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## **What Makes Theatrical Performances Successful in China's Tourism Industry?**

**HANQUN SONG  
CATHERINE CHEUNG**

*This study aims to explore the factors affecting the success of a popular tourist product, namely theatrical performance, within the context of China's tourism industry, and develop a model based on previously successful productions. Using qualitative software, 22 Chinese-language articles on theatrical performances are analyzed to generate a list of success factors, classified as internal and external. The internal factors are storyline and performing, market positioning and marketing strategy, investment and financial support, operation and management, performing team, outdoor venue, indoor/outdoor stage supporting facilities, continuous improvement, and production team. The external factors are collaboration between cultural industries and local tourism, government support, privatization, and social and cultural effect. This study also provides suggestions for the future development of theatrical performances in China.*

**KEYWORDS.** Theatrical performance, success, China, content analysis

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## **Introduction**

In recent years, the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) (2009) has strongly promoted the development of theatrical performance, noting that it is a new product of the tourism and cultural industries. Such performances have been developed in many Chinese cities, and have become the highlight of China's tourism industry (Dou, 2009). The growth of these performances is reflected not only in the large number of tourist arrivals, but also their contribution to the local economy (Wang, 2008; Wei, 2007; Zhuge & Cui, 2005). In China, the success of theatrical performances can be witnessed from *The Impression of Liusanjie*, directed by Chinese director Zhang Yimou in 2004. The launch of this performance increased the gross domestic product (GDP) of Yangshuo County in Guilin by more than 10% (Wang, 2008). Since then, more and more cities in China have been presenting dramatic performances to visitors (Song & Cheung, 2010a).

Most of these performances have had a large impact on the local tourism industry; however, some have only attracted a small number of visitors and hence can be said to have failed in a competitive environment (Bai & Ge, 2008). Accordingly, there is a need to investigate successful theatrical performances so as to offer suggestions to theatre operators. This study therefore aims to explore the factors affecting the success of theatrical performances within the context of China's tourism industry.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Theatrical Performance***

Theatrical performance can be defined in this context as a large-scale live performance, staged indoors or outdoors, designed predominantly for tourists (Song &

Cheung, 2010a). Many studies have provided basic background information on specific performances in China (see for example Li, Hymiti, & Li, 2009; Rong, 2009). Some study this new product from an empirical perspective. Tian and Bao (2005) examined the authenticity of performing arts in the minority area of China, and showed that some attributes, such as the performers' costumes, content of the performance, musical instruments used, atmosphere, dancing, emotion of performers, and the interpretation placed on the performance by the hosts are all factors affecting authenticity. Qiao, Chen, and Kim (2009) showed that three factors (tradition, education, and charm) have a positive relationship with tourists' evaluation of their satisfaction, their intention to recommend, and their revisit intention, all in relation to the *Zen Music Shaolin Grand Ceremony*. Song and Cheung (2010a) explored 34 attributes affecting tourist satisfaction with theatrical performances in China, and found that most tourists are unwilling to watch the same theatrical performance again in future but would like to recommend it to others. In addition, Song and Cheung (2010b) developed a measurement scale for tourist satisfaction with theatrical performances, and showed that four factors, *performance, venue environment, service, and stage facilities*, contribute to satisfaction with *The Romance of the Song Dynasty* in Hangzhou. However, all the above-mentioned studies focus on a specific research area, namely the marketing of theatrical performances, and none explore the general attributes of a successful theatrical experience.

In western countries, theatrical performance, as a type of entertainment, has been studied by many researchers. Pearce (2008a) examined several aspects of tourism entertainment (such as *time and intensification of experience, the communication problem, audience involvement, themes and story-telling, skilled performance, the evolution of tourism entertainment, commercialism, consumerism and contradictions, and the fame of tourist entertainment*) and provided future research directions on this basis. Ryan and Collins (2008) probed the deeper meaning of theatrical performance, and showed that *An Eastern Odyssey* in Japan offers a representation of postmodern tourism. In addition, Daniel (1996) examined the authenticity and creativity of tourism dance performances from a sociological perspective. Some other studies on theatrical performances, shows, or live shows can be found within the casino and restaurant sectors (see for example d'Hautesserre, 2000; Loi, 2008; Morrison, 2010). Some researchers found that restaurants in the United States and Canada provide exciting entertainment, such as performance of jousting, swordfights, and horse riding, which can provide a customer experience and offer enlightenment (Morrison). It is believed that providing new entertainment, special events, and activities to tourists can renew and heighten customer interest, and thus enhance revisit intention (Morrison).

## ***Success of New Tourist Products***

Hsu (2008) noted that only a few new tourist products can be successfully launched. Reid and Bojanic (2010) mentioned that it is critical for firms to take a systematic approach to developing and marketing new products; the potential rewards are high if they are successful, but so are the potential risks of failure. Tourism companies face many challenges when they design a new tourist product. A good product idea might still fail due to its development, design, and specification flaws (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2009). Henard and Szymanski (2001) identified the dominant and most reliable predictors of success for new introductions as: *product/service characteristics* (product meets customer needs, advantage over competing products, technological sophistication), *strategy characteristics* (having dedicated human resources and research and development teams focused on supporting the initiative), *process characteristics* (marketing, predevelopment, technological, and launch proficiencies), and *marketplace characteristics* (market potential). Similarly, in the tourism context, it would be interesting and worthwhile to explore the predictors of success for theatrical performances in China. In addition, Swarbrooke (2002) generated a detailed framework for developing and managing tourist attractions, and showed that the factors affecting the success of tourist attractions are *the organization and its resources, the product itself, the market, and the management of the attraction.*

## **Methodology**

In the present study, all of the data, including newspaper and magazine articles, were retrieved from the Internet in March 2010. Content analysis, a qualitative method, was used to uncover the natural creation of categories by reading and annotation of the data (Glesne, 1999). McDaniel and Gates (2005) suggested that using search engines to gather secondary data is becoming a popular method to do research, as it is both useful and cost-effective. By using the Web sites Google and Baidu, searches were performed using the keywords “theatrical performance” and “success.” A total of 22 relevant Chinese-language articles, and no English articles, were found.

In these 22 articles, the average number of words is 2,012 Chinese characters, the minimum 682, and the maximum 5,736. Ten articles were published in 2009, five in 2008, two in 2007, three in 2006, and one in each of 2005 and 2010. Table 1 presents some background and basic information about these theatrical performances, including the founding year, name, cultural or ethnic origin, performance style and content, venue, number of articles, and indicators of success. As there is no

consensus on the definition of “success,” several indicators, such as high revenue, awards, large number of stage appearances, word-of-mouth, and impact on local economy, are used here. It should be noted that *The Tang Dynasty Show* in Xi’an, the first ever theatrical performance in China, was presented to foreign politicians as a dinner performance in its early stages (Da He News, 2009). The most innovative theatrical performance, *The Impression of Liusanjie*, is the first to be staged outdoors in the natural environment, rather than an indoor traditional theatre.

\*\*\*\*\*Please Insert Table 1 Here\*\*\*\*\*

The data analysis procedure commenced with coding, which was done using qualitative software (NVivo 8). This program makes it easier and more effective to organize the information in a professional manner (Edhlund, 2008). The coding process was informed by the approach of Edhlund. Every piece of information was individually coded based on the nature of the factors affecting the success of theatrical performances. It should be noted that some of the sentences can be coded into more than one category. Taking an example from Figure 1, the text from NVivo 8 could be coded as “operation and management” and “performing team” respectively. In the second step of analysis, the researcher categorized all of the codings into thirteen code families, or nodes, based on the nature of the factors involved. Finally, another researcher carefully reviewed the results of the data codes and nodes, and undertook minor revisions of their terms based on the consensus emerging from the discussions between both researchers.

\*\*\*\*\*Please Insert Figure 1 Here\*\*\*\*\*

## **Findings and Discussion**

The findings of this study show that thirteen nodes were generated (see Table 2): *storyline and performing, market positioning and marketing strategy, investment and financial support, operation and management, performing team, outdoor venue, indoor/outdoor stage supporting facilities, continuous improvement, production team, collaboration between cultural industries and local tourism, government support, privatization, and social and cultural effect*. *Storyline and performing* has the largest number of text units at 114, and the code with the fewest text units is *government support*, at 10. All of the thirteen nodes can be categorized into one of the two major factors (internal and external). The internal factors are theatrical performance attributes, such as *storyline and performing, market positioning and marketing*

*strategy, investment and financial support, operation and management, performing team, outdoor venue, indoor/outdoor stage supporting facilities, continuous improvement, and production team.* The external factors are those influenced by the outside environment and social trends, for instance *collaboration between cultural industries & local tourism, government support, privatization, and social and cultural effect.* Derived from the two factors together with the thirteen nodes, a model of theatrical performances' successful experience can be developed (Figure 2).

\*\*\*\*\*Please Insert Table 2 Here\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*Please Insert Figure 2 Here\*\*\*\*\*

## ***Internal Factors***

### ***Storyline and performing***

Storyline and performing, as the main attraction of theatrical performances, is the key to success. Storylines are associated with the content of performance such as ethnic minorities, traditional culture, historical stories, and local cultures. In China, history and cultures have been demonstrated vividly through performing, enabling tourists to have a direct encounter with intangible elements such as culture and history. Storyline is based on the specialty and characteristics of a destination. For example, *Four Seasons of Zhouzhuang* is staged at Zhouzhuang, the most famous water town in China, and the performance highlights the water and water-town life. *The Impression of West Lake* was developed and based on a few traditional, romantic love stories from West Lake, Hangzhou, emphasizing the romantic, "rainy day" ambience of the location. *The Impression of Lijiang* and *Mountains Rivers Show* both emphasize the experience of the ethnic minorities who live in the western part of China. This finding coincides with that of previous studies, such as Qiao et al. (2009), who found three aspects of a theatrical performance, namely tradition, education, and charm, to be strongly associated with tourist satisfaction and revisit intention. In the context of theatrical performance, a clear theme and storyline should be developed (Pearce, 2008a), and at the same time, language differences and incomprehensibilities should be resolved.

Theatrical performance involves a combination of performing arts such as opera, acrobatics, dancing, ballet, martial arts, and Kung Fu. These arts make the performance special and unique, as it is very rare for a storyline to be combined with all the various performing arts. It should be noted that the performing arts should

present their own sense of creativity and be well-coordinated with the storyline, rather than being copied from other performances.

### ***Market positioning and marketing strategy***

Market positioning and marketing strategy are the approaches implemented by theatre operators to ensure success in a competitive environment. In terms of the former, most theatrical performances are targeted at package and international tourists, and domestic Chinese visitors. Hence, theatre operators should establish good business relationships with travel agencies and tour guides, since previous research shows that these partners contribute to the profitability and success of theatrical performances. Tourists will receive strong recommendations for particular theatrical performances from travel agencies or local tour guides. In addition, some theatrical performances such as *The Legend of Kung Fu* and *Back to Tang Dynasty* have often been staged overseas with the assistance of foreign art companies. The findings in this section are similar to those of Swarbrooke (2002) in that strategic marketing planning, in particular market positioning, plays a vital role in managing a tourist product.

Developing a sound strategy is a cornerstone of successful marketing (Reid & Bojanic, 2010). Different theatrical performance packages are presented to tourists. For instance, the *Tang Dynasty Show* was the first to package dinner with the performance. In addition to traditional marketing strategies such as advertising in newspapers and travel agency promotion, e-commerce marketing methods are also implemented. Moreover, a professional marketing team contributes a lot to the success of theatrical performances, even in the economic downturn; the marketing team can directly sell and promote the product in different Chinese cities. Some, such as *The Romance of the Song Dynasty* and *The Impression of Liusanjie*, will co-operate with local destination marketing organizations to promote theatrical performances.

### ***Investment and financial support***

The investment involved in putting on a theatrical performance is huge, especially for outdoor performances, which have particularly high production costs. For instance, the cost of *The Impression of Liusanjie* is RMB 0.1 billion. The Central People's Government of the PRC (2009) also encouraged foreign investment in the theatrical performance industry. Therefore, persuading overseas investors to put their money into such performances plays an important function in success. Long-term investment can ensure the quality of production and performing teams, a suitable venue, good operations and management, and excellent stage facilities. In China,



investment in theatrical performance mainly comes from the large enterprises or local government.

### ***Operation and management***

Effective operations and management are associated with the skills and experiences of art companies. A professional approach to this plays a vital role, to some extent, in the success of a theatrical performance. Swarbrooke (2002) noted that operations and management could be a competitive advantage of a tourist attraction. In this study, it is apparent that many theatrical performances team up with professional art companies which are responsible for producing the product and also contacting travel agencies and local destination organizations. Some art companies have ample experience of this and so have better opportunities to produce a high quality production. For instance, theatrical performances such as *The Legend of Kung Fu* have learned from the management system used on Broadway.

Many theatrical performances give a lot of attention to performers' training. There are two ways to improve performers' professionalism: training programs and an incentive system. Regular training is needed to ensure excellent performances. For example, *The Romance of the Song Dynasty* has set up a training program with Zhejiang University for its performers. In addition, performance appraisal and an incentive system can be used to evaluate and motivate those taking part.

### ***Performing team***

In large-scale theatrical performances, there may be hundreds of performers involved. Some spectacles may involve as many as six hundred actors. There are two types of performers, professional and amateur. For some cultural and historical performances, the level of skill and professionalism of the participants can affect quality. Pearce (2008b) showed that skilled performers are particularly significant to theatrical performances given that nowadays many tourists have many chances to see, listen to, and appreciate world-class performers. Song and Cheung (2010a, 2010b) also mentioned that many aspects of performers' abilities affect tourist satisfaction, such as professionalism, good coordination, and expression of emotion. *The Romance of the Song Dynasty* and *The Song of Eternal Sorrow* are both famous for the professionalism of those involved. Such professional performers, including actors, models, and acrobats, can express and demonstrate the cultural and philosophical background to the show. Some of them are even recruited from overseas.

However, not all theatrical performances use professional performers; some, such as *The Impression of Lijiang* and *The Impression of Liusanjie*, recruit local residents to present the original lifestyle of ethnic minorities. Two-thirds of the participants in the former are selected from the local community and given training

prior to appearing on stage. Such individuals are able to demonstrate the culture of ethnic minorities and their original lifestyle.

### ***Outdoor venue***

Outdoor venue mainly means outdoor stages such as mountains, rivers, lakes, and valleys. Almost every outdoor theatrical performance highlights its setting, and is different from those staged at ordinary theatres. The first-ever outdoor theatrical performance in China, *The Impression of Liusanjie*, was staged at the Lijiang River, with mountains as its background. Following its success, several outdoor theatrical performances can now be found in China.

Almost every outdoor venue is located at a well-known tourist attraction, such as Lijiang River in Guilin, Jade Mountain in Lijiang City, West Lake in Hangzhou, Huaqing Pool in Xi'an, and Mount Song in Dengfeng. It seems that tourist attractions are highlights of the destinations, so the performances can further strengthen their reputation. However, Song and Cheung (2010a) showed that some tourists are not satisfied with outdoor performances because they are liable to be affected by bad weather, and sometimes the performances may even be cancelled because of heavy rain or thick fog.

### ***Indoor/outdoor stage supporting facilities***

Stage supporting facilities denote the equipment supporting the performance, such as lighting, smoke, water, fire, laser, and large screens. Many high-technology equipment has been introduced in theatrical performances, such as a specially-constructed stage which can be divided into two or three parts, or auditoria where part of the seating could be removed and changed during the performances. In some performances, an artificial waterfall is involved, which tourists find impressive. All of these supporting facilities enlighten the tourist experience. This factor coincides with Song and Cheung's (2010a) and Pearce's (2008b) finding that stage facilities are vital to tourist satisfaction, and high-technology stage facilities can enhance the competitiveness of performances.

### ***Continuous improvement***

Theatrical performances' continuous redesign and revision can attract more repeat visitors. Improvement of the performances relies largely on two methods. The first, and vital, approach is to learn from the experiences of western shows such as *Moulin Rouge* and *Circus of the Sun* in Broadway, Las Vegas, and Paris. Another is to use feedback and evaluation from tourists. Some theatre operators evaluate the quality of their performances by conducting tourist surveys, and use the results to revise and improve the presentation. The operator of *The Romance of the Song Dynasty*, for instance, regularly conducts surveys to get tourist feedback and opinions. In order to

maintain the high standard and quality of theatrical performances, some improvement and revision to the dancing, screen, costumes, and so on will be needed from time to time. Morrison (2010) noted that offering new activities and renewed activities can produce a continual heightening of customer interest, and attract repeat visits.

*The Impression of West Lake* was redesigned and revised four times in its first year, in an attempt to present the best possible performance to the audience. *The Legend of Kung Fu* has also been revised regularly based on evaluation of overseas theatrical performances. In 2007, the theatre operator invested RMB 10 million to upgrade the stage facilities of *The Romance of the Song Dynasty*.

### ***Production team***

Performing art is the main element of theatrical performances, and the production team plays a significant role in designing and producing excellent productions. The director is the leader of the team, and a famous director can create a good word-of-mouth for tourists too. An example is Zhang Yimou, a famous Chinese director, who was responsible for the opening ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. He has directed a number of theatrical performances, including a series of Impressions, namely *The Impression of Liusanjie* in Guilin, *The Impression of West Lake* in Hangzhou, and *The Impression of Lijiang* in Yunnan.

In some cases, musicians, singers, scriptwriters, and designers have also participated in performances. Zhang Liangying, a famous Chinese singer; Tan Dun, a well-known international musician; and Kitaro, a Japanese musician, have all contributed to the success of some theatrical performances. In summary, the high standard of a production team can bring success.

## ***External Factors***

### ***Collaboration between cultural industries and local tourism***

Theatrical performances have become a highlight of China's tourism industry, as a product of the tourism and cultural industries. *The Tang Dynasty Show*, the first theatrical performance in China, was first staged for overseas government visitors. Its success mainly relied on the innovative collaboration between the tourism and cultural industries in the early stage of Chinese tourism. Many other theatrical performances have also achieved success through developing the cultural product for tourism. In 2009, the Chinese government strongly encouraged the cooperation of the tourism and cultural industries, and suggested that they should work together to form a positive partnership.

The development of theatrical performance should be based on the local tourism industry. For instance, *The Romance of the Song Dynasty* is located in

Hangzhou, and its audience is mainly made up of tourists visiting the city. Generally, in China, it is mainly tourists who attend theatrical performances. Song and Cheung (2010a) showed that in China, tourists will not go to a destination solely for the purpose of attending a theatre performance. However, on Broadway, the audiences are not made up primarily of tourists, even though some attendees may consider watching the show as their major reason for visiting New York. Therefore, it should be noted that the success of theatrical performance in China is based on the tourism development of the destination which captures a large number of tourist arrivals.

### ***Government support***

In China, the government plays an extremely important role in tourism development (Zhang, Yan, & Ye, 2008). Indeed, such development is largely reliant on central and local government support. In the present study, it is clear that this also applies to theatrical performances specifically. Government support is therefore an important external factor and one which is strongly related to the success of theatrical performances. For example, *The Impression of Liusanjie* was funded at the outset by RMB 0.2 million from the Guilin government; local government officials also helped to select a suitable location and venue, and negotiated with local residents for tourism development.

### ***Privatization***

The privatization of state-owned enterprises plays a significant role in transforming centralized economies into market economies (Gan, Guo, & Xu, 2008). China's rapid economic development has led to many changes since the introduction of the Open Door policy in 1978. The Chinese economy has changed from a centralized to a market system. Such economic reform has also influenced the development of theatrical performance. In the past, dancing troupes were controlled by the government and were not permitted to enter the market. After the economic reforms, such troupes were able to start up a market operation by setting up performing-arts businesses. Without the privatization factor, theatrical performances would not be successful in a competitive society.

### ***Social and cultural effects***

China's tourism industry has developed dramatically. In its early stages, it has been said, "daytime activity for tourists is visiting temples, nighttime activity is sleeping" (Song and Cheung, 2010a). Nowadays, a variety of tourist activities, including nightlife, is available. The development of theatrical performance, a type of tourism entertainment, can be partly explained by this evolving social effect.

With the development of China's economy, Chinese tourists are opting for sightseeing as well as experience tourism (Qiao, 2010); they are eager to pursue cultural experiences and to explore the subculture in different provinces of China. In addition, many foreigners are interested in Chinese culture, such as Kung Fu, martial arts, and so on. *The Legend of Kung Fu* is one product designed for those western tourists who are fascinated by Chinese Kung Fu.

## Conclusion

This study has explored 13 factors affecting the success of theatrical performances in China. As China is poised to become the number one international tourist destination in the near future, this study provides valuable insights and suggestions for the development and improvement of theatrical performances, an emerging tourism product in China. Firstly, it shows that theatrical performances in China and the United States are different. In China, only a few of them are regarded as attractions in destinations; in the United States, particularly in areas such as Las Vegas and New York, some productions are the main tourist attractions. Therefore, Chinese performances should be developed and produced based on the uniqueness of a destination and local culture. Such uniqueness could be defined as the specialty of a destination, such as local folk stories, symbolic attractions, particular eras in history, or a style of music and dance. Taking *The Impression of Liusanjie* in Guilin as an example, there is an ancient Chinese saying that "Guilin's mountain and water scenery is the best in the world," and indeed the area is known for its world-famous landscapes. In addition, the ethnic minority population of Liusanjie is famous across China. This performance is directed by Zhang Yimou, a world-renowned director. Moreover, Guilin is an international tourist city with large numbers of tourist arrivals every year. All of these factors make the theatrical performance *The Impression of Liusanjie* successful. Another example is *The Impression of West Lake* in Hangzhou. Hangzhou, a city known as "heaven on earth," is famous for its West Lake and its ancient love stories, as well as the history of the Southern Song Dynasty. All of these elements are vital factors determining its success. In addition, *The Tang Dynasty Show* in Xi'an is a successful example of presenting ancient music and dance, as well as the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty; these elements cannot be found all together in any other city in the world. However, it should also be noted that it might take a long time to develop a theatrical performance as a major attraction of a destination.

Secondly, a theatrical performance can enlighten the tourist experience. Theatrical performance makes static history and culture lively and explicable.

Tourists can better understand and get to know the history and local culture. This could be a good way to attract mass tourism.

This study has several limitations. Firstly, only media reports were used, and all of the data were accessed from the Internet. It should be noted that some articles published in trade magazines or journals were not available through this means and therefore were not included in the analysis. Secondly, it is based on content analysis, by coding and analyzing all the successful factors of theatrical performances. It should be noted that the selected cases might create bias, as every performance analyzed here is a large-scale event. There are smaller-scale, shorter performances taking place in some tourist attractions in China, so these results cannot be applied across every event in the nation. Future research should expand the sampling frame by considering journal papers and trade magazines as well.

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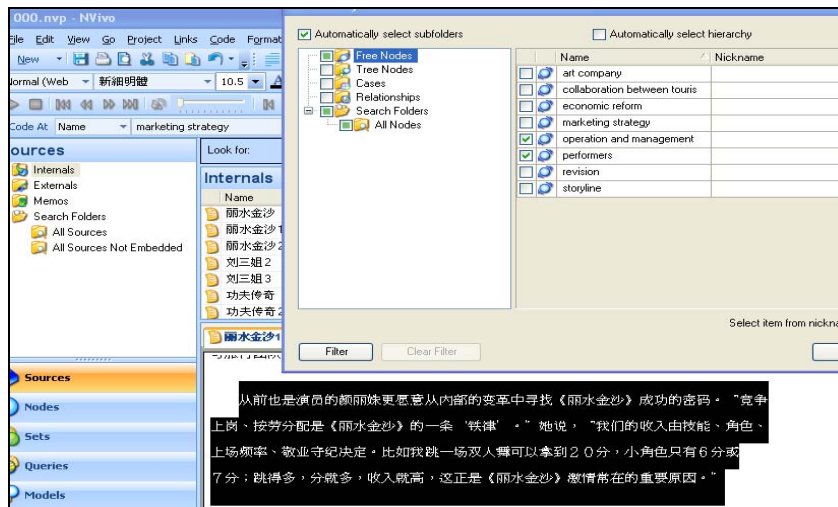


**Table 1.** Brief Information on the Articles Analyzed in This Study.

Founded year	Name	Cultural/ethnic origin	Performance style and content	Venue	Number of articles	Indicators of success
1988	<i>The Tang Dynasty Show</i>	Historical	Dancing, and traditional musical instruments	Tang Dynasty Theatre Restaurant, Xi'an	1	Staged 7000 times; 5.2 million international tourists
2000	<i>The Romance of the Song Dynasty</i>	Hangzhou	Acrobatics, singing, and dancing, supported by high-technology shows	Song Dynasty Town Theatre, Hangzhou	4	10 million visitors; revenue of 0.2 billion; good word-of-mouth
2001	<i>Amazing Xiangxi</i>	Ethnic minority of Tujia and Miao	Acrobatics, singing, and dancing	Xiangxi Theatre, Zhangjiajie	1	Staged 2400 times; 1.45 million visitors
2002	<i>Mountains Rivers Show</i>	Ethnic minority of Lijiang	Dancing, and traditional musical instruments	Lijiang Culture Exchange Center, Lijiang	3	Staged 4000 times; revenue of RMB 0.2 billion; a list of awards in China
2004	<i>The Impression of Liusanjie</i>	Guilin, and ethnic minority of Zhuang	Singing and dancing, supported by high-technology shows	Lijiang Outdoor Theatre, Guilin	3	Revenue of RMB 40 million; a list of awards in China; enhanced the local economy
2004	<i>The Legend of Kung Fu</i>	Kung Fu	Martial arts, acrobatics, and dancing	Red Theatre, Beijing	2	Revenue of US\$3 million; staged overseas in the US and Canada; good word-of-mouth in the US
2005	<i>Back to Tang Dynasty</i>	Historical	Acrobatics, singing, and dancing	Fengming Jiutian Theatre, Tang Paradise, Xi'an	1	Staged overseas in Singapore
2006	<i>The Impression of Lijiang</i>	Ethnic minority of Naxi	Singing and dancing	Jade Dragon Snow Mountain Outdoor Theatre, Lijiang	1	Revenue of RMB 67 million; enhanced the local economy
2006	<i>The Song of Eternal Sorrow</i>	Historical	Dancing, supported by high-technology shows	Huaqing Pool Outdoor Theatre, Xi'an	1	Increased tourist arrivals to the attraction; tourists stay longer at the destination

2007	<i>Four Seasons of Zhouzhuang</i>	Zhouzhuang	Dancing, and traditional musical instruments	Outdoor Theatre, Zhouzhuang, Suzhou	2	Good word-of-mouth; enhanced the local economy by RMB 50 million a year
2007	<i>Tea Show</i>	Tea-Zen tradition	Dancing, acrobatics, and martial arts, supported by high-technology shows	OTC East Theatre, Shenzhen	1	A list of international awards; staged 1000 times; revenue of RMB 10 million
2007	<i>The Impression of West Lake</i>	Hangzhou	Singing and dancing, supported by high-technology shows	West Lake Outdoor Theatre, Hangzhou	1	140,000 visitors in the first year
2007	<i>Zen Music Shaolin Grand Ceremony</i>	Zen, and Kung Fu	Martial arts, Zen song, and dancing	Mount Song Outdoor Theatre, Dengfeng	1	Enhanced the local economy; increased tourist arrivals

**Figure 1.** An example of multiple coding using NVivo 8.



**Table 2.** Code Families (Nodes) and Their Components (Codes) for the Successful Experience of Theatrical Performances in China.

Code families (nodes)	Components (codes)	Text units identified
Storyline and performing	[ethnic minorities] [minority dancing] [culture] [history] [oriental culture] [Chinese culture] [local culture] [Zen] [love story] [opera] [acrobatics] [artistic] [traditional music and instrument] [modern dancing] [ballet] [martial arts] [Kung Fu]	114
Market positioning and marketing strategy	[market positioning] [travel agency] [tour guide] [hotel] [package tourists] [package of dinner and entertainment] [package of Kung Fu] [marketing team] [selling tickets on the internet] [media promotion]	52
Investment and financial support	[investment] [foreign investment] [private enterprise] [big companies] [financial support]	16
Operation and management	[art company] [experience of theatrical performances] [incentive system] [performance appraisal] [training] [competition system] [management system]	47
Performing teams	[dancing troupe] [local residents] [professional performers] [actors] [change the performers] [art school] [model] [graduates] [foreign performers]	51
Outdoor venue	[natural environment] [scenery] [mountains] [valley] [lake] [rivers] [pool] [pavilion] [trees] [bamboo grove] [ordinary theatre]	43
Indoor/outdoor stage supporting facilities	[high technology] [stage facilities] [LED screen] [lighting] [smoke] [fire] [laser] [sound]	41
Continuous improvement	[revise and reform] [improvement] [long term] [learning experience from others] [Circus of the Sun] [Moulin Rouge] [Broadway] [Las Vegas] [Paris] [feedback from the tourists] [collection data]	44
Production team	[production team] [overseas production experts] [international production teams] [Zhang Yimou] [famous directors] [scriptwriter] [musician] [singer] [designer] [composers] [dancer] [authors] [technician] [a series of “Impression” theatrical performances]	36
Collaboration between cultural industries and local	[combination of tourism and culture] [local tourism development] [tourist arrival]	33

tourism		
Government support	[government funding] [government support] [government guideline] [policy]	10
Privatization	[market economy] [economy reform] [privatization of cultural companies]	12
Social and cultural effect	[cultural trend] [night life] [night entertainment] [cultural differentiation] [cultural demand] [spiritual demand]	17

**Figure 2.** A model of the successful experience of a large-scale theatrical performance in China.

