as the size and the services provided at Haw Par Villa cater mainly to the visual sense over other sensory engagements.

Methods

In researching this article, we used multiple approaches to collect our data to ensure reliability. Using Google as the search engine in 2009-2010, we collected data from the Internet on Haw Par Villa that consisted mainly of newspaper articles, blogs and tourist information sites. We also used information from a survey conducted in the summer of 2009 on cultural tourism in Singapore. The survey included both tourists and locals and was conducted by three researchers. In order to find participants for our survey we frequented several tourist destinations and pro-actively solicited interviews. Our sample size was 147. Our participants consisted of 49% men and 51% women. Their ages ranged from 18 to 70 years old. 41% of them were first-time visitors to Singapore, 27% had visited Singapore before, and 32% were native Singaporeans. 94% of interviewees were non-Asian tourists; only 6% were Asian visitors. The two countries most represented in our sample were the United Kingdom (16%) and Australia (14%). Other countries include USA, Germany, Nepal, Norway, Sri Lanka, Argentina, Hungary, Russia, Indonesia, Slovakia and Trinidad and Tobago. In addition, we visited the Haw Par Villa in the summer of 2009 and 2010, writing field notes and photographing the site. Finally, we reviewed 25 tourist guidebooks from the in-store stock of large, chain bookstores in the US (February-May 2009) and Singapore (June-July 2009) to examine whether and how Haw Par Villa was being promoted.

Thematic content analysis was conducted to examine how individuals discuss Haw Par Villa as a tourist site. We used a grounded theory approach in analysing the data (Glaser and Straus, 1967), allowing themes and issues that participants deemed important to emerge rather than to structure the analysis using predefined frameworks. First, we performed open coding of broad themes, followed by focused coding using those identified themes (eg Esterberg, 2002; Charmaz, 2006). Each set of data was analysed separately but were consolidated to examine whether the views from each source were similar to or contradict one another.

Land of the Forgotten Past

Of the tourists surveyed in 2009, no one mentioned Haw Par Villa as one of their top three places to visit. For most tourists, the top sites in Singapore that they wanted to visit included Sentosa (a beach resort island), the Night Safari, shopping malls (specifically Orchard Road), the Singapore Flyer, Chinatown, Little India and the Botanic Gardens. Among native Singaporean survey participants, only three mentioned Haw Par Villa as a unique place to visit in Singapore. The main reasons given for recommending

Haw Par Villa were its roots in Chinese myths and traditions, its proximity to the Hua Song Museum and its unique combination of Eastern and Western statues.

Figure 3 – A sinner's heart is carved out in the Ten Courts of Hell (photograph by Joseph W. Miller, 2011)

On travel advice blogs, the most commonly mentioned attraction within Haw Par Villa is the Ten Courts of Hell, which depicts the punishments for sins committed while one is alive. 'Spooky' describes it thus:

> *According to Chinese mythology, a soul must pass through ten courts of judgment, before being allowed into heaven, and Haw Par Villa has very detailed representations of these trials.* (2010: online)

Three Australians and one American on www.tripadvisor.com (2010-2011) share their views: "I must add that the 'Ten Courts of Hell' exhibit is not be missed... take your kids - trust me - they'll never be naughty again." (Australia 2009); "The Ten Courts of Hell… features the ten steps of judgment before reincarnation... The statues and sets depict moral values and the punishments for wrong-doing. (Australia 2011); and "We did have to pay $1 to view the Ten Courts of Hell but it was well worth the $1". (USA, 2006). However, one Australian (2010) did not think the site was worth visiting: "What were they thinking when they designed this place for their children? The 12 paths to hell! It was like a puppet show but gory. It was tacky and not worth the entry fee!"

Figure 4 – Statues like this with human heads are scattered throughout the park
(photograph by Joseph W. Miller, 2010)

Of great interest is the qualification that the place is rather rundown and not very well maintained. For example, Selanan (www.tripadvisor.com) from the UK mentions that:

> The whole attraction is obviously in need of a cash injection and a marketing revamp, such a shame that it has been left to stagnate as it could be so much more than it is at the moment. The statues are fascinating, the folklore riveting, loads of space, vibrant colours, fabulous photo opportunities.... but the atmosphere is of an old run-down theme park with very little going on. (2011: online)

Ironically, for one Singaporean survey participant, this provides an impetus to see it before it is no longer there. Another Singaporean survey participant actually commented that, "it is there but forgotten, like the land of the forgotten past. The younger generation has no interest in it and the older has no time for it. Who knows if the government will tear it down sooner or later" (2011: online).

Walking down Memory Lane

Of the 25 guidebooks we reviewed, only one had a substantive write-up on Haw Par Villa: "[t]here is hardly a native resident in Singapore who hasn't been taken here as a child. For generations parents have brought their children here to expose them to traditional values – mostly Confucian – behind these stones" (Brown, Backenheimer and Tan, 2009: 64-65). This statement is probably true of the generations growing up in the 1960s-1980s. As a result, for many adult Singaporeans, Haw Par Villa represents part of their childhood memory. On his blog entitled "Haw Par Villa Re-visit", Laokokok (2007)

lamented the changing nature of this site. A notable feature of the blog is two photos of the author, one taken in the 1970s and another in 2007, both standing in front of the same statue, which had been moved in the interim. Responses to the blog included memories of the peak tourist times of the site, with some commenting on the younger generations' lack of appreciation for these Chinese legends and values.

Haw Par Villa brings back childhood memories for many adult Singaporeans. As such, many of them see Haw Par Villa as a part of Singapore's history (Teo and Yeoh, 1997). An important distinction here is the generational divide with respect to how Haw Par Villa is viewed. Younger generations seem mainly to view Haw Par Villa as an outmoded tourist attraction while the older generations see visiting Haw Par Villa as a walk down memory lane. The somewhat rundown look of the park ironically more accurately represents its long period of existence and its decline as a tourist site, as opposed to complaints about the artificiality of the renovated Chinatown. (Oon reports that as "part of the government's heritage conservation mandate, Chinatown was cleaned up and restored, too clinically some may argue, robbing it of some of its authenticity" [2008: 53]).

To Gaze or Not to Gaze

Haw Par Villa receives mixed reviews as a tourist site. On Lonely Planet's blog, one traveller inquires about the place: "Been told about Haw Par Villa in west of Singapore and told it's quite an experience of Chinese folklore! Anyone been who could advise best way by public transport to get there (and how long you'd suggest spending there)". Responses to this inquiry are mixed; while some simply provided directions, others offered suggestions:

> *Don't forget to see the Hua Song museum there and also the chamber of horrors.*

> *You won't have to spend more than a couple of hours there as it is quite small. The place has been out of operation for many years so entry is now free, you can still explore the interesting statues there and look around the park however.*

> *Haw Par Villa is very very old and very very run down…. Chances are u'd be extremely disappointed. It's a little kitchy too. Go to Chinatown and some of the Chinese temples there, u can get a better real life experience.* (Lonely Planet, 2010)

On our visit to Haw Par Villa, we noticed that many statues were in need of restoration. However, the park itself is a museum piece. The place felt like a walk back in time. Such displays of Chinese folklore are uncommon in Singapore, and the contrast between the newer statues (eg the Statue of Liberty with an Asian face) and the original statues (of Chinese folklore figures) marks an interesting blend of the East meeting the West. Hua Song Museum is a valuable addition, although it has an admission fee. Knowing what to expect is a critical element to appreciating Haw Par Villa.

Gazing at Haw Par Villa

Gazing at Haw Par Villa is not necessarily just looking at something out-of-the-ordinary. The idea that Haw Par Villa is a place of nostalgia for some tourists suggests that Haw Par Villa encompasses elements of the ordinary *and* the out-of-the-ordinary. The former suggests that comfort and familiarity can be reasons for attraction and the latter denotes that the factor of time could reshape something ordinary in the past into being out-of-the-ordinary in the present. What is also interesting is that such a gaze that involves nostalgia could result in wanting to preserve that place as suggested in our study. This idea is similar to Urry's (1992b) study on the relationship between the tourist gaze and the environment. Urry writes that, "the romantic tourist gaze... feeds into and supports attempts to protect the environment" in spite of the fact that tourism may have adverse effects on the environment (ibid: 9).

What is hidden behind the nostalgia felt by some participants (on websites and in interviews) is akin to the concept of the second gaze. What these participants did not implicitly and directly voice beyond their nostalgia is the changing tastes of tourists and how the current state of Haw Par Villa is a reflection of that. In commenting on Haw Par Villa, participants either comment on what it is not as a viable tourist site or what it was (reliving the past). MacCannell (2001) argues that the second gaze looks at the way attractions are presented than the attractions themselves, though in this case, the current state of Haw Par Villa is not necessarily STB's intended presentation.

The Future of Haw Par Villa

Examining the data sources we collected, tourists are not familiar with or particularly interested in Haw Par Villa as a tourist site and guidebooks do not have extensive write-ups on it. During our visits to Haw Par Villa we did not see many tourists (although this is highly dependent on the timing). Not surprisingly, most information presented in this article derives from Internet sources as our other research yielded limited information. However, this lack of information on Haw Par Villa underscores an important point – the lack of promotion and marketing of this site. Thus, the fate of Haw Par Villa lies in part in the priorities of STB, which has a strong influence over the promotion of tourist sites. However, one also has to recognise that Singapore's tourism is dependent on the ever-changing preferences of tourists. In the context of an island nation with limited land area, resources may have to be disproportionally allocated to tourist sites that are more able to generate profit (eg Ramchandani, 2012). Haw Par Villa in its current state is no competition to other tourist sites, such as Sentosa and the casinos (eg Henderson, 2006), in terms of its type and variety of entertainment, particularly for the younger generation. Yet Haw Par Villa represents, in its own way, a treasured past, although one in danger of fading away with newer generations of tourists. Managing expectations is an important aspect to securing Haw Par Villa's future. Phua et al (2009) argue the importance of being consistent between what tourist sites offer and how they are promoted. Providing critical information on Haw Par Villa's historical significance (better and clearer descriptive signs for the statues, for instance) and an honest account of its current state in promotional materials will help manage tourists' expectations. According to one visitor:

> just because this place lost its glow doesn't mean it's not worth a visit, especially if you're into offbeat attractions. I mean this place will really

blow your mind, with statues like a woman breastfeeding her father in law, armed monkeys, or the human faced giant crab. Now these apparently do make some sense if you've read up on Chinese mythology, but to an uneducated guy like me they just look freaky. (Spooky, 2010: online)

Conclusion

Haw Par Villa represents a part of Singapore history and a part of Singapore heritage. The characterisations in this article resonate with similar sentiments in terms of Haw Par Villa being a place of nostalgia for the older generations who had frequented the site and knew more about its history. It is also one of very few places steeped in Chinese folklore and legends in Singapore, inculcating Chinese and Confucian values. In fact, one guidebook hails it as "[f]ar livelier than the Chinese and Japanese gardens … [and] the most Chinese of Singapore's theme parks" (Brown, Backenheimer and Tan, 2009: 65).

Using Urry's theoretical lens of the tourist's gaze enables us to evaluate how this site is being viewed by visitors (both foreign tourists and locals). While sight (gaze) is one of many senses that tourists could employ in their experience, its importance does not necessary diminish. In fact, one could argue that for some tourists, the sight captured (especially) via a camera is the best evidence they have to show others that they have travelled (Urry and Larsen, 2011). In the context of Haw Par Villa, with all its oddities, is a perfect example of a tourist's visual consumption. Yet, what tourists fail to voice is the second gaze, MacCannell's (2001) critique of the first version of the tourist gaze. The second gaze would enable tourists to look at what the current state of Haw Par Villa is representing.

Also of interest is that people who argue for the preservation of Haw Par Villa are not necessarily local Singaporeans. On the internet, the groups interested in keeping Haw Par Villa open appear rather diverse. However, we are unable to ascertain the precise extent of the diversity and magnitude of this tendency. Nonetheless, the results show that people who are interested in keeping Haw Par Villa open, regardless of their country of origin, share at least one of the following two characteristics: interest in Chinese culture and/or past visitation. As such, Haw Par Villa could be considered as a site for cultural contact where both foreigners and locals visit the place because of its local cultural value. Yet it is also the changing tastes of foreigners and locals that are impacting its popularity, leading to several of its manifestations.

To celebrate the country's fity years of tourism in 2014, STB provided free guided tours to Haw Par Villa to enable "Singaporeans and residents here to relive their memories at local attractions and create new ones with their friends and families" (Chow, 2014: online). Visiting the site in earlier 2014, the authors also noticed some areas were renovated with fresh layers of paint. Still, Haw Par Villa as a tourist sites pales in comparison with the newer and more technologically enhanced sites. The fate of Haw Par Villa as a tourist attraction is interesting as it brings out the tension between the preservation of heritage attractions and generating tourist receipts. Future research could include a study of STB priorities in the challenging landscape of changing tourists' preferences and expectations. Another topic that could be explored is the issue of authenticity. This could be approached in two ways. First, one authenticity issue here is the extent to which Singapore Chinese culture has evolved from the original Chinese

culture and its representation (eg Jennings, 2010, on 'inherited' cultural heritage; Hayward, 2012, on evolving representations of Singapore's Merlion symbol). Second, the issue of authenticity and place branding is worth exploring if place branding is used to revive the site (eg Ooi and Stöber, 2010).

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