ABSTRACT

NAZARIADLI, SHAHAB. An Urbannormative and Orientalist Critique of the Representational Bias in Rural Tourism. (Under the direction of Duarte B. Morais).

Developing tourism microentrepreneurship is often considered a key strategy for enabling economic rejuvenation of rural communities. However, tourism representations are reportedly characterized by Orientalist and Urbannormative biases, stereotyping the subordination of the Rural Other by superior Urban Centers. The representation of rural populations has long been problematized because those who write people’s histories end up influencing their futures. In the context of rural tourism, microentrepreneurs’ success has been linked to their control over how local histories and identities are represented to visitors. Additionally, the unscripted spaces created by tourism microentrepreneurship have been reported to afford opportunities for self-representation and improved livelihoods. Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation is to examine the self-representations of rural tourism microentrepreneurs in contrast with the images urbanite tourists have of them.

Namely, first, I engaged with a group of rural tourism microentrepreneurs in an autophotography activity to examine the ways they wish to represent themselves to visitors. The findings suggested that rural tourism microentrepreneurs resist and comply with Urbannormative biases in an attempt to both speak against urban hegemonic forces and appeal to the perceived desires of tourists. Second, I developed and validated an online visual research tool, named “VQMethod,” designed to enable the online administration of Q methodology. Next, I employed this tool to examine the dissonance between the self-representations of rural tourism microentrepreneurs in the NC piedmont region with the images potential urban tourists have of them. The findings revealed that participants held the following mental models: quaint and idyllic places; places for small-scale healthy food production; sacrificed places to produce food;
and primitive places devoted to food production. Cumulatively, this dissertation stands to provide novel insights into the politics of rural tourism destination image-making, and to enable rural communities to harness the economic force of tourism.
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An Urbannormative and Orientalist Critique of the Representational Bias in Rural Tourism

by
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, my lovely mother Soussan, my father Manouchehr, my sister Leila and my beloved wife Samira for their sacrifice and unreserved support. I would also love to dedicate the dissertation to my grandmother Parvin who always called me Dr. Shahab but passed away sooner to witness. Besides, this dissertation is dedicated in remembrance to Maryam Mirzakhani, the former Professor of Mathematics at Stanford University, who died at the age of 40. She was the First woman and Iranian who won the Fields Medal, the most prestigious award in mathematics.
BIOGRAPHY

Shahab Nazariadli was born in Iran. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Architecture in 2006 and Master of Arts in Landscape Architecture in 2009. His altruistic passion moved him towards dismantling and apprehending the ways tourism can foster development and equality among peripheral communities. Therefore, he destined to pursue his PhD studies at NC State University and work under the supervision of Dr. Duarte B. Morais the chief investigator of People-First tourism, the first social start-up at NC State. Hence, he teamed up with a group of multidisciplinary researchers to foster livelihoods and strengthen equal prosperity in marginalized and alienated communities of North Carolina. His broad research interests consist of rural-urban tourism, tourism representation, architecture and tourism, participatory action research and novel visual research methods. He is the creator of the visual Q method (VQMethod) online research tool (www.vqmethod.com).
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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Overview

No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story.
Moreover, then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still the author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speaking subject, and you are now at the center of my talk. (hooks, 1992, p.208)

Scholars have problematized the depiction of the Third World, previously colonized regions, and minority groups in perpetuating the dominance of West ideologies upon the Rest, leading to the creation of “us” and “them” (Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Mellinger, 1994; Santos, 2006). The Western world itself is perpetuating colonial ideologies by defining the binary boundaries of urban and rural. The urban-driven representations of rural Other are biased projections of real life in such geographies (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2014). Such representations are governed by what the media chooses to represent and how the media frames rural realities (McCombs, 2005), which have penetrated into tourism. In other words, rural tourism representations are characterized by Urbannormative biases (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2014), which stereotype the subordination of the rural Other and superordinate urban ideals (Pratt, 2007; Wang & Morais, 2014).

Rural tourism microentrepreneurship is a mechanism through which the rural alienated can benefit from tourism due its underregulated nature, outside the control and tyranny of formal industry (Morais, K.C., Mao & Mosimane, 2015). However, this mechanism is affected by the expectations created by the urban media and internalized by urban tourists, harming the host communities’ dignity and identity. Within this mechanism, tourism microentrepreneurs can
either transform their identities according to urbanites’ tastes (Kordel & Weidinger, 2016; Hall & Page, 2014; Perkins, 2006), turn into passive tourees (Cohen, 2002) and perform a rural simulacra (Cloke, 1997) or resist the streamlined urban-centered forces of representation at the probable loss of income.

Rural peoples’ resisting against to the urban tourists’ expectations, can mollify or subjugate the urban media’s continuous stereotyping of rural life. However, the concern is that if rural microentrepreneurs do not satisfy the tourists’ expectations, they might not be able to sustain their livelihoods from tourism. If the rural residents choose to comply with tourists’ desires and defer to tourist’s unrealistic demands, they can be less active in shaping and preserving their identities (Wang & Morais, 2014).

By transformation of identities to comply with external expectations, rural tourism microentrepreneurs and eventually the rural residents will distance themselves from their roots and further engrain their subordination with stereotypical and urban-centered projections of their identities. This will eventually lead to gradual loss of identity (Stronza, 2001), alteration of history and the polarization between rural and urban people (Banhyopadhyay & Morais, 2005; McKay, 2016). This loss of identity, however, is not the ultimate loss, as it also inexorably brings about political, economic and social dominance of urban upon rural (Creed, 1997).

Accordingly, images of rural communities as “urban playgrounds” tend to gradually change the identity of rural people (Figueiredo, 2013). For example, Brandt and Haugen, (1997, p.330) contend that the agricultural press “participates in the social shaping of rural women’s identity.” Connell (1987) recognized the *hegemonic masculinity* and emphasized the femininity prevailing in the contemporary mass media. Men represented with physical superiority and economic strength, and women as nurturing and compliant.
Sturma asserts that a “representational loop” is established where stereotypical images with colonial biases are continually reiterated (1999, p. 713). Jenkins (2003) adopting Urry’s (1990) notion of “hermeneutic circle” explains that in a cyclical process, the destination marketers project the images through promotional materials, then the image is perceived by tourists. Next, the touristic icon is visited and photographed by tourists. Jenkins contends that as long as less powerful and under-resourced people are unable to represent themselves, the impenetrable circle of representation will dominate the views and conceptions about “rural realities.” To put it another way; the disempowered under-heard can speak, if allowed inside the representation loop.

In the representational loop, disempowered people are seen, photographed and represented while not being active agents in shaping their own identities (Spivak, 1988.). They have been kept silent through streamlined urban-driven hegemonic forces which inhibit them from penetrating the loop of representation. The host community’s stereotyped images are reiterated, reconstructed, renegotiated and perpetuated by urban media in a way that does not give rural people outlets or opportunities to speak up (Yan & Santos, 2009).

This politics of representation further loses equilibrium with the widening digital divide between rural and urban people (Baum, 2006). The rural under-resourced are banned from entering into the representation loop, but more dramatically even if they are allowed, they lack the means and outlets to self-represent. In other words, the under-resourced rural people will continue to be defeated against urban sophisticates, as long as they are unable to influence the tourism market. However, rural tourism microentrepreneurs have the capability to defend urban media and accordingly influence the tourists’ expectations.
In the modern world, emancipatory movements have revealed to be less troublesome and fast. The oppressed people disseminate their discontent through the visual media and social networking, raising awareness within their communities and to the world. Take for example through a series of movements occurred in Arab countries called “Arab Spring” such as in Yemen and Qatar and Syria wherein the digital Media played an acute role in raising awareness among people (Howard & Hussain, 2013), harmonizing peoples’ voices and orchestrating their movements. Also, an image of an innocent woman killed during presidential election protests in Iran, debut riots against the government (Mortensen, 2011).

Imagine tourism microentrepreneurs as agents in preserving local rural identities, their voice can be recorded and magnified by snapping images that counter the fake realities created by urban media. In McCarthy and Zald’s (1973, p. 20) words, tourism microentrepreneurs can also act as “social movement entrepreneurs.” Therefore, inspired by real-world digital media-driven political/social movements discussed above, the socio-political mobilization of tourism microentrepreneurs, and the local communities can take place through the use of photography. Hence, this dissertation proposes another representational loop that is self-owned, self-controlled and self-driven by local rural people, in representing their true version of reality to urban visitors (Figure 1.1).

Accordingly, the overarching purpose of this dissertation is to examine the self-representations of rural tourism microentrepreneurs in contrast with the images urbanite tourists have of them; to empower rural tourism microentrepreneurs through opportunities for self-representation and through informing equitable tourism development policy. This research purpose is underpinned by the notion that critical consciousness is the first step toward emancipation from urban hegemonic control (Ferreire, 2000). Therefore, it employs
methodologies which inherently are empowering, inclusive and mobilizing, i.e., autophotography and Q methodology. Hence, this dissertation is framed into three studies.

The first study examines how rural tourism microentrepreneurs wish to represent their lives through digital photography. This study involves tourism microentrepreneurs in an autophotography activity, by asking them to represent their preferred aspects of rural life and surrounding environments to future visitors. Thematic analysis is employed to derive overarching themes and critical history to explore and interpret the ways the rural representations comply/resist the urban colonial ideologies. The second study assesses how reliable and usable the visual Q method (VQMethod) is for the collection of Q method data online. Besides, it embarks on a methods agreement test to estimate the degree of agreement between the VQMethod and the golden-standard paper-based mode of Q-method.

In the third study, the generated photos from the first study are used to contrast how rural tourism microentrepreneurs and their potential urban visitors believe the photos are least like to most like rural place as a tourism destination. The data analysis reveals the different perspectives centered around the visual representation of rural piedmont region of North Carolina among the rural and urban participants. In sum, these three studies attempted to shed light on the prevalence of Urbannormative and colonial ideologies in visual tourism representation within and between urban and rural populations.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guide this study:

**CHAPTER 2: Rural Tourism Microentrepreneurs’ Self-representation Through Photography: A Counter-Hegemonic Approach**
RQ1: In what ways do rural tourism microentrepreneurs want to represent themselves to potential visitors?

RQ2: To what extent do the self-representations of rural tourism microentrepreneurs comply with and/or resist Orientalist and Urbannormative biases?

CHAPTER 3: Evaluating the Visual Q Method (VQMethod) Research: A Usability, Reliability and Methods Agreement Analysis

RQ1: To what extent is the VQMethod’s survey interface easy to use?

RQ2: To what extent is the VQMethod a reliable instrument to conduct Q method research?

RQ3: To what extent do the traditional paper-based Q method and the online VQMethod-generated Q sorts converge?

H1: The number of factors remains stable at the VQMethod in repeated measures

H2: The pattern of factor membership remains stable at the VQMethod in repeated measures.

H3: The time spent on the Q survey significantly increases the reliability of VQMethod.

CHAPTER 4: Contrasting Rural Microentrepreneurs’ and Their Potential Urban Visitors’ Images of Rural Life

RQ1: What perspectives do rural tourism microentrepreneurs and their potential urban visitors have about rural life?

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1 below illustrates the guiding conceptual framework of this study, which encompasses theoretical constructs from “circle of representation”, “hegemony”, “tourism microentrepreneurship” and “tourism representation”. This conceptual framework unearths how rural tourism marketers inject a set of meanings and create expectations for the urban visitors which contradicts the status quo of rural tourism destinations. Then the rural host communities
referred as subaltern, tend to stage their socio-cultural and environmental assets into rural simulacra to meet urban people’s expectations. The rural simulacra then is visited by urban visitors, photographed and reintroduced into a circle of representation. This destabilizing and re-affirming and imposed set of meanings in turn ramifies the identities of rural subaltern and turn them as subordinates to the urbanites’ mythical expectations. However, in this study, the rural subaltern are mobilized to self-represent themselves through act of auto-photography and further disclose their mindsets about representation of their geographies.

![Figure 1.1. The study’s overarching conceptual framework.](image-url)
**Theoretical Framework**

**Overview**

The countryside has increasingly become an object of consumption and growth of service sector (McCarthy, 2005). The function of the countryside as the site of the production of food and fiber has become less and less relevant (Liberry, 2014). It is increasingly replaced by other economic sectors such as tourism (Kneafsey, 2003), the marketing of local and alternative food (Tregear et al., 2007; Ermann, 2005) or leisure activities that build on selling images of the countryside. While urban-centric media predominantly produce these images, it can come at the expense of under-appreciating local identities and cultural diversity.

A growing interest in the issue of post-modernism has deflected attention away from what has been referred to as the “politics of inequality” towards the politics of identity (Leyshon, 1995). The sense of antipathy and inferiorization of rural identities has led to rural people’s representation as sights and rural destinations as sites for tourists (Aitchison, 2001). Manifestations of colonial legacy are being deployed for the exploitation of the rural assets by urban power centers (Tacoli, 1998). In turn, the rural people have become disempowered to take actions and voice their needs.

This Othering is pursued through a set of descriptors manufactured by “Western Imaginary” such as backward, immoral, timeless, unchanging, lazy (Aitchison, 200; Bruner, 1991, p. 241). These preconceived notions, emanated from the persistent colonial ideologies, have been even happening between neighbour countries such as England and Wales (Pitchford, 1995) and America and Latin America. What is more, in a smaller scale the dominance of one group over another through the imposition of biased representations is happening between urban and rural geographies (Wang & Morais, 2014). Namely, rural people have been deprived to
represent themselves and instead narratives constructed by urban centers generally describe them.

In essence, the theoretical underpinnings of this research integrate insights from post-colonialism, rural tourism, and tourism self-representation. Postcolonialism (neocolonialism) is the umbrella term that will subsume two another constructs namely as Urbannormativity and Orientalism which will guide the proposed studies. They will further broaden our understanding about the tourism-driven bifurcations and oppressions in global and regional levels.

**Postcolonialism**

It has been over 50 years since the end of European imperialism, but legacies of this phenomenon still overshadow international relations, migration and tourism (Hall & Tucker, 2004). The proliferation of colonial ideologies was initially promulgated through the print form in an attempt to identify the colonized as primitive and justify the dominant position of colonizers (Ngugi, 2005). Then through the advent of technology, photography, travel and anthropology helped perpetuate those narratives (Sharp, 2011).

Burke (2013) locates two plain themes from the postcolonial discourse, resistance-complicity, and power-knowledge. Tourism discourse is mostly affected by the former, postulating that tourism can reproduce the colonial sense of Europeans traveling to see the pre-modern and exotic. This colonial tendency can also happen as a counter movement, in a reverse direction; the colonized elites travel to colonizers’ territories to erase their differences (Flutsy, 2011).

Said’s (1978) seminal work on Orientalism has propelled the development of postcolonial theory. Many scholars in tourism have taken up and extended Said’s delineation of the Western representation of the East (Orient). The power imbalance in conjunction with the
substantial role of photography in tourism (Albers & James, 1988) has fueled ample discussion about the politics of representation in tourism. The authority of who has the right to represent a place or people and whose story should be told and which slices or versions of history should be shared play out in aggressive ways in the context of tourism (Hasty, 2002; Wang & Morais, 2014).

In postcolonialism, the exertion of power over the oppressed is not military-based, but rather practiced in forms of representations (Yan, 2009). Postcolonialism theory in the context of tourism also manifests itself in tourism representations and identity. Many scholars interested in tourism representations of the East/rural Other have underpinned their research on postcolonialism theory (Yan & Santos, 2009). They adopt postcolonialist critiques in their interpretations of the oppressed and minorities when there is prevalent political, social, economic, cultural and environmental disequilibrium. In short, tourism is a context in which inequalities of power and exploitation can be manifested and even exacerbated (Hall & Tucker, 2004; Nash, 1989).

One of the first authors who postulated tourism as a vehicle for perpetuating colonial legacies in the form of neocolonialism was Manning (1978). He highlights Antigua’s dependence on tourism revenues generated from the Western visitors. Matthews (1978) also characterizes the tourism industry as a new form of the plantation economy, which consisted of colonial owners exploiting and harvesting the colonies’ raw materials, lands, assets and labor. Bandyopadhyay and Morais (2005) also reported the persistence of colonial ideologies on American tourism media in the representation of India and Chambers (2002) recognized Caribbean tourism as a form of postcolonialism.
Crick argued that tourism is a form of “leisure imperialism” and represents “the hedonistic face of colonialism” (1989, p. 322). Furthermore, according to Nash (1989):

Metropolitan centers have varying degrees of control over the nature of tourism and its development, but they exercise it – at least at the beginning of their relationship with tourist areas – in alien regions. It is this power over touristic and related developments abroad that makes a metropolitan center imperialistic and tourism a form of imperialism. (p. 39)

The representation of the non-western regions was and still is inextricably linked to the popularization of accounts of travels and explorations in the imperial lands. For example, it was the accounts of the French and English voyages of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which confirmed the discovery of a tropical paradise (Hall & Tucker, 2004).

Subaltern Studies

The notion of subaltern finds its way in postcolonialism studies, where the polarization of power and socio-political and even geographical marginality is the core. The three influential thinkers and critics of subaltern studies are Antonio Gramsci, Ranajit Guha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. This term is originated in the military use meaning people of lower rank and therefore is intertwined with the politics of power (Sharp, 2011; Sarkar, 1984). This term was then adopted by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1971), to refer to those who are affected and dominated by ruling classes (Louai, 2012). After that, it penetrated postcolonial studies mainly in South Asia by a Subaltern Studies group of historians, led by Ranjit Guha and launched in the 1980s by a group of Indian scholars. This group aimed to address the Westerners tendencies to study South Asian’s history only from the elite’s vantage points (Guha, 1982).
Guha (1982) similarly defines the subaltern as “a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed regarding class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way.” The Subaltern Studies Group believed that the histography of colonial India has been under the influence of colonial elitism which has been produced by imperial Britain.

Gramsci (1971) defines subaltern as the condition of people who are lacking autonomous political power (Smith, 2010), are not elites and cannot be elites, those who are objectified, are studied and too underresourced to earn their way to a voice and agency. The histories of subaltern people are confounded with the history of upper-class elites. The disenfranchised subaltern, have been ignored as active agents of their local and national history (Louai, 2012). The Gramscian concept of subaltern applies to those groups in society who are lacking autonomous political power (Smith, 2010).

“Gramsci was concerned with how literary representations of the subaltern reinforced the subaltern’s subordinated position…In historical or literary documents, the subaltern may be presented as humble, passive or ignorant, but their actual lived experience may prove the contrary. Hence, the integral historian has to analyze critically the way in which intellectuals represent the conditions and aspirations of the subaltern” (Green 2000, p. 15). His interest in subaltern studies was to find out a conducive methodology for the subaltern histography and a political strategy for change and action (Green, 2000). This tendency was questioned by Spivak and her belief that no methodology, even the most ambitious Marxist one, can avoid a sort of essentialism in its attempt to define who or what may constitute the subaltern group.

Nonetheless, through some strategies, whether covert or overt the rural subaltern can resist while reaping benefits from tourism. For example, a group of West Virginia high school
students created a short movie to voice their disapproval of a reality TV show named *Buckwild*, in perpetuating bigoted stereotypes against Appalachian people. In the same vein, Elizabeth Barrett in a 2000 documentary film called “Stranger with a Camera” (Baldwin, 2001) makes the audience aware of how strangers *mine* images of rural Appalachian people as like they did *mine* their natural resources for decades (Jude & Brashear, 2016).

Spivak (1988) strived to oppose postcolonialist advocates whom she saw as aspiring to dismantle the voices of the unheard subaltern. She asserted that the subaltern cannot speak in order to stop advocates and activists in consolidating colonial thoughts through the proliferation of their thoughts and concerns.

**Otherness**

“Thus an irony of global capitalism and its mainstay of enforced homogeneity is that the world’s largest industry relies upon the marketing of difference, and the (re)production of both places and people as the desirable Other…” (Aitchison, 2001, p. 139).

Rose (1995) defined Otherness as a process of distinguishing where you belong to by contrasting it with other places and whom you are by contrasting to other people. Bandyopadhyay and Morais (2005) further characterized Otherness as a process contrasts a masculine “same” as opposed to a feminine as a reflection of power dynamics between growth centers and pleasure peripheries.

The term Other is mainly used in social science and humanities to define those who are different from “us” (Dervin, 2012). “The same” signifies inherent superiority and privilege germane to the breed and social and geopolitical status, while the “Other” are associated with inferior genes and destinies (Hayden, 2013). The Other is objectified as passive tourees (Urry, 1994), eroticized, feminized or effeminized (Bandyopadhyay, 2009). Once the Other is
determined, the superiority of the same solidified, the power emerges at the hand of the exploitator to ratify rules and resolutions and identify norms. Thereby, Otherness brings about marginalization, exclusion, inequality and disempowerment (Little, 1999).

The Other peoples’ lives are simplified, showing less diversity and richness, characterizing them as homogeneous groups (Spivak, 1988). Their lives are seen as less valuable than the people at the Center and the West. Besides, the Other’s lives are portrayed as unchanged and slow, lacking intellectual contribution to science and the edifice of knowledge (Little, 1999). As per Foucault’s contention (1980), power and knowledge are inextricably related and power is a function of knowledge. Therefore, keeping or portraying the Other as unintelligent and backward implies the control and exertion of power on them. Therefore, since “we” are not holding these characteristics, this is “us” who creates the norm, and that is “them” who should comply.

Tourism is germane to the hierarchy of power and relations between hosts and guests (Bresned, 2010; Mellinger, 1994). The tourist gaze upon the host is particularly problematic in some types of tourism such as ethnic tourism (Dervin, 2012), slum tourism (Frenzel, Koons & Steinbrink, 2012) and indigenous tourism (Bender, 2001) where the power gap between tourists and their hosts is larger. According to MacCannell (1976) people from economically developed societies search for exotic unadulterated and authentic explanations because those explanations are absent from their mundane, high-paced, and highly predictable lives (Olson, 2002). Additionally, assertion of primitiveness is at the core of the assertion of authenticity (White, 2007). Namely, White (2007) explains that qualifiers like genuine friendliness are used to Otherize Fijians and their culture as a way to position Fiji more competitively in the global tourism market.
Orientalism

In Western discourse, the East (Orient) is recognized as the Other in contrast to the West (Occident). The West is portrayed as culturally, politically and economically at the center of the world, and the East at the periphery (Chang & Holt, 1991). Said (1978) proposed the notion of Orientalism to mean a form of discourse that asserts and reinforces colonial power and domination. Orientalism is generally associated with polarizations and segregation of the world in an effort to rank-order people and disseminate implicit power and control.

Discourse is a system of meaning “a large-scale, ordered integrated way of reasoning/constituting the social world” (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000, p. 1125). Foucault (1980) defines discourse as “ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledge and relations between them”. Understanding the importance of discourse is crucial, since it constraints or marginalizes the generation of new knowledge.

Said (1978) asserts that there are no actual Oriental people, cultures or religions, but people still are Orientalized. In Orientalist discourse, the West is symbolically portrayed as civilized, masculine, advanced, normative, and rational while the East is cruel, sly, backward, mysterious, exotic, and irrational (Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Said, 1978). Thus, by defining the Orient, Orientalism functions as discursive practices of repression used to “justify the inspection, exploitation, colonization, and ‘civilization’ of the East” (Echtner & Prasad 2003, p. 667). Orientalism inherently promulgates generalizations and stereotyping of the Orient, which has gradually turned into a discourse (Kafka, 1986). Then, it shapes a theoretical paradigm through which the cultural forms can be analyzed with colonial ideologies.

Discourse can also be a sign of power, instrument, and effect of power but also a hindrance, a point of resistance and a starting point for opposing strategy (Foucault, 1971). In
Said’s (1978) Orientalism, the Orient is a product of fantasy and fiction which has never existed. What is more, Oriental people are never allowed to speak and have remained outside of colonial societies (Young, 1995).

In the “White man’s burden” Kipling (1899) a notable colonial British writer writes:

Take up the White Man's burden, Send forth the best ye breed

Go bind your sons to exile, to serve your captives' need;

To wait in heavy harness, on fluttered folk and wild

Your new-caught, sullen peoples, Half-devil and half-child…

The poem cautions America in taking on the burden of civilizing Puerto Rico, Guam, Cuba, and the Philippines. The poem points out that the colonizer has the moral obligation to rescue the primitives from their multifaceted shortcomings, giving the colonizer jurisdiction to conquer and the exploit their assets. Orientalism discourse is a means for oppression, and recognizing its existence opens ways to resist it (Said, 1978).

However, the colonized people can hardly infiltrate and influence the discourse without having agency, self-determination, autonomy and recognition of appropriate methods (Jenkins, 2003). Nonetheless, although the situation is well perceived and propagated through discourse, the strongest and most fitting contemporary anti-essentialist methods in subverting hegemonic discourses is not yet well-understood. This is because discourse is based on the act of representation which in the digital age is spread on the urban-centered digital media such as filmmaking, reality TV shows, games and photography (Fernández, 1999). For example, Aladdin (1992) has been critiqued by creating offensive caricatures, and cunningly sexualizing, exoticizing and romanticizing Arab life as well as many other Walt Disney Company-made cartoons, e.g., Pocahontas (1995) and The Jungle Book (2016).
However, it should be noted that the tone of speech could be revenant and positive about the Orientals but still, this evaluation could be essentially Otherizing. For example, portraying the Other places as authentic, pristine, heaven-like, healthy, inhabited by happy people, might seem positive on anybody’s minds but these attributes still continue to reproduce the colonial ideologies. Orientalism is proper in establishing an extraordinary and distinctive identity for the once colonized (Cheng, 2006). This colonization not necessarily should happen by war and power, but literary works, news, and the media are establishing, controlling and directing the colonial gaze over the Orient.

The Orientalism can also be internal to a country (Internal orientalism). For example, Schein (1997) disclosed the Internal Orientalism in China between Han and the rural indigenous people, in a way that rural people are recruited in low-paid and labor-intensive jobs, and also paid to dress and perform in traditional ways. Janson (2003) also portrays the identity relationship between South and North in America. He argues that in the form of internal colonialism, South is Otherized and racialized by North through negative characteristics such as poverty, violence and crime.

Feighery (2012) through a critical discourse analysis of tourism promotional video named “Welcome to My Country” asserts that Oman represents itself to the Western market from the eyes of the West. This intentional way of Orientalizing self, called “self-Orientalism”, is a strategy through which the oppressed subaltern represent themselves to meet the conceived desires or expectations of a more powerful group, for example their potential visitors. In the same vein, Santos (2009) points to the self-orientalism of the Chinese government for broadcasting a video named “China Forever,” in which China is depicted as unchanged, mythical and conforming to West understanding of modernity (Wang, Morais & Buzinde, 2009).
Rurality

In order to extrapolate from the Orientalism to the urban and rural geographies it is essential to define what are different perceptions and definitions of rurality. According to the U.S. Census 2010, rural is what is not urban, that is after defining individual urban areas, rural is what is left. The Census Bureau’s definition of urban is largely based on residential population density and a few other land-use characteristics to identify densely developed territory namely as total population thresholds, density, land use, and distance.

U.S. Census Bureau has established the essentialist definition of what is urban and rural but for the social analysis of rural space, these definitions, comprising materialist and measurable explanations will give place to the social construction of rurality (Silva, Figueiredo, Eusebio & Carneiro, 2016). The Census Bureau expanded the classification to include two types of urban areas, i.e., urbanized areas and urban clusters. Urbanized areas are areas with 50,000 or more people. Urban clusters are areas with at least 2,500 but fewer than 50,000 people. In order for a block to qualify as urban, it must have a density of 1,000 people per square mile.

Halfacree (2007) in a three-fold model, ascribes three characteristics to the rural space as material, imaginative and practiced. Namely, he classifies rural space in three categories: rural locality, representation of the rural, and lives of the rural. The rural locality refers to the symbols of production and rustic landscapes such as agricultural practices, barns and curved landscapes. The lives of the rural and representation of the rural in fact create two imaginative and practiced aspects of rural geography (Elden, 2004). The former deals with representation of space while the latter with the space of representation. The former is more of an abstract, nostalgic and utopian aspect of rural space while the latter reveals the lived experiences of rural people (Figure 1.2).
Referring to the imaginative domain, Mormont (1990, p.36) asserts that “Rurality is not a thing or a territorial unit, but derives from the social production of meaning.” As we are moving towards the postmodern era, the importance of rurality from the representational point of view is gaining significance in par with its geographical interpretations (Woods, 2010). This social construction and collective understanding is dynamic and changes over time, not because of the physical and structural changes of rurality, but mainly because of discourses shaped by urban centers (Figueiredo et al., 2013). Therefore, the representation of rurality is less about the territorial distinction from urbanity but rather the social distinction between the two entities. Hence, rurality seems to be deterritorialized and reterritorialized (Cloke, 2006), leading to the emergence of notions as representational cliché (Little, 1999), virtual rural (Cloke, 2006), and McRural (Figueiredo, 2013). Besides, symbolic notions of the rural have become ever more detached from geographically functional rural space (Murdoch & Pratt, 1997).

**Urbannormativity**

While the geographic spaces of the city and the countryside have become blurred, it is in the social distinction of rurality that significant differences between the rural and urban remain. For example, “rural simulacra” (Thomas et al., 2013) has been singled out as a status of a

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**Figure 1.2.** The Halfacree's (2007, p.127) three-fold model for rural space.
community transformed to fit the urbanites’ tastes and expectations. This fit is achieved by capitalizing on urban cultural notions about what is desirable about rural settings and burying or downplaying those aspects that are not consistent. In the same fashion, this urban exploitation and bias towards rural geographies happen between West and Rest, in the process of neo-colonization.

According to the U.S. Census Burea rural is what is not urban, in other words, when defining urban, the rest is rural. This geographical binary has also given ways to the socio-political dualism. The rural space is stereotypically presented as socially backward, changeless, and small-minded, and rural life is seen as a restraint on individual growth and a block on social development (Short, 1991). Rural people seen as rednecks, who indulge in drinking, show loose morals, and lack social skills (Apo, 1996). These representations are frequently propagated by the media which has affected the popular conceptions of rurality (Cloke, 1997; Mormont, 1990). For example, as Heikkila (2000) states, media often represents countryside as strange, peculiar and unfamiliar, and according to Malmsten (2004), as stagnant, insular, underdeveloped, depopulating, aging and desolating (Aho & Ilola, 2004; Eskola, 1963).

Extending the notions of self-Orientalism and internal Orientalism towards the urban and rural geographies the Urbannormative ideologies emerge (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2013). Urbannormativity refers to the tendency of placing urban norms in the center and rural norms in the periphery (Seale & Fulkerson, 2013). In this way, in order to reap benefits from tourism industry, and also preserve and take pride of their cultural assets, rural individuals perform and monetize their cultural assets into commodities sought by urban markets (Hall & Page, 2014; Kordel, 2016).
Urbannormativity grows out of a traditional culture that contributes to the idea that urban is the way forward while rural is the way backward and tends to distort the real rural life according to the urbanites’ taste and normative behavior. It means that the urbanites being affected by the urbannormative view tend to identify, represent and address the rural populations as uncouth, redneck and deviant. This is because in an increasingly urban society the number of people who can have any direct experience visiting or living in a rural community is dwindling and their perception of rural reality is shaped by what media presents to them (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2013). “The media reflect and form the perceptions that people do not experience directly” (Schmidt, 2003, p. 69). As a result, rural space is therefore treated paternalistically as signifying the illiterate, backward and wild, and in need of help for survival and prosperity.

Urbannormative discourse assumes that the conditions and experiences of the city are normal and desirable, often casting the rural as not normal. For example, Fulkerson and Lowe (2016) through content analysis of top-rated rural TV series on North America television, shed light on the Urbannormative representation of rural life. The rural TV series tended to portray the rural as idyllic but at the same time wild and an escape from the ever-predictable life in the city. Holloway (2007) and Spooner (1997) have pointed to the perceived racial exclusivity of Urbannormative narratives whereby rural areas are understood as exclusively white inhabited by “particular class, job and heterosexual backgrounds” (Jonasson, 2012, p. 197).

The dominance of “Western imaginary” yield to separation and oppression which eventually results in the rural disempowerment and marginalization (Santos, 2006). This sense of dominance and stereotyped beliefs has brought about dire social, economic and environmental consequences (Heyden, 2016). For example, rural peoples’ exploitation in coal and mining industry, lodging, and miserable life/working conditions. In this way, the rural and Eastern
people are portrayed in demeaning and uncivilized manners, through selected vantage points, by depicting their contentment with their humble lives (Hughes, 2011). Because “Urban” is intrinsically exploitative of “rural” (Scott, 1975), the process of place-structuration typically reflects this exploitation in varying ways. Accordingly, there is a need “to situate tourism representations politically and examine what they include and exclude, and whose interests they serve” (Mellinger, 1994, p. 776).

**Tourism Media and Representation of the Other**

“The magic of the photographic image lies in this ability to appear to objectively represent reality. The active signifying practices through which lay and professional photographers select, construct and remake what is registered on film remain hidden from view” (Mellinger, 1994, p. 758).

Representations of destinations typically rely on essentialist descriptions that are appealing to, and readily grasped by prospective tourists (Santos, 2004; Silver, 1993). In other words, tourism utilizes the “language of tourism” to frame and sell destinations (Dan, 1997). However, these representations are not void of power relationships and exploitative intent. The exertion of the supremacy of one group over the Other can be fulfilled by the alteration of destination image and inscription of some qualifiers and stereotypical attributes to the Other. This alteration will further detach the reality from the visual projections. This alteration of destination image might be both for the financial reasons to aestheticize the destination image to the market’s taste (Xiang, Wober & Fesenmaier, 2008) and/or to further define bipolar identities and consolidate power structures (Aitchison, 2001).

As noted by Cohen (1993) one of the most problematic areas of tourism representation is the discrepancy between representations and the reality. The visual representations of the tourism
destinations is associated with empowerment/disenpowerment (Baylina & Berg, 2016) which have the potentiality to re-create attitudes and shape the expectation (Baylina & Berg, 2016). Nonetheless, the expectations profoundly affect the tourists’ preconceptions about the destination and affect the host and guest interactions. In this respect, Lewis (1979, p. 21) notes “The advertisement . . . becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy”. The immediate loss will be for the visitors who have been deceived by media’s presentations of the tourism destination, leading to their dissatisfaction as their expectations are not met.

The tourism industry builds images of destinations to match the ambitions of dominant generating markets (Di Marino, 2008), but this has yielded in the discrepancy between reality and the representation. The primary concern will be loss of history and local identity as in compliance with the urban needs. The discrepancy of the representation is occurring in two major contexts: domestic and international. Scholars have examined the discrepancy between what urban media portray about rural and what is the real rural life (e.g., Holloway, 2007; Jonasson, 2012; Phillips, Fish & Agg, 2001).

The effect of media in shaping the preconceptions upon the potential tourists and the tourists’ efforts to reproduce the image has been proposed, critiqued and examined immensely (Phillips, Fish & Agg, 2001). Urry (1990) had termed it the hermeneutic circle to explicate the tendency of the tourists to recapture the famous images of a place and share it as a proof of being there. Further, Jenkins (2003) adopts the Urry’s notion of the hermeneutic circle through autophotography of Canadian tourists traveling to Australia. In her study she discovered that the images of destination are “produced, projected, perceived, propagated and perpetuated” by Canadian tourists, imitating the media’s stereotypes.
The compliance with the media-produced images will have dire consequences for the host communities. Firstly, it will encourage the tourists to visit certain advertised places, and not the un/under-represented places (Urry, 1990). Secondly, it makes the tourists less attentive to the deep cultural meanings and to tempt to consume the surface by their gaze (Urry, 2002). Thirdly, certain stereotyped images propagated by the media’s bias can motivate the host communities to commodify their culture to meet the tourists’ expectations (Kordel, 2016). However, this will gradually lead to deterioration of identity as well as rural residents’ dependency to tourists’ needs (Stronza, 2001). Fourth the media’s stereotypical representations are hugely ingrained with exoticized portrayals of tourism destinations which have inherent disempowering and polarizing etiquettes (Burner, 2005; Caton & Santos, 2008).

Through the agenda-setting theory, McCombs and Shaw (1972) contend that the media can influence the importance of a subject matter by the scale of coverage and the language used to transmit to the public. In other words, the media from different types can modify people’s minds about the existence and the salience of any phenomena. The agenda-setting theory has been utilized by critiques in tourism realm to divulge the media bias in representing tourism destinations (e.g., McKay, 2016; Wanta, Golan & Lee, 2004). For example, Mellinger (1994), through a critical analysis of tourism representations of African Americans postcards revealed that postcard photographers have overwhelmingly fetishized and Otherized the Black bodies between 1893 and 1917. Also, Echtner and Prasad (2003) through the content analysis of brochures advertising of the third world by the North American travel agencies, impart the same pattern of Otherness through emphasizing certain stereotypical binaries.

“Photography fragments space and time. These fragments come to stand for the whole or the essence, often in representations which may extend, symbolically, far beyond that which is
photographed” (Markwick, 2001, p. 420). Moreover, the media is under the control of the urban centers and power holders. The urban media has the ability to self-servingly shape the world’s history by record and projection of the Other through pre-defined frames and angles. The stereotyped colonialist, racist regimes’ representations of the Muslim and third world countries have also been widely researched (e.g., Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Jafari & Scott, 2014). However, no identified study has tried to empower the oppressed rural fight against the hegemonic centrist urban forces than perpetuating the Otherness.

**Methodology**

Urban centers have long exploited rural subaltern in many ways, but at the core root of this problem, lies the fundamentals of Otherness. The Otherness attempts to rank-order people using hierarchy, which determine who will control and define the norm and who will need to comply. Therefore, an emancipation model is needed through which the rural subaltern can autonomously resist upon urban hegemonic forces, which aim to devalue their culture and self-worth.

The proposed model of emancipation (illustrated and practiced in the first article) employs tourism microentrepreneurs and eventually rural people in a process by which they can gain agency to fight against biased hegemonic urban representations of their lives. This model is constructed by reflecting on the postcolonial and subaltern theories which state that in the battle for claiming identities, the oppressed people are impoverished and silenced. Thus, in order to overturn these forces, the rural subalterns’ voices ought to be heard. This dissertation aims to amplify the rural subaltern’s voices about the rural representations of their socio-cultural and environmental space.
The Study’s Paradigmatic Methodological Approaches

Crotty (1998) argues that theoretical perspectives provide a context for the research process and methods employed. This worldview and philosophical inclination is “a loose collection of logically held together assumptions, concepts, and propositions that orientate thinking and research” (Bogdan & Biklan, 1982, p. 30). The theoretical frameworks underpinning this research are critical theory (Hunt, 1991) and its historically mediated realism, which subscribe to the value-mediated creation of reality (Healy & Perry, 2000). The critical theory focuses on political, cultural, economic, and social relationships within a culture, particularly as they relate to which groups have more or less power.

Critical theory’s epistemological stance is transactional, subjectivist and value-laden. The nature of the relationship between the researcher and researched is value-laden and interactive. Critical theory states that reality is socially and interactionally constructed through the integration of participants as co-researchers and believing that knowledge is co-constructed for the aim of social change and equity. In this research, to the extent that structural and intellectual resources allowed, I integrated the involvement of local rural people. Nonetheless, from the first to the second and then third articles (from autophotography to Q methodology), the participation of tourism microentrepreneurs gradually declined because of the gradual reliance on quantitative analysis methods which needed technical and mathematical education.

The research quality within the body of dissertation was frequently revisited through its historical situatedness in bringing about consciousness about oppression and power, and being consequential (Morrow, 2005; Norman, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The language almost resembles a transformative intellectual as advocate and activist, expressing concerns for positive change into the oppressed community. Further, the researcher had enhanced his qualitative and quantitative skills through before and during conduct of research which are essential for a critical
theorist and studies of empowerment (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 112). However, regarding accommodation and commensurability of research, the critical theory paradigm does not readily go along with the scientific approach of inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Therefore, the chosen methods (i.e., autophotography and Q methodology) were selected to align with the philosophical underpinning of this research.

Ensuring Trustworthiness and Rigor

Criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research are closely tied to the paradigmatic underpinnings of the particular discipline in which a particular investigation is conducted. Lincoln (1995) referred to these as extrinsic criteria because they emerged from outside the qualitative genre.

Credibility (internal validity) refers to the idea of internal consistency, where the core issue is “how we ensure rigor in the research process and how we communicate to others that we have done so” (Gasson, 2004, p. 95; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). For this, a level of “early familiarity” and trust is built between the participants and the People-First Tourism (P1t) project during the past few years. Therefore, while some participants were not directly familiar with the principal investigator in this study, their long-term acquaintance with the P1t project, enthusiastically showed their zeal for participation. This is what Creswell and Miller (2000) have termed “prolonged engagement” between the investigator and the participants. However, regarding the danger of over-familiazation with the culture under scrutiny (Silverman, 2003) and the interference of professional judgement is overcome by concurrent documentation of interactions and reflections in a research journal.

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1 P1t is a participatory action research project, started in 2011 and focuses on enabling tourism microentrepreneurs succeed through long-term accompaniment and mentoring.
However, since the cooperation of the participants is essential for the accomplishment of research goals, and dependability of findings, in this study, purposeful sampling was adopted (Morse, 2015). Triangulation of participants and settings were also taken into account. In other words, individual viewpoints and experiences were verified against others. Setting (site) triangulation was adopted by using participants from dispersed geographies within the piedmont North Carolina. The participants were secured from different counties adjacent to the Wake County, NC. The triangulation aimed to lead to a more stable view of reality named “circling reality” (Dervin, 2012). Moreover, research participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were ensured that their opt-out would not affect them in any tangible and intangible forms.

The researcher, during the visits with the participants, interviews, email exchanges, phone calls and text messages, took reflexive notes on his journal to explicate his “progressive subjectivity” (Guba & Lincoln, 1995). For this sake, peer debriefing or devil’s advocate strategy was used by asking peer graduate students, to comment and propose alternative interpretations of the photographs and their categorization (Hill et al., 2005; Onwuegbuzie, & Leech, 2007).

Phenomenologists have coined the term *bracketing* to describe the process of becoming aware of one’s implicit assumptions and predispositions and setting them aside to avoid having them unduly influence the research (Husserl, 1931). For this, detailed and thick descriptions were provided to clarify the extent researcher’s role has influenced the way the research is conducted, or data interpreted.

Referring to the “crisis of representation,” Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described a growing concern with reflexivity beginning in the mid-1980s. In particular, the crisis of representation deals with questions about whose reality is represented in the research. This “crisis” was of particular importance in that it addressed the impossibility of a dichotomous
separation between the researcher and researched. To ensure the unbiased representation of the underrepresented rural people, this research verified the interpretations with the local people, which (member-checking). It means returning the material to the participants to check if the accuracy of the findings/interpretations resonates with participants’ beliefs (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell & Walter, 2016).

Member checking relies on the assumption that there is a fixed truth of reality that both resonates with the respondents’ social constructionists’ beliefs and can be accounted for by a researcher and confirmed by a respondent (Angen, 2000). Member-checking took place in the form of a potluck dinner meeting where tourism microentrepreneurs were informed about the study results and findings. In that meeting, it was tried to check if the findings are reflective of what they believe (Birt et al., 2016).

Transferability (external validity or generalizability) refers to the extent to which the reader is able to generalize the findings of a study to her or his own context. For this research, emanated from rural people’s subjective understanding of the rural visual representations, it is impossible to demonstrate the findings and conclusion apply to other situations and populations. However as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (2002) by detailed contextual description of the socio-political and geographical positionality of the rural piedmont region, the reader was enabled to at some point, make such a transferability.

Confirmability from the qualitative standpoint is comparable to objectivity from a quantitative standpoint. For this, the researcher needs to ensure that the findings are derived from experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than preferences of the researcher reporting convenient truth. For this, an ongoing reflective commentary was devised to admit the researcher’s predispositions. Moreover, an audit trail (decision trail) was provisioned to
transparency delineate the steps taken to the research findings, interpretations, and conclusions (Given, 2008). Further, the choice of method in achieving unbiased data was secured by answering why this method was the most fitting and available method in answering research questions. Audit trail allows any observer to trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and procedures described (Koch, 2006). For this, theoretical (theoretical framework) and methodological audit trails were provided and presented in forms of elaborate diagrams (Figure 1.3).

**Figure 1.3.** Methodological audit trail for the second article.

**Hybrid Design**

Research methods must be tailored to the subject and topic under investigation and the available resources (Toulmin, 1996). Accordingly, the methodological approach is a hybrid design that brings the local community to the center. In turn, this choice will have repercussions
upon the positionality of the researcher. I made this effort by creating a hybrid multi-modal
design with three subsequent research studies. I offered the participants the ability to set their
own degree of engagement (given a limited timeline, budget and competence to engage, while
doing their everyday work).

**Quantitative or Qualitative? Sequential or Embedded?**

This research transitions from more participatory and interpretative to more deductive
from the first to the third study. Quantification has long been used as a means to objectify life in
certain ways and to regulate social practices (Porter, 1996). Therefore, this essentialists’
(rationalists’) propensity towards research problematizes the participatory action research (PAR)
by looking at data as preexisting needless of human intervention and cooperative construction.
However noteworthy to say that the available resources would always limit the possibility of the
labor-intensive and time-intensive participatory action research (Leung, Yen, & Minkler, 2004).
Therefore, this research should be discreet in advancing the studies by thoughtfully considering
the resources and premises of PAR.

The integration of QUAL or QUAN methods of research with the PAR can be
systematized sequentially (A => B: Study A transfer/complement/justify the study B) or
embedded (A [B]: Study B embedded within study). Having said that, in the dissertation, the
quantitative and qualitative inquiry could be embedded and/or sequenced with the PAR nature of
this dissertation research.

In the conventional mixed method designs, this sequence can work in both directions
whether 1) QUAN/QUAL => PAR or 2) PAR => QUAN/QUAL. In the first model the
participatory inquiry benefits from the data gathered in the quantitative/qualitative phase which
may result in improving participant selection or identifying topics for discussion and problems.
(Marti, 2016). In the second model, the quantitative/qualitative inquiry can be used to measure the outputs or the outcomes of a PAR project or to explore/interpret into issues defined in participatory research. It should be noted that the PAR chiefly is interpretative and intense, therefore having inherited the legacy of interpretivism, the difficulty is to integrate it with quantitative methods of inquiry.

In the case of embedded integration, the QUAN methods could be nested within the participatory tools while having inherited knowledge that was generated qualitatively. This embeddedness can arise between QUAN and PAR methods in two particulars: PAR [QUAN] and QUAN [PAR] (Marti, 2016). The former indicates that participatory tool benefits of some measurement instruments and techniques to assist dominant participatory inquiry, such as census building, progress measurement, prioritization of needs, etc. For example, through ranking, polling, surveying and the like. The latter which the quantitative method is predominant and is given more weight is much harder for untrained and lay participants to tackle.

As a result, the latter embeddedness model has been largely refrained upon and also by this dissertation research. However, the former (i.e., PAR [QUAN]) specifically contributed to the formation of the Q-sort methodology. That is to say; the quantification allows the researcher to proceed even if its nature of the conduct is participatory and the disclosure of human subjective meaning-making.

The first study, by harnessing the autophotography and value on indigenous knowledge subscribes to PAR (Noland, 2006). The second study all encompasses analytical procedures (QUAN) to provide figures which shed light on the reliability, methods agreement and usability of the VQMethod web application. The third study benefits from Q methodology which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative pursuits. However, the weight is more given to the
qualitative aspects of data that is why quantitative aspects of the research were be embedded within its qualitative aspects. The below shows the study design:

PAR [QUAL] => QUAN => QUAL [QUAN]

**Positionality**

Herr and Anderson (2015) employ the term *researcher positionality* to illustrate the various stances researchers can have toward research participants. They come up with a continuum of stands that range from (1) an insider studying her practice to (6) an outsider working with insiders. Between these extremes, are other positions. From the inside toward the outside, these include (2) insiders in collaboration with other insiders; (3) insiders in collaboration with outsiders; (4) insider/outsider teams working in mutual collaboration; and (5) outsiders in collaboration with insiders. Therefore, the positionality of the researcher impacted by the adopted sequential hybrid research design slides from the virtually equal collaboration of insider and outsider to the expanded role of outsider researcher in collaboration with insider (Figure 1.4).

![Diagram of positionality](image)

**Figure 1.4.** Positionality in the research from insider to outsider.

In the end, it should be noted that the researcher’s positionality for the studies dealing with the people’s voice and identity are highly important. Hence the researcher regularly checked his position, not to harvest knowledge from the disempowered and silenced people or perpetuate
Orientalist and colonialist ideologies. Said (1979) takes an extremist position to warn the researchers be conscientious about their words that may reinforce dichotomy and oppression:

“…The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one… Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient--and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist--either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she says or does is Orientalism”.( p. 2)

**Action**

This article seeks to identify actions for positive change, awareness and ideological liberation. While the term emancipation is often considered relevant in the context of slavery, Habermas (1992) categorizes emancipation in three sections: emancipation from control by technical interests, emancipation from ideology, and emancipation by an action for positive change. This research subscribes to the second and third modes of emancipation. Indeed, emancipation from ideology and stereotypes are ways to honor local knowledge, dignity, and identity. Further, this research, as warned by Spivak (1988) has not intended to reproduce the urban generated “representational loop” and Otherize the rural subaltern, but rather to raise critical consciousness. Therefore, the results, which aim to amplify the voices of the rural people, will be shared with a broader audience and the policymakers and influencers through Tourism Extension publications, conference presentations and publications. Further, it is hoped that the tourism representations be situated politically and examine what they exclude and include and whose interests they serve (Millinger, 1994). Also, this dissertation advocates research and tourism policies which rely on the marketing of similarities between bifurcated and alienated geographies, rather than well-established and practiced investment on the marketing of differences (Aitchison, 2001)
Methods

Study Setting

The study participants inhabited the North Carolina’s piedmont region which is located between coastal plains and mountain regions of the state. The urban areas in the piedmont region are proliferating, resulting in the immigration and emigration in rural areas, and sweeping changes called rural restructuring. Wake County is the most populated county in the North Carolina, including Raleigh, the capital city (Figure 1.5).

Article One

Rural Tourism Microentrepreneurs’ Self-Representation through Photography: A Counter-Hegemonic Approach

RQ1: In what ways do rural tourism microentrepreneurs want to represent themselves to potential visitors?

RQ2: To what extent do the self-representations of rural tourism microentrepreneurs comply with and/or resist Orientalist and Urbannormative biases?

The purpose of this study is to hear the voice of rural subaltern which in the context of this research are rural tourism microentrepreneurs, on how they want to self-represent themselves and cultural assets to urban visitors. Also, the participatory nature of this research
enabled the rural residents to gain agency and self-determination mostly through the mobilization and accentuating their essential role through the research process. To pursue this purpose, I employed the autophotography method of inquiry to bring to the surface and magnifying tourism microentrepreneurs’ notion of “rural realities.” This is a particularly critical issue for those who research the lived experiences of marginalized groups (Noland, 2006).

Sample and Data Collection

We used People-First Tourism longitudinal panel of tourism microentrepreneurs as sample frame which includes individuals who have experience participating in participatory action research from several months to years. Participants were equipped with digital cameras for a 10-day period and asked to capture 35-40 elements/fragments of their lives illustrating rural realities that they were willing to share with potential urban tourists. Follow-up interviews were conducted to reflect on each participant’s favorite ten pictures in sharing with potential urban visitors. The participants’ voices also were recorded, due to the language and accent barriers between the researcher (from the Middle East) and participants.

The autophotography (participant-employed photography) is soundly established and practiced within the realm of visual research. As initially noted by the Collier and Collier (1986), interpreting the meanings of images can be explored in a dialogue between the researcher and the respondent. What is now termed the polysemic quality (Harper, 2002, p. 15) of images creates the prospect for different observers to interpret their subjects according to their identity, native knowledge and mentality. It further needs to discuss actively and swap the personal values and meanings that these issues might have for them (Collier &Collier, 1986).
Method: Autophotography

“An image is a sight, which has been recreated or reproduced....which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved… Every image embodies a way of seeing. Even a photograph.... Every time we look at a photograph, we are aware, however slightly, of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights... The photographer’s way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject.” (Berger, 1972, pp. 9–10)

The photographs for research finds its roots in nineteenth-century anthropology. Pictures of the colonized were derogatorily captured to serve the interest of the anthropologist (Thomas, 2009). This was done to show some fragments of people living “faraway” in substandard, uncivilized fashion, turning the lifestyle and people themselves as sights for pleasure (Echtner & Prasad, 2003). Thomas (2009) recognizes photography is highly linked to the notion of politics of representation. This means that there is a battle between those who “have” and those who “do not have” the authority to represent local cultures. This issue is at the core of this study, in that it gives agency to local people (specifically tourism microentrepreneurs) to represent themselves through photography.

Autophotography is a visual method in research which has seldom been used for identity research. This method empowers the participants as the co-investigators and generates authentic data, by looking the world through the participants’ eyes (Noland, 2006). Further, it falls under a broader umbrella of ethnographic research, in which the researcher is interested in living experiences of the population of interest (Thomas, 2009). Other research approaches to identity like usage of surveys have majorly measured preconceived notions, and do not produce meaningful results when conducted upon the minorities with sensitive, diverse cultures (Noland,
Some authors believe that the best way to unfold the latent construct of self and identity is through picture taking rather than previously designed, universal instruments of measurement (Ziller & Lewis, 1981). Autophotography is an appropriate method for the study of the marginalized people as it allows them to speak for themselves and balances the distribution of power between the researcher and the participant (Packard, 2008). There are some examples of studies dealing with the concept of self and identity in which they used autophotography to elicit emic responses. For example, Phoenix (2010) used this method to demystify how bodybuilders recognize their identities associated with their bodies. Ziller (1990) also instructed the participants to take photos of their immediate environment which best describes them. Noland (2006) utilizes autophotography to approach a group of Latina teenage girls living in inner-city Los Angeles and South Asian immigrant women living in a small town in the Midwest of the US. What is more, the autophotography is not sophisticated for illiterate, and people to handle and also gives for the less talkative people have the opportunity to express themselves.

The process of eliciting data from the picture is termed photo-elicitation (Collier & Collier, 1986). The autophotography principally means that the informants or co-investigators themselves take pictures without the intervention of the researcher. The informants were given a camera of any type, preferably easily manipulated and compact cameras, and asked to take some pictures based on a pre-defined criterion. Then after a specific amount of time, the informant was interviewed based on the pictures taken, to disentangle the meaning of the pictures from the informants’ vantage points. The data further can be analyzed quantitatively (e.g., content analysis) or qualitatively (e.g., Thematic analysis and semantic analysis) (Keller et al., 2008).
In the context of socio-politically marginalized rural people which this dissertation is embarking on, all abovementioned qualifiers added to the suitability of this method of data collection. To be explicit, the self-representational attitudes of the rural people were shared in an authentic, unforced and culturally appropriate manner. For the studies of identity, however, the researcher should be very discrete in the application of the images (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). The produced images can also be either employed to perpetuate the Otherness and fuel the urbanites fantasies or ideologically mobilize the oppressed. Further to raise awareness about the realities of rural life and the importance of preserving identities.

Data Analysis

After conducting the follow-up interviews with the rural tourism microentrepreneurs, the interviews were transcribed by the principal investigator. The NVivo 10 data management software was used for the transcription and analysis of data. This research propelled by the critical theory, I did not try to find themes emerging from the data but rather, made active, interpretative choices in generating codes and in constructing themes. In the same fashion, not believing in pre-existing reality, I did not use a codebook nor the inter-rater agreement but instead checked the themes with the research participants. Then a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of images was undertaken to identify overarching themes corresponding both to the images and the participants’ narratives.

Discourse analysis is not just a method of analysis, but a “methodological and theoretical whole” (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 3). The analysis may focus on structural characteristics of the narrative like volume, pitch, pace, and intonation. Also, the analysis may include microanalysis of the narratives using tools from linguistics and semiotics, or macro analysis of
socio-political contexts (contextuality) and their relations with units of analysis (intertextuality) (Luke, 2004).

Nonetheless, the CDA demands heavy work and leaves the interpretation to the discretion of reader by disentangling the covert explanations of power (Potter, 1996). Besides, “every theoretical approach in CDA is inherently interdisciplinary because it aims at investigating complex social phenomena which are inherently interdisciplinary and certainly not to be studied by linguistics alone” (Kendall, 2007, p. 5). Hence, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of image and text were used to uncover the opaque and transparent roots of inequality and oppression in reference with Urbannormative discourse (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Rose, 2001).

**Article Two**

**Assessing the Visual Q Method (VQMethod) Research Tool: A Usability, Reliability and Methods Agreement Analysis**

**RQ1:** To what extent is the VQMethod’s survey interface easy to use?

**RQ2:** To what extent is the VQMethod a reliable instrument in the conduct of Q method research?

**H1.** The number of factors remains stable at the VQMethod in repeated measures

**H2:** The pattern of factor membership remains stable at the VQMethod in repeated measures.

**H3:** The time spent on the Q survey significantly increases the reliability of VQMethod.

**RQ3:** To what extent do the traditional paper-based Q method and the online VQMethod-generated Q sorts converge?

The purpose of this research paper is to safeguard the use of the VQMethod web application for a real study (research paper three), in contrasting rural tourism microentrepreneurs and potential urban visitors views of rural place. In order to reach this
purpose, the usability and heuristic diagnosis methods, a test-retest reliability method and a methods agreement method were employed.

This research encompassed three main stages. First, two usability evaluations were conducted to debug the potential (heuristic inspection) and real (laboratory test) problems of the VQMethod survey interface. The stage two entailed examining the capacity of the VQMethod in generating identical results in repeated measures. In the stag three, the traditional paper-based Q method and the online VQMethod were compared to see if the online mode can replace the paper-mode. In other words to evaluate the convergence of the two methods in generating identical results in repeated measures, i.e., the extent to which the patterns of Q sorts generated by two methods resemble. This article was organized in a manner that each stage was essential in the construct of the next stage. For example, the reliability analysis as a pre-requisite informed the methods agreement analysis. Also, the heuristic inspection and usability tests ensured that the research tool was in a pretty decent shape before undergoing further tests, i.e., effectiveness, user satisfaction, efficiency, reliability and methods agreement (Table 1.1)
Table 1.1  
**Samples and data collection methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Methods (participatory)</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User-based</td>
<td>Laboratory test (One-way mirror observation)</td>
<td>Sample: 31 museum lab visitors</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Method: Observation and post-survey questionnaire</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tasks:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Taking the online survey at museum lab</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Taking the post-survey questionnaire</td>
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</table>

| Expert-based | Heuristic inspection | Sample: 5 Q method experts |
|              | Tasks: |
|              | 1. Review of the ten usability heuristics |
|              | 2. Comparing heuristics with the survey interface |
|              | 3. Finding and rating potential usability problems |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Methods agreement analysis</th>
<th>Sample: Ten students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Method: Test-retest repeated measures</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tasks:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Taking an online and a paper-based Q survey</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Identifying the limits of agreement (degree of convergent validity)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Reliability analysis</th>
<th>Sample: 37 undergraduate students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Method: Test-retest repeated measures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tasks:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Taking two online and identical surveys under controlled conditions at class setting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Taking a System Usability Scale survey for measure of their overall satisfaction.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Sample and Data Collection**

In study two, and for the heuristic inspection, a sample of five Q method experts was recruited who did not have any expertise nor experience in usability inspection methods (Jeffries & Desurvire, 1992). They took a sample survey, consistent throughout this research. They went through stages of familiarization, pre-sort, main sort, reflections, and supplementary questions. They were asked to identify the heuristic which had been violated and rate their intensity (with a
5-point Likert scale) which might degrade the survey-takers’ satisfaction (Holzinger, 2005). The ten usability heuristic criteria were adapted from Nielsen & Molich (1990): (1) use simple and natural dialogue, (2) speak the user’s language, (3) minimize memory load, (4) be consistent, (5) provide feedback, (6) provide clearly marked exits, (7) provide shortcuts, (8) provide good error messages, (9) prevent errors, and (10) provide help and documentation. The experts were given an online link with complete description of each heuristics. However as (Nielsen, 1994) asserted, this process is informal, and the experts did not have to assign heuristics to each potential problem.

For the usability test, a sample of museum visitors was randomly intercepted and invited to take an online survey at the Visual Investigate Lab at the Museum of Natural Sciences, Raleigh, NC. The VQMethod-enabled survey was set up on a desktop computer with two vertically cascaded synchronized monitors. The fishbowl laboratory surrounded by glass walls, abled the researcher to watch the participants resembling a one-way mirror. That is, without the participants’ notice, the researcher stayed behind the glass wall monitoring the participants’ operations on the survey via the upper monitor. After completion of the online survey (noticed by researcher from the upper monitor), the participants were approached and handed the post-survey questionnaire. They needed to clarify their degrees of easiness and hardness functioning on different aspects of the interface.

For the reliability analysis, a sample of undergraduate students in an “Introduction to Parks, Recreation and Tourism” class were recruited to take a test twice under similar conditions at class settings. Therefore, an intra-instrument/intra-participant reproducibility analysis was run at two different timeslots. Besides, in order to measure the potential survey-takers’ overall satisfaction with a larger number of participants, a System Usability Scale (SUS) was distributed
to undergraduate students at NC State University. For the methods agreement analysis, another sample of ten undergraduate students was recruited to take paper-based and online surveys with the same content twice. In order to remove the effect of order, half of the participants started with the online version and half with the printed version.

Methods: Usability, Reliability and Methods Agreement

The usability studies are majorly conducted to assess how the created method or system can be easily performed by the potential users who had never received any formal training on that (Holzinger, 2005). International Organization for Standardization guidance on usability (ISO 9241-11) refers the usability as a measure of effectiveness, efficiency of a product and the degree of end-user’s satisfaction. The effectiveness means whether people can accomplish the given tasks, efficiency highlights the needed time and resources to accomplish certain tasks, and satisfaction refers to both the overall and task-specific levels of comfort the users’ experience. However, other usability experts, include learnability and error rate as other indicators of usability (Holzinger, 2005).

It should be noted that usability studies would better to take place before prototyping in order to reduce the later costs and efforts required for amendments (Holzinger, 2005). Nonetheless, there are two main types of usability studies which are dealt with and without the end-users, i.e., inspection methods test methods respectively. The commonly-used methods of inspection are namely heuristic evaluation, cognitive walkthrough, and pluralistic walkthrough, and the test methods are direct (i.e., thinking aloud, laboratory testing) and indirect (i.e., questionnaires, interviews) (Lin, Choong, & Salvendy, 1997).

Besides, given the strength and weaknesses of inspection and test methods, their combined application is recommended (Jaspers, 2009). Also, a combination of direct and indirect
usability test methods can be useful. For example, heuristic evaluation can be combined with thinking aloud with the complementary interview session (Holzinger, 2005; Jaspers, 2009). Therefore, this research combined the heuristic inspection, and laboratory and questionnaire usability test methods to strengthen the usability assessment of the VQMethod’s survey interface.

Introduced by Nielson and Molich (1990), the heuristic inspection method is a “debugging” method which demands a small set of experts (3-5) assess the interface against a set of principles (heuristics) (Nielsen, 1994). Each expert evaluates the given system separately and shares their findings together. This method has the advantage that it removes the cost associated with recruiting users for the system interface evaluations and saves users for the real study. However, the results cannot be solely reliable for the development of the software due to the detachment from the real users (Hollingsed & Novick, 2007). Besides, minor problems are harder than major problems to be discovered by heuristic usability inspections (Nielsen, 1992). This method is less formal than the usability test methods and is called “discount usability engineering.”

Doing a laboratory usability test needs logistical considerations. The process is like the potential end users are invited to a laboratory in which they perform certain tasks without knowing that they are being observed. This can be achieved with special considerations such as unobtrusive observations through one-way mirrors (Kaikkonen, Kekäläinen, Cankar, Kallio, & Kankainen, 2005). The observation room is divided from the experiment room in a way that the observer sees but is not seen, in order to not to intervene and/or bias the way the experimenter works with the system (Lin et al., 1997). Many aspects of usability of a new system can be evaluated by querying the users about their satisfaction and sources of error, discomfort and
confusion. This post-test queries can be done via questionnaire surveys or interviews. However, this usability test method is indirect, and retrospective and the potential end-users’ subjective opinions might differ from actual behaviour (Holzinger, 2005).

Reliability is defined as “the capacity of a test or any other measurement tool to differentiate between respondents when measured twice under the same condition” (Berchtold, 2016, p. 1). Watts and Stenner (2012) assert that the reliability in TPQM reflects more of the stability of opinions rather than the consistency of findings. It means that the stability of the method itself has not been suitably tested because there are no standard “quality check” guidelines in the deliverance and preparation of Q surveys. Notwithstanding scholars assert that the number of viewpoints on any subject of interest is stable (Brown, 1971; Nicholas, 2011). Therefore, the number of viewpoints can be used as a benchmark for reliability by testing its stability over repeated measures. Nonetheless, no scholar has tested that if those who hold the views (henceforce view-holders) would again share thoughts with the same view-holders over repeated measures.

The agreement between two methods (methods agreement), is the extent to which identical findings can be obtained using two measurement tools. In contrast to the reliability, the methods agreement looks for identification of systematic error rather than random error. The perfect agreement means the exact similar results, but perfect reliability means high correlation, while the results can be different (Thomas, 2017). The methods agreement is mainly conducted to unfold if a new method can replace an old gold-standard method, or wants to detect changes in participants in longitudinal studies (Berchtold, 2016). That is, if measurement error is larger than the change over time, the measurement tool would not be suitable to detect changes longitudinally (Berchtold, 2016; Martin Bland & Altman, 1986). Hence, reliability underpins the
assessment of methods agreement and needs to be analyzed before any contentions about the agreement between methods are made.

Data Analysis

A table with the list of heuristics and the mean rating produced and the problems with the ratings of 3 or more by the Q method experts were listed. Besides, the most feasible solutions to the identified problems were proposed. The usability data analysis took shape by immersion into the observational field-notes by the researcher. The data from the post-survey questionnaire also helped to promote the participatory design of the VQMethod survey interface platform. The Pearson-moment correlation was employed for the determination of the reliability of the VQMethod survey interface in two repeated measures. The analysis of the data for the measurement of the agreement between the paper-based and online research tools were examined and illustrated by Bland-Altman diagram (Bunce, 2009), analysis of the column-wise bias, and the correlation of the line of best fit with the line of equality.

Article Three

Contrasting Rural Tourism Microentrepreneurs’ and Their Potential Urban Visitors’ Images of Rural Life

RQ1: What perspectives do rural tourism microentrepreneurs and their potential urban visitors have about rural life?

This paper’s purpose is to unfold the rural tourism microentrepreneurs and potential urban visitors’ views towards the visual representation of rural place. Therefore, a method of inquiry which is visually-oriented and can cluster like-minded people was identified (i.e., the Q methodology). Besides, although the Q method has its unique advantages in empowering and
emancipatory research (Brown, 2005), the results will not manifest what proportion of population comprise each group of people with the same perspectives. However, this weakness is not of importance for this study, as the generalization of data is not sought, but disentanglement of different views about rural place.

Sample and Data Collection

Study three involve a sample of approximately 20 rural tourism microentrepreneurs and 20 potential urban visitors (P set). I used People-First Tourism longitudinal panel of tourism microentrepreneurs as sample frame which includes individuals who have experience participating in participatory action research from several months to years. Besides, the sample of urban was secured from Amazon Mechanical Turk workplace – an online marketplace where requesters can post tasks to be completed by skilled workers. Requestors can recruit workers who have achieved a desired qualification status to complete their tasks. Hence, only workers who obtained a Master qualification status were eligible to take the online survey.

It should be noted that the participants of study three were different from participants of study one who took part in the act of autophotography. We developed the concourse of communication by asking several rural tourism microentrepreneurs from the piedmont region of North Carolina taking photographs representing the aspects of their rural lives that they wish to represent to potential urban visitors (Article 1). We asked the participants to select their favorite ten pictures to reduce the concourse to a more controllable and manageable number of photos. Next, a systematic and structured deductive Q sampling method was employed to select a representative Q sample of 40 images and also to refrain from under- or over-sampling of opinions surrounding topic (Paige & Morin, 2015).
For this, two Urbannormative and anti-Urbannormative attributes were identified. In identifying the levels, thematic analysis of the 130 photos, (discussed and agreed by two experts familiar with the Urbannormative ideology) was undertaken to result in two by five (attribute × level) factorial design solution. The salient meaning of the images (interpretation at surface level by two of the authors) guided their assignment into the matrix. Further the selection of 40 images representing A attributes and B levels constituted three steps: 1) removing images with low quality, identifiable signs, and with photographer’s mistakes like finger thumb covering the camera lens, 2) expert content validity analysis and 3) lay peoples’ judgements about the clarity of images 4) reconciling the overrepresented and underrepresented levels.

Having put these images into the VQMethod website, participants sorted images on a graded grid from “most like rural life” to “most unlike rural life.” Then they were asked to describe why they put specific images at the ending edges of the grid. In the end, the participants answered demographics questions as well as questions regarding questions their rural social identity; i.e., a four-item, 5-point Likert scale (0 = “Not at all” to 5 = “Extremely”) adapted from Krok-Schoen et al. (2015).

Therefore, owing to the Q methodology’s capabilities to compare two sets of Q sorts both quantitatively and qualitatively, a rich understanding of this difference between the rural and urban populations was illuminated. The principal advantage of a Q study, is its transparent approach in reporting the collected data and its pragmatic approach to mixing qualitative and quantitative methods (Stenner & Rogers, 2004).

**Method: Q Methodology**

Q methodology is termed “Q” to refer to the individual and his or her perspective as the locus of attention (as contrasted with conventional “R” analysis, where the interrelationship of
variables is the main focus). Although the invention of Q methodology dates back to the 1950s, when the psychologist and physicist W. Stephenson developed it, it was only during the last two decades that social scientists have begun to adopt it (Duenckmann, 2010). Further, Q methodology’s increasing popularity is also motivated by dissatisfaction with a continued reliance on researcher-generated images which, in the case of studies of ‘exotic’ or vulnerable ‘others’ have been accused of perpetuating negative stereotypes (Crang 1997; Madden 200). Therefore, the suitability of the Q methodology and its symbiosis with the autophotography can be sensed soundly.

The Q sort methodology refers to a set of beliefs and attitudes which are shared within a territory and community and “broadly representative of the opinion domain at issue” (Watts & Stenner, 2005, p. 58). Also, despite Barry and Proops (1999), contend that the Q sort methodology is a little-known research practice, Previt, Pini, and Haslam-McKenzie (2007) maintain that it can be leveraged to explain the rural research questions. The practice of Q-sorting for landscape planning also has been relatively used ever since Zube, Sell and Taylor (1982) appropriated it for scenic value appraisal of landscapes.

The data collection process initially starts with the creation of the concourse of communication. It refers to the volume of discussion surrounding any topic, supporting the raw material for the Q-sorts (Stephenson, 1980). The concourse can be created from primary and secondary sources such as nominal group technique (Kinsey & Kelly, 1989), interview, focused group. It can also be adapted from linguistic or nonlinguistic sources such as newspaper, websites, photographs, films, aromas, literature, available scales (Thomas, 1978) and the standardized Q samples (McKeown & Thomas, 2013)
The representativeness of the Q sample needs to be ensured through whether structured and unstructured ways. The latter is chiefly used when there is no guiding theories and concepts to frame the research. In this regard, while not using the principles of the experimental design, the researcher should be careful not to under-represent/over-represent and undersample/oversample the particular opinions (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). However, through the structured sample method, the unrepresentativeness of the Q sample will be less likely to occur, through rigorous factorial experimentation (Fisher et al., 1960).

Brown (1980) indicates that the number of Q sample items will determine the range of the Q-sort grid and the number of items in each column. Q samples smaller than N = 40 can safely utilize a range of +4 to −4; from 40 to 60, a range of +5 to −5 is generally employed; most Q samples contain 40 to 50 items and employ a range of +5 to −5 with a quasi-normal flattened distribution. The shape of the Q-sort grid depends on the topic of research; the less controversial topics will be more leptokurtic shape, but the most contentious ones will be platykurtic, by providing more options at both extreme ends. Block (1961) recommends a 1:2:1 proportion of positive, neutral and negative items for forced Q sets with a quasi-normal distribution (Figure 1.6). The Q sort represents the skeleton of subjectivity, which only becomes interpretable through the comments and reflections about the underlying motives at work.
Another critical area to ensure the validity of the research is to ascertain a representative sample of persons (P set). The P set should be selected as per the researcher’s confidence that individual can reach the researcher closer to answering the research questions or testing the hypothesis. It is said that (Brown, 2004; McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2005) the appropriate size for the Q sample is to be 30-60 and its proportion to the P set between 1:2- 1:10. For example, if the Q sample of 40 is selected the number of participants could range from 4 to 20.

After the selection of the Q sample and the P set, the researcher will need to plot a score grid on paper, preferably A4, along with the condition of instruction and hand it into the participant (Exel & Graaf, 2005). For this sake, the researcher needs to provision a desk or card table to accommodate a place to sort the cards (Brown, 1980). As the first step to soak the participants better organize their thoughts, they will be asked to sort the items on three columns upon which they most agree, feel neutral or disagree (Watts & Stenner, 2005). After that, the participants will slide the cards from the columns to a fixed score grid. It is then advised that the participant sort the cards first on the two edges of the grid, then the middle, as the perception of

![Figure 1.6. The grid comprised of spectrum of boxes (cells) and piles (columns).](image-url)
extremes most likely is easier for typical people. In the end, the participants will need to answer why did they place cards at the most extreme positions.

**Data Analysis**

After the participants configured their Q sorts, the data was exported from the VQMethod online research tool and inserted into the KenQ online software. Then, the whole Q sorts were correlated in order to shape a correlation matrix. Principal component factor extraction and Varimax as an orthogonal method of rotation were utilized to cluster those individuals who held similar views. The proponents of each factor were presented with a composite Q sort. The factor arrays, participants’ comments on the photos, and distinguishing and consensus statements were used for data interpretation (Stenner & Rogers, 2004).

**Limitations of Dissertation Study**

In the first study, as the researcher strived to ensure the comfort and convenience of the place for interviewing with the farmers, unforeseen sounds and happenings, somehow distracted the farmer and the researcher or urged the discussion to be adjourned sooner. For example, mowing, crowing, abrupt rain, customers arriving to buy produce, etc. Besides, the timeline during which the participants captured pictures of their immediate environment, was limited to the October to January which resulted in featuring dry, less green features in the study region. Nonetheless, for this reason, the researcher invited participants to share pictures taken in another timeframe.

In the second study, due to limited resources, it was unfeasible to test the reliability and usability of the VQMethod’s survey interface on non-urban users. Hence, it is suggested that the future research investigate the usability of the VQMethod tool among rural and marginalized
populations who may not have experienced this type of web-based survey platform. This is because the VQMethod-created surveys demand more than simple and basic computer knowledge, i.e., drag and drop, following the guiding instructions, use of the back, save and redo buttons when necessary, etc.

The third study was conducted via an online platform (i.e., VQMethod) that was developed and tested in the second study of this dissertation. The urban sample for the third study was derived from the Amazon Mechanical Turk online workplace, and while I assigned the rural/urban social identity and the zip code as criteria of exclusion/inclusion, there was no way to guarantee the true identification of their residency. Besides, those potential urban participants who did not have access to the Internet or did not work for the MTurk did not have the chance to participate.

**Delimitations of Dissertation Study**

Pertinent to the first study, I used autophotography which is also named participant-led photography which ideologically, was highly critical to ensure the voice is of the participants and not from the researcher. The participants were engaged in the act of photography and later the follow-up interviews which were later used as data. These steps fall in line with Spivak’s (1988) assertion that researchers should *let the subaltern speak*, rather than publishing and/or pioneering any movement that may instead reproduce the long-held stereotypes and reinforce the subaltern’s subordination.

Pertinent to the second study, I chose to conduct the usability tests in the Museum of Natural Sciences, in Raleigh, believing that there would be a high chance of recruiting people of different ethnicities, ages, and education levels. We operated the survey on the computer systems at the Visual Investigate Lab in the Museum, as the configuration of the monitors, and the
“fishbowl” setting of the Lab promoted the one-way mirror unobtrusive observation which is essential in system usability tests. The recruitment process involved purposefully intercepting people by having a poster glued on a cardboard carried with researcher. This was because we wanted to ensure diversity of people who take the survey, rather than having one race, or age range dominating the sample.

Pertinent to the third study, I chose to use the VQMethod instead of the paper-based traditional Q method, majorly because of its high-reliability estimate, the standardized process through which all participants take the survey, and the ability to simultaneously distribute two surveys to urban and rural participants. Apart from saving time, the simultaneous distribution of surveys would have deterred the effect of history in participants’ perception of rural image. This is because rural image is profoundly affected by discourse promulgated through media. For instance, imagine the popular rural reality TV shows which frame negative/positive aspects of rural life. The time the shows are broadcasted, coinciding with taking the survey, has the potential to affect the ways participants visualize the rural piedmont NC. This was highly critical in respect with the fact that the movies, shows and news surrounding the rural idyll, in serving the fantasies of urban populations are not rare in America, such as Buckwild, Duck Dynasty, Here Comes Honey Boo Boo and Rocket City Rednecks.

Moreover, the geographical dispersion of the rural tourism microentrepreneurs was limited to the counties mostly surrounding the Wake County and who were engaged in longitudinal research in the People-First Tourism project. Hence, in ensuring the trustworthiness, the prolonged engagement and established trust between the researcher and the participants overweighed the probable inclusion of other rural tourism microentrepreneurs whom I did not know. It should be emphasized that generalization to the wider populations is not of concern in Q
method studies (Brown, 1980). However, the ideological generalizations can be deliberated in other settings whether internal or external to and between regions such as between East and West in international realms and North and South in American Context.

**Significance of Dissertation Study**

Tourism knowledge is Euro-centric and colonized by elite Western writers and seldom incorporates indigenous knowledge from people of different cultures and regions (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015). This study took any possible initiatives to safeguard the participants’ voices are resonated and are not blurred or hid by the possible imposition of researcher’s own biases or the overall organization of the study. Hence, checking the validity of the research findings by participants (member-checking) and auditing (checking for taken-for-granted assumptions by those who do not know the study’s leading concepts and ideologies) were initially planned and implemented.

Moreover, it was central in this study to empower the rural subaltern towards their emancipation from the ideological forces stemmed and imposed from discourse and urban-centered tourism media. Hence this study, pursued the aspirations of an inclusive and emancipatory research for which a model of emancipation was proposed and practiced. The proposed model has strong theoretical underpinnings (Babu, Mishra, & Parida, 2008; Bhabha, 1997; Hoare, & Nowell-Smith, 2005; Morais et al., 2017) and would make a significant contribution to the subaltern studies specifically in the context of rural tourism.

The Q methodology and autophotography have been amply used in postcolonial studies, but have never been combined to streamline the participants’ voices throughout research in informing the findings. Hence, this approach would eliminate biases that may have been incurred from the creation of the concourse of communication, more specifically in the application of Q
methodology in subaltern studies. Q methodology also helped to cluster like-minded people who have similar opinions about visual manifestations of rural piedmont NC. The practice of this study will illuminate the capabilities of the Q methodology in informing developmental tourism policies by reverberating and integrating both host and guests’ voices.

Moreover, a unique visual Q methodology research tool (i.e., VQMethod) was developed and tested which provided parsimony and accessibility and increased reliability in the Q method research (Article 2). This method underwent strict usability tests and inspections with potential survey-takers and Q method experts which informed the improvements and design of the VQMethod survey interface. This approach elevated the VQMethod to a research tool which was participatorily designed, by integrating the ideas of potential users throughout the design process (Spinuzzi, 2005). The VQMethod for the first time enabled online conduct of visual Q method research. Accordingly, contrasting rural and urban participants’ opinions about the visual manifestations of rural piedmont NC in a short period became possible (Article 3). Moreover, the VQMethod is now equipped with video and audio features, which would hopefully be used for disciplines which needed those features, such as visual arts, film, cinema, poetry, music, etc.

**Definitions of Terms**

**Autophotography:** This method involves participants as the co-investigators to take pictures and generate authentic data. It is a method used in ethnographic research (Noland, 2006).

**Colonialism and tourism studies:** “Postcolonial theory is increasingly influencing the field of tourism studies, … in responding to the various manifestations of colonialism evident within destinations located in former colonies (Hollinshead, 1998)…These critical approaches to research have enabled scholars to examine the legacies of colonialism manifest in the practices and structures of tourism” (Buzinde, 2016, p. 163).
**Decolonization:** Decolonization, broadly understood, is the process by which the colonial powers in Europe surrendered, voluntarily or by force, their overseas possessions in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (henceforth referred to collectively as the South) (Chambers, 2016, p. 228).

**Discourse:** Discourse is any “talk and text” that frames and shapes and/or is resultant from human aspirations, intentions, reflections, and actions” (Ong, 2016, p. 261).

**Emancipation:** Research that seeks to empower the subjects of social inquiry. It is now commonly recognized that power is a fundamental aspect of all research relationships. Traditional research processes have been criticized for their objectification of respondents. One response has been to argue for an emancipatory research process: one which recognizes this power imbalance in research and aims to empower respondents through research. (Letherby, 2011, p. 2).

**Emic and etic:** “Fieldworkers assuming the role of insiders are considered to be emic – seeing the world through the “eyes” of the researched, whereas those locating themselves as outsiders are etic in their epistemological view (Ali, 2016, p. 297).

**Epistemology:** “Epistemology is the philosophical approach to the study of knowledge. It centers one’s focus on how the world is or can be known and is concerned with what shapes the ability to understand and explain the world the way it is known” (Mair & Torabian, 2016, p. 306).

**Escape:** purposeful pathways individuals choose to free themselves from everyday roles and the pressures of life (Pearce, 2016, p. 312).

**Exoticism:** “Exoticism refers to the aestheticizing perception of the Other, people-objects-places different from subjectively familiar reference systems, which renders them strange and, simultaneously, domesticates them” (Berdychevsky, 2016, p. 333).
**Gaze:** The term “gaze” refers to the discourses and practices of seeing in tourism contexts as well as to ways of knowing what is being looked (Tzanelli, 2016, p. 380).

**Hegemony:** Hegemony” was most likely derived from the Greek *egemonia*, whose root is *egemon*, meaning “leader, ruler, often in the sense of a state other than his own” (Williams, 2015).

**Histography:** The writing of history, especially the writing of history based on the critical examination of sources, the selection of particular details from the authentic materials in those sources, and the synthesis of those details into a narrative that stands the test of critical examination (Van, 2017).

**Identity:** The qualities or beliefs rendering a person or group distinctive from others. Social scientists have underscored that many forms of identity are not biologically determined and unchanging. Rather, they are dynamic social constructs (Adams, 2016, p. 450).

**Identity and tourism:** The concept of identity is central to the study of tourism. Ethnic, cultural, national, gender/sexual, and regional identities are not simply marketed for tourists, but these various dimensions of tourists’ identities can be reaffirmed or altered via tourism (Adams, 2016, p. 450).

**Imperialism:** Tourism distinguished between “host and guest,” where alien social and cultural transactions brought by tourists to native people converted tourism into a form of imperialism (Zhang & Shelton, 2016, p. 461).

**Tourism media:** Media’s importance to tourism is largely due to its role in the formation of destination image and expectations (Croy, 2016, p. 600).

**Microentrepreneurship:** Businesses employing five people or less, usually including an owner/manager/worker and family members (Ferreira, Morais & Lorcsheider, 2015, p. 112).
**Minority groups:** “A minority is a segment of a local population who by some cultural, economic, political or religious marker, are fewer in number relative to other groups of the population. They are differentiated and are formally or informally assigned as separate social position” (Smith, 2000, pp. 390-391).

**Neocolonialism:** Postcolonial theory is a literary theory or critical approach that deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries… examine ways in which the literature of the colonial powers is used to justify colonialism through the perpetuation of images of the colonized as inferior (Lye, 1988).

**Orientalism:** Orientalism is “a way of seeing and knowing about the Orient” framed by colonialism and its pre- and postcolonial forms “in which the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined” (Said, 1978, p. 63).

**Other:** “The most profound of what our human, ethical and imaginative faculties must confront and are confronted by” (Shapiro 1996, p. 42).

**Pedagogy:** The method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept (Oxford dictionary).

**Pedagogy of liberation:** How can the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation? Only as they discover themselves to be 'hosts' of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy (Ferreire, 2000).

**Q methodology:** The Q-sort methodology refers to a set of beliefs and attitudes which are shared within a territory and community and “broadly representative of the opinion domain at issue” (Watts & Stenner, 2005, p. 58).

**Representation loop:** Stereotypical images originating with colonial narratives are continually reiterated (Echtner & Prasad, 2003, p. 662).
**Rural simulacra:** A status of a community transformed to fit the urbanites tastes and expectations (Thomas *et al.*, 2013).

**Rural tourism:** Rural tourism is tourism which takes place in the countryside. But, as many early commentators have pointed out, on more in-depth consideration, a simple definition of rural tourism is inadequate for many purposes (Lane, 1994, p. 9).

**Self-representation:** Colonial’s attempts to reclaim their identities in efforts to write and speak for themselves, self-controlled and self-owned.

**Stereotype:** “A stereotype is a generalized perception of qualities attached to an object. The attachments may be correct or not, or something in-between, but they remain resistant to change… Tourism stereotypes are often (re)produced in the media and may be studied by analyzing texts and imageries” (Hottola, 2016, p. 990).

**Subaltern:** This term is originated in the military use meaning the lower rank and therefore is intertwined with the politics and power (Sharp, 2011).

**Urbannormativity:** Urbannormativity grows out of a traditional culture that contributes to the idea that urban is the way forward while rural is the way backward and tends to distort the real rural life according to the urbanites’ taste and normative behavior.


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CHAPTER 2: Rural Tourism Microentrepreneurs’ Self-Representation through Photography: A Counter-Hegemonic Approach

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ABSTRACT

American rural social geography has been subjected to simplified and standardized projections and stereotyping. Furthermore, urban-centered advertising of rural tourism destinations is a powerful medium in creating hegemony and hierarchy between urban and rural communities. The discursive act of representing rural social geographies through tourism creates discourse, which dialectically creates and reinforces the modified social status quo of rural societies. Hence, aiming for a social change and magnifying the voice of the unheard, this article adopted autophotography as an ethnographic participatory method that enables subaltern people to speak. This aim was pursued by empowering acts of self-representational photography spearheaded by 14 tourism microentrepreneurs in piedmont North Carolina. They took pictures of their lives which they yearn to use in promoting themselves to urbanite visitors. After follow-up interviews, critical discourse analysis was employed to identify rural tourism microentrepreneurs’ self-representations within an urban-normative to counter-urban-normative spectrum. The findings show that rural tourism microentrepreneurs both resisted and complied with the urban ideological hegemony.

Keywords: Tourism microentrepreneurship; tourism representation; self-representation; autophotography; rural subaltern
Introduction

Since the 1990s, the countryside has been increasingly considered as an object of consumption and service rather than production (Ikonen, 2016). However, the process of rural tertiarisation, the growth of service sector in rural areas, has not resulted in the democratic governance of rural social, cultural and environmental assets (Kordel, 2016). In the same vein, rural tourism industry has not been immune to the tyranny of urban elites. With the tourism industry encroaching more and more on rural spaces, the joint forces of urban-based tourism operators and marketers have impacted the lives of rural locals, making it increasingly difficult for them to earn a living as well as defend their identities (Wearing & McDonald, 2002). Hence, rural people have become passive tourists vulnerable to fabricated representations of their lives and forced to gleaning scraps from the tourism industry (Cohen, 2002).

The subaltern, “a cohort of people that possess a different cultural identity from that of the dominant group” (Wang & Morais, 2014, p. 76) have been silenced through authoritative and hegemonic representations. Major postcolonial theorists such as Bhabha (1997) and Spivak (1988) exclaimed if/let the subaltern speak (Amoamo, 2011). Indeed, rural subaltern are muted through hegemony of urban tourism media, i.e., framing and propagating extracts of their social rural life. These fragments are then visited and photographed by tourists, creating a circuit that marginalizes, alienates and shapes rural subaltern. This “loop of representation” (Jenkins, 2003) accentuates aspects of their cultures which are “less appealing” and fulfilling to the tourists’ mythical aspirations and preconceived notions of rural life (Nazariadli, Morais, Barbieri, & Smith, 2017). The grip of the urban tourism autocracy (i.e., travel media, lodging industry, tourism retailers, public sector organizations) on media prevents the rural subaltern from speaking up, creating a pressing need to find apt methods for rural people to resist such hegemonic forces (Hoare & Nowell-Smith, 2005).
This inheritance of colonial ideologies in tourism has been amply critiqued in the context of West (Occident) and East (Orient) using the conceptual prism of Orientalism (Jafari & Scott, 2014; Said, 1978) and Urbannormativity in the context of urban and rural (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2016). Orientalism is built upon differentiating beliefs that discursively widen the gap between East and West. This discourse depicts the Easterners as the “White man’s burden” with the benevolent Westerners helping and civilizing them (Svendsen, 2004). In American geography, internal orientalism has been unfolding between North and South as well as rural and urban geographies (i.e., Urbannormativity). This is explicitly visible in rural reality and “hixploitation” TV shows relying on negative portrayals of rural Americans, and implicitly through rural tourism advertisements (Jude & Brashear, 2016).

Nevertheless, Morais et al., (2017) maintain that tourism microentrepreneurship is a mechanism that enables alienated rural subaltern to articulate true versions of their identities. This is because tourism microentrepreneurship needs low investment capitals, is under-regulated and unscripted that is outside the sphere of the formal tourism sector (Morais, K.C., Mao, & Mosimane, 2015). This quality prevents tourism industry from exerting its usual control over rural narratives by removing middle-men and tourism operators who write, illustrate and sell their most profitable version of host communities’ assets (Morais et al., 2017).

Besides, the colonizer’s power-structured behavior and assumptions can be denounced, deteriorated or subverted by countering their exploitative strategies through acts of mimicry (Amoamo, 2011). Hence, consistent with Bhabha’s (1997) notion of mimicry, this article trials the use of autophotography as a counter-hegemonic strategy to undermine Urbannormative

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3 Referring to the exploitation of rural people alluding to the slang term “hick” which means an unintelligent person living in a rural area.
tourism representations of rural settings (Berglund & Johansson, 2007). In this article, tourism microentrepreneurs participated in a counter-Urbannormative practice of photography and self-representation, and their photographs and follow-up interviews were critically analyzed to reveal their degree of compliance/resistance towards urban norms. Accordingly, the following questions guided this article:

**RQ1:** In what ways do rural tourism microentrepreneurs want to represent themselves to potential visitors?

**RQ2:** To what extent do the self-representations of rural tourism microentrepreneurs comply with and/or resist Orientalist and Urbannormative biases?

**Theoretical Background**

**Urbannormativity**

From a critical social science standpoint, rurality is relational and socially negotiated (Winterton, Chambers, Farmer, & Munoz, 2014). Rurality is increasingly perceived through imaginations and fantasies galvanized through fabricated urban-streamlined representations. This perception is created and propagated without active participation of its constituents, i.e., rural people (Morais et al. 2017). Seale and Fulkerson (2013) define representation as “sketches of reality that people rely upon when they interact with an unfamiliar reality”. Hence, through acts of representation, rural places are *deterritorialized* and *reterritorialized* (Cloke, 2006). The new rural places are mythicized, romanticized, and eroticized to fit the perceived tastes and desires of urbanites. This process of place-making employs a set of bipolar qualifiers to define what is rural in opposition to what is urbane (Halfacree, 1993).

The process of legitimizing “The global march towards urbanization, equating it with both progress and modernization, while denigrating the rural as irrelevant, unimportant,
backward, deviant, and undesirable” was coined by Fulkerson and Thomas (2013, p. 19) as Urbannormativity. Urbannormativity as a discourse centers on a series of discursive (written, spoken and visual) representations, which aim to selectively and self-servingly portray rural geographies. This Urbannormative discourse has the power to marginalize and disempower rural people because it postulates that the urban is at the center and the rural is at the periphery; priority, progress and rationality are in the urban center, and backwardness, irrelevance and emotionality are in the rural periphery (Baylina & Berg, 2010; Kordel, 2016). Smith (2010) further explains that the deliberate devaluation of rural cultural capital serves as a mechanism to disempower rural people and ascribe high status to urbanites.

This sense of dominance and stereotyped beliefs have brought about dire social, economic and environmental consequences for those living in rural areas (Hayden, 2013). Representations can become guiding maps, which frame urbanites’ interactions with rural populations (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2013). Sterotyped representations transform people’s views and expectations of the represented entities (Seale & Fulkerson, 2013). Moreover, like discourse, the (re)produced unreal portrayal of rural places can craft new meanings, knowledge and power which in the long turn can potentially change the local history in accord with the urban fantasies (Makoni, 2012).

The Urbannormative concepts (i.e., set of descriptors), are fundamentally entrenched in and propelled by urban media which is underpinned with visual representations. This is because in an increasingly urban society the number of people who can have any direct experience visiting or living in a rural community is dwindling (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2016). This gap, and lack of recognition exacerbates media’s power in controlling what and how the rural Other is portrayed which sometimes can be paradoxical. For example, rural narratives in reality TV
shows and movies have been found to both portray rural places as idyllic, romantic, and peaceful, but also as threatening, backward, and rife with crime and terrible deeds (e.g., Cooke-Jackson & Hansen, 2008, Hayden, 2013).

One of the main perpetuators of Urbannormative ideologies is rural tourism. Rural tourism entails “commodifying rural space for economic purposes” in which the urban-rural dichotomy becomes “a starting point for analyzing demand and supply” (Kordel, 2016). This means that urban-centric rural tourism being affected by Urbannormative concepts tends to identify rural populations as eccentric and rural landscapes as urban playgrounds and refuges from modernity (Aitchison, Macleod, MacLeod, & Shaw, 2014; Short, 1991). In tourism promotional plans, rural places are stereotypically represented as socially backward, changeless, and small-minded, and rural life is seen as a something that limits individual growth, and a creates a block on social development (Short, 1991). Accordingly, there is a need “to situate tourism representations politically and examine what they include and exclude, and whose interests they serve” (Mellinger, 1994, p. 776).

**Orientalism, Self-Orientalism, and Self-Urbannormativism**

Postcolonialism theories have been the driving force behind many social and cultural studies in the current era. Their foundational thoughts are indebted to the Frantz Fanon’s (1925-1961) anticolonial works, such as “Black Skin, White Mask,” “a dying colonialism,” and the “Wretched of the Earth” through which he deliberated on the modes and stories of resistance and recuperation. Then seminal postcolonial works of Edward Said (1935-2003) stand out on Orientalism and European imperialism. Orientalism enunciates that in Western discourse, the East is established as Other in hostility to the West; as if the West is cultural, politically and
economically at the center of the world, and the East is undeniably positioned at the periphery (Ikonen, 2016).

Said (1978) was the first scholar to use the term Orientalism as a type of discourse to mean the “… set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories and statements which together produce a particular version of the world” (Berglund & Johansson, 2007, p. 11). He asserted that colonialism is not only a matter of military invasion, but is rather about domination by any available means (Yan & Santos, 2009). Said’s work focused on textual modes of hegemony and stereotyped representation, by drawing on Foucault’s (1926-1984) power-knowledge interrelationship and Gramsci’s (1891-1937) resistance and opposition. However, Said is criticized for not exploring the extent to which oppressed people may speak-up and for portraying them as passive victims of colonial forces (Young, 1995).

Orientalism discourse is a means for oppression, and recognizing its existence opens ways to resist it (Said, 1978). However, the rural subaltern can hardly infiltrate and influence the discourse without having agency, self-determination, autonomy, and recognition of appropriate methods (Jenkins, 2003). Nonetheless, although the situation is well perceived and propagated through discourse, the strongest and most appropriate contemporary anti-essentialist methods in subverting hegemonic discourses is not yet well-understood. This is because discourse is based on the act of representation which in the digital age is spread on the urban-centered digital media such as filmmaking, reality TV shows, games and photography (Fernández, 1999). This inability causes the subaltern to give in, complying with the external expectations created through discourse and surrender their identities to ensure survival.

Self-Orientalism emerges from the subaltern’s need to commodify their cultural capital and market their identities to the Westerners in order to survive (Xingcheng, 2006). This
inclination is highly stimulated and reinforced by the tourism industry. For example, Yan and Santos (2009) noted that in the China Forever campaign, the Chinese tourism industry portrayed China as a colorful place, promoting senses of romanticism and archaism to increase the country’s appeal to Western visitors. Feighery (2012) delineates the self-Orientalisation of the Omani identities by government-produced tourism promotional video “Welcome to My County”. He reported that Omani people and their social, cultural and environmental assets are portrayed as passive, sly, frozen in time and hence subject to Westerners’ investigation and exploration.

Although the Urbannormativity discourse has been increasingly explored by rural postcolonial theorists and mainly after Fulkerson and Thomas’s (2013) book of “Studies in Urbannormativity”, there is a critical paucity of research examining counter-Urbannormative strategies. In other words, there is no mention of a systematic, sustainable and anti-essentialist approach in combating Urbannormative processes but transitory solutions to “exercise more control over frequently uncomfortable situations (Evans-Pritchard, 1989, p. 102). Indeed, to some degree, the studies of Urbannormativity perpetuate rural “Othering” by authorizing urban-centered scientific probing of rural places. Thus, exploring an analogy with documented processes of self-orientalism, the rural subaltern may self-Urbannormativise themselves and theatricalize their cultural assets to appear attractive to urbanites. However, in a different vein, the rural subaltern may instead resist urban norms and pursue self-representation strategies to destabilize the narratives that are imposed on them.

Tourism Microentrepreneurship

One of the propellers of Urbannormative discourse is rural tourism as it has been used to reinforce dominance and exploitation of urban upon rural (Kneafsey, 2000). Morais et al., (2017,
assert that “rural subaltern people are generally relegated to the role of passive toureees, allowed to informally glean bits of income not worthwhile to the formal tourism industry.” The objectification of the indigenous cultures, if reciprocated by its owners through commodifying their cultural assets, has the ability to keep a culture frozen in time, locked into the past (Markwick, 2001). This way the rural subaltern self-Urbannormativise, themselves by representing themselves as backward, sly, archaic, exotic, inbred, hillbilly and so forth (Baylina & Berg, 2010). Thus, if not disrupted, the monopolized, tyrannical governance of the tourism industry by urban elites, theatricalizing rural people for self-benefit, will have dire social, cultural environmental and political consequences in rural areas (Jonasson, 2012).

In turn rural tourism microentrepreneurship that is small-scale informal tourism businesses encompassing five or fewer owners/managers/workers has the ability to disrupt the monopoly and domination of urban elites (Ferreira, Morais, & Lorscheider, 2015). Tourism microentrepreneurship enhances self-determination and agency of its actors. Through an elevated sense of ownership, tourism microentrepreneurs feel more valued, capable and will strategize innovative approaches to influence the tourism industry (Kordel, 2016). Nonetheless, social networks, reciprocity, togetherness, and trust are important factors in entrepreneurial success (KC et al., 2017).

From an ideological standpoint, tourism microentrepreneurs also play within a reinforcing dialectical loop of representation, emanated from discourse underpinned with act of representation (Amoamo, 2011), implicating their socio-cultural capital. Rural tourism microentrepreneurs find themselves in a virtuous cycle which depends on the representation of their cultural assets without including their thoughts and beliefs. Hence as an anti-foundationalist (i.e., destabilizing realities created by colonizers) concept, this article employs the mimicry of
Urbannormative strategies (i.e., visual representation) and introduces the self-representational photography as a counter-discourse method (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1.** Conceptual framework.

**Method**

In reference to agenda-setting theory, the history of the subaltern has been (re)modified by colonial forces through selection of what and how things are represented (McCombs, 2005). Therefore, there is a persistent battle over who has the authority to represent (Beverley, 2008). Hence, critical theorists have strived to magnify the voices of indigenous people and problematize outsiders’ representations of local entities (Wang & Morais, 2014). The Italian neo-Marxist Gramsci (1891-1937) wrote essays (The Prison Notebooks) during his imprisonment (1926-1935) opposing the Italian Fascist regime, directing attention to the absence of a solid methodology of subaltern’s histography. Hence, this article was guided by a social constructionism paradigm and subscribed to critical social research with the ultimate aim of the participants’ emancipation (Pollio, Graves, & Arfken, 2006).

Hence autophotography (participant-led photography) was used to amplify the voices of the rural subaltern and unmask power differentials between rural and urban people and places. Historically, this method was created to examine how people want to portray themselves to others and also to empower them as active agents of the research process (Murray & Nash, 2017;
The participants in this study were involved as co-investigators and subject-matter experts who influenced the direction of the study (Buckley, 2012). Nonetheless, the declaration of researcher’s positionality in the rural research empowering the marginalized voices is essential (Woods, 2010). In this research, all the efforts and measures (e.g., self-reflexivity and thick explanation) were taken to respect and avoid polluting the voices of the subaltern (Reason, & Bradbury, 2008).

Sample and Setting

This study used the purposive sampling, by selecting those who are relative to the topic under investigation and potentially can provide deep data via long-held trust and collaboration with the research team (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This recognition was established by recruiting from a panel of rural tourism microentrepreneurs involved in longitudinal action research projects from several months to several years with the research team carried out in the state of North Carolina. The prolonged engagement also established a high degree of trust which is central in conducting in-depth interviews and eliciting honest responses (Murray & Nash, 2017).

Rurality can be relational or socially negotiated (Winterton et al., 2014) or placed-based and structural (U.S. Census, 2010). This study, chose the participants based on the latter criteria and the tourism microentrepreneurs’ location, having a population of less than 2500, not near the urban clusters or urbanized areas. Figure 2.2 shows participants’ approximate locations based on their ZIP code addresses, on a map which highlights the density of service and farm occupations. A total of 21 rural tourism microentrepreneurs were called to explain the study’s aims and expectations. Among them, 14 agreed to participate, encompassing nine male and six female participants with ages ranging between 39 and 72 (Table 2.1). However, one of them dropped out during the research.
Table 2.1
Identified concepts within the photographs and narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symbiosis with nature</td>
<td>State of being engulfed and dependent on nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazement with God’s and/or Nature’s power</td>
<td>Extreme astonishment, wonder, and awe in response to God’s infinite power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics of natural and rural landscapes</td>
<td>State of being picturesque or sublime or beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whimsical</td>
<td>Oddly out of the ordinary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eccentric and whimsical</td>
<td>The quality or habit of deviating from what is usual or regular in urban regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anachronistic</td>
<td>Anything which was proper to a former age, but is out of harmony with the present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arduous work and life</td>
<td>The product of the manual or creative labor of a person or other agent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.2. Location of study participants (one participant dropped).
Table 2.1 (continued)

*Identified concepts within the photographs and narratives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resistance to Urbannormative discourse</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-functionality of their livelihoods</td>
<td>Different aspects of rural life/agricultural life or different things they do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence across many complex skill areas</td>
<td>Free of naivety, experienced, discriminating, aware of and versed in the complexities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superiority over enslaved urbanites</td>
<td>A state of urbanites not understanding the realities and complexities of rural life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection**

The 13 rural tourism microentrepreneurs were met at places they deemed convenient and were handed a paper consent form and a Kodak Zi8 pocket video camera. They were instructed on how to use the camera and were asked to take 35-40 pictures, during a period of roughly two weeks, “through which they want to represent their life to potential urban visitor.” Some participants sought to use their own digital cameras, and some asked to add already taken pictures because of their personal and seasonal constraints limiting them from taking their favorite pictures. Hence, 76% of pictures were photographed during the agreed period, and four of the participants used their own cell phone cameras. It was emphasized that the subject of the pictures could be anything, only excluding identifying signs, information, and people’s faces.

After follow-up calls with participants, a convenient time and place for each interviewee were set up. Then, the participants were met and interviewed in informal locations, such as their backyard, in front of a fireplace, or at their kitchen table in order to balance power between researcher and participants (Morais et al. 2017). In preparation for the second visit, the participants were asked to select the 10 photos which “they feel are most representative of their lives”. The interviews were initiated by going over those pictures and asking them questions like
“What do you see in this picture?”, “Was there any particular reason in taking this picture?”, and “Why did you select this picture?”

The interviews lasted between 18 to 52 minutes, averaging 28 minutes in length, and they were audio recorded and transcribed. Data saturation was achieved after 13 interviews when the authors agreed that no new patterns of meaning were emerging from subsequent interviews (Fusch, & Ness, 2015). During the transcription the following key was used to denote critical intonations in the participants’ voice: parenthesis = simultaneous speech; CAPITAL WORDS = loud speech; angle brackets = enclose descriptions of vocal noises; colon = stretched sound; one dot = less than a second pause; two dots = full second pause; three dots = more than 1 second pause; ↑ rising tone; ↓ falling tone; Italic = stress. Moreover, the first author took field notes, memos, and drew sketches and diagrams during the interviews in a reflexive journal. The sketches and annotations enabled the researcher to remember and internalize his impressions of the discussions and at the same time convey his excitement and value of the respondents’ iterations (Pollio, Graves, & Arfken, 2006) (Figure 2.3).

![Figure 2.3. Reflexive journal including annotated sketching.](image-url)


**Data Analysis**

Visual stimuli often play a significant role in the reproduction of the elements of discourse because they allegedly mirror reality and convey a *regime of truth* (Jhala & Young, 2010). Discourse analysis is not just a method of analysis, but a “methodological and theoretical whole” which highly depends on the theoretical framework underpinning the research (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 3). The analysis may focus on structural characteristics of the narrative like volume, pitch, pace, and intonation. Also, the analysis may include microanalysis of the narratives using tools from linguistics and semiotics, or macro analysis of socio-political contexts (contextuality) and their relations with units of analysis (intertextuality) (Luke, 2004).

The CDA emphasizes on contextual knowledge and “involves second-guessing … seeing underneath, behind, and beyond texts… how these texts establish and use power over us” (Luke 2004, p. 4). Nonetheless, the CDA demands heavy work and leaves the interpretation to the discretion of reader by disentangling the covert explanations of power (Potter, 1996). Besides, “every theoretical approach in CDA is inherently interdisciplinary because it aims at investigating complex social phenomena which are inherently interdisciplinary and certainly not to be studied by linguistics alone" (Kendall, 2007, p. 5). Hence, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of image and text was used to uncover the opaque and transparent roots of inequality and oppression in reference with Urbannormative discourse (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Rose, 2001).
There is no single way of doing CDA (Van Dijk, 2011) and Potter (1996, p. 127) calls this method a “craft skill” that one will learn by doing. Although the process of discourse analysis is fluid, two main avenues of analysis are recognized, i.e., analysis of structure of statements/images and analysis of their social context (Potter, 1996). Hence integrating the Harding (2015) CDA of interview data and Rose (2001) CDA of visual data, this research has created this workflow for analysis (Figure 2.4). Further, it uses the “integrationist model”, which centers on the belief that no single discipline can uncover the implicit power and divulge the discourse. Therefore, this study builds the interpretations on the insight from sociology, politics, tourism media, geography, and ideology (Wodak & Chilton, 2005).

Figure 2.4. The CDA workflow.

Findings

Through the CDA of the photographs and narratives, nine concepts (i.e., themes in the thematic analysis) were identified as having indicators of Urbannormative discourse. The concepts are data unit’s contribution to a specific function of the discourse – in this article, those
are power and status (Gee, 2005). This recognition was accomplished by its cross-reference to the extant literature, impression, and inspiration from the familiarity of researchers with the context and the participants. The concepts were placed either in compliance (denoted by +), resistance (denoted by –), or hybrid functionalities by contrary interpretations of their salient and latent meanings (+ and –). Moreover, the concepts were thoughtfully and carefully named, by being sensible enough not to create and perpetuate stereotypes through our scientific inquiry. For this, the primacy was given to the participants’ own words. For example, anachronism was used instead of primitiveness, and eccentric and whimsical instead of irrationality and/or exotic.

Compliance with Urbannormative Discourse

Symbiosis with Nature

Rural tourism microentrepreneurs represented their connectedness and symbiosis with nature. Indeed, this concept directly subscribes to Urbannormative discourses by demonstrating the rural people infused with nature, supernaturally and mythically. Research participants depicted themselves as living in harmony and concert with their surroundings ascribing human traits to flora and fauna (anthropomorphization). For example, Patricia expressed her companionship with her dog and rabbits as her friends and co-workers, Sarah told us how “vegetables become kind of your children,” and Linda described the emotional connection she felt with Furry Cow who was shot and killed due to disease. Besides some pictures showed how people from urban areas go native to interact with rural creatures (Figure 2.5).
“I kind of build relationship with my breeders... My girls and boys, and he is one of my favorite rabbits… it represents the relationship which I build with the rabbits… I keep these rabbits for a long-term, for years, and he is just an old man” (Patricia). Use of human attributes such as children, boys and girls, old man, saying goodbye to Furry Cow, etc., were all indicators of the participants’ willingness to show their deep connections and dependency with what they grow and raise!

Figure 2.5. Patricia’s friend (left) and people going native by feeding rustic animals (right).

Amazement with God’s and/or Nature’s Power

Rural tourism microentrepreneurs were mesmerized and astonished whilst admiring God’s boundless power and control, which drew strong parallels with the essentially powerless, defenseless, and feeble nature of humanity. This concept submitted to the Urbannormative discourse by representing themselves as devout and submissive to God’s will and control, compared to urban people’s belief in primacy of reason and logic. For example, Jack referred to the previous year’s flood which destroyed their farm, saying of the only surviving sunflower “the last soldier remained alive after a tremendously damaging flood.” Sarah, pictured a flower which instead was meant to turn into cabbage and be sold, despite all of the thoughtful efforts and hard
work that went into cultivating and raising the plant. Linda compared “the size of the tree, versus the tininess of the house,” exclaiming “how little would it take to crush us” (Figure 2.6).

“That is a flower which is beautiful… But to me it represents a crop that did something that I did not want to do ↑. It went to flower <amazed eyes>. It was a cabbage and I wanted the cabbage to form a head that I can sell it, but it actually went to flower, so I can’t use it ↓… Sometimes you really do not know what you are going to get until you harvest it.” (Sarah)

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 2.6.** God’s power and humans’ feebleness illustrated at the micro and landscape levels.

*Aesthetics of Natural and Rural Landscapes*

Aesthetics were one of the most represented aspects of rural tourism microentrepreneurs’ lives. This concept functioned to comply with Urbannormative ideologies by representing the socio-cultural and environmental rural geographies as colorful and naturally beautiful in contrast with the dull, colorless and industrialized aesthetic of cities and city life. The represented aspects of rural lives were captured within the three manifestations of aesthetics, i.e., sublime, picturesque, and beautiful. The sublime aroused strong emotions such as awe, immenseness and infinity, the picturesque evoked a sense of peacefulness, and the beautiful conveyed a sense of regularity and order, taken respectively by extreme-long, medium and close-up shots (Bell & Lyall, 2002).
For example, the radicchio and the hops and sunflowers had beautiful color combinations for Michael and Robert. Robert stated that “So: when the picture in this photo is larger there are sunflowers at the button. So it shows the green paired with the sunflowers.” In addition, Jack expressed the beautiful sunset in the sublime sense of beauty by saying “This is the colorful sunset. It is amazing. Is not it? ↑ I feel like to sit in front of the pond and see the distance for a while”. Kevin highlighted the picturesque in a “ground ready for harvest, and the haze in the morning, creating a nice view of the farm” (Figure 2.7).

![Figure 2.7. Beautiful radicchio (left) and awe-inspiring sunset (right).](image)

*Healthy Minded For Their Family and Community*

The participants indicated how healthily they live, by being free from pollution and living crammed in tiny urban houses. They referred to the abundance of healthy food by which they feed their families and communities which are non-GMO and are also from free-range, pasture-raised livestock (Figure 2.8).

“So this is my husband and daughter with a carrot...<Laughing> (with a carrot? ↑) yeah. She is eating a carrot... So it is another reason I want to farm especially organically that my daughter can eat whatever she wants out of the field… I do not have to worry about it.” (Sarah)
“Hanging on with the sun… soaking up that sunshine, this one you can’t see but the little one Ryan <Smiling>. He was walking in their path towards silos… they are not confined to the city streets… concrete jungle of downtown area. It is just kind of wide open area that they can PLAY ↑.” (Robert)

“Because it is the way the pigs should be raised. If you contrast this with CAFOs, it is awful. Look at that… this is how pigs need to be raised.” (Linda)

Figure 2.8. Eileen selling produce to market and kid playing freely in rural landscape.

Hybrid Discourse

_Eccentric, Anachronistic, Whimsical_

Rural tourism microentrepreneurs demonstrated their socio-cultural and environmental capitals as deviant to the urban norms, namely _eccentric_. Although compliant with the Urbannormative ideologies in the surface value, the critical analysis shows a different pattern, putting this concept in a hybrid space. For example, Michael specified that he was jubilantly bouncing around and drinking beer in _celebration_ of the construction of a new _pig pavilion_. The picture, however, displays a dimly lit wooden shelter filled with bales of straw on wooden shipping pallets instead of what pavilion is perceived in urban lexicon. Besides, his presence instead of exclusion, soaking himself in a pool of straw instead of a pool of water, and smiling to the camera in that setting creates a whimsical portrayal of joy inundated with defiance and
protest against stifling urban norms. However, although a naked eye may see the picture as primitive or backward, being familiar with Michael’s personality for several years led the authors to believe that Michael was ridiculing urban norms (Figure 2.9).

“We got a party in the pavilion <snipping>. We built this house for the pigs. (so what is happening in this picture?) We were playing around... So: this is a picture of where the pigs sleep... We were hanging out drinking beer (CELEBRATING?), YEAH CELEBRATING.” (Michael)

Anachronism as a word was articulated and interpreted by one of the participants as “old and not belonging to the current era”. This concept was placed in the hybrid category as the demonstrated narrative-backed pictures conveyed worth and value (latent) rather than backwardness or uncivility (surface). For example, James not only shared the photographs of his friends/families and himself working with “anachronistic” harvesting, processing and distilling tools, but had proudly framed and hung those photographs in front of his cozy farm bar as an added value to his products. Interestingly, James noted that he learned this knowledge in his university degree in agriculture rather than from an informal multi-generation informal transfer of traditional knowledge (Figure 2.10).

“This is us cooking sorghum on the wood-fired stainless steel pan… A syrup, so back in 1800 people could not just buy table sugar… So: we are doing this very much in the same way↑ these farmers would have done it back then… IT IS A LOT OF WORK”. (James)

Furthermore, participants photographed objects, atypical to the region, labeled by Kevin as result of whim. For example, Sarah represented her “unusual heritage chickens”, Barbara expressed her eagerness in raising peacocks and emus and James explicitly referred to the rareness of his red peppers spicing up the Vodka he produces and sells (Figure 2.9). Kevin
remarked “It is like WHIMSICAL. It is just for FUN. We can grow banana plant ↑. New and odd things and also we have there a kiwi fruit that is also unusual here <smiling> ↑… Most people do not grow that.”

However, through portraying unusual behavior/objects to the urban socio-cultural and environmental geographies, participants did not endeavor to fetishize or exoticize as per Urbannormative ideologies, but either showcased added value (anachronism and whimsical) or denunciation of the urban norms (eccentricity).

Figure 2.9. Michael celebrating new “pig pavilion” (left) and Barbara raisin Emus (right).

**Arduous Work and Life**

Hard work was another manifestation of hybridity between resistance and compliance to Urbannormative discourse (Figure 2.11). To a high extent, this concept was hard for participants to photograph. Hence, they endeavored to portray arduous work through verbal explanations and snapping its manifestations such as perfect products. Nonetheless, Linda was successful in saliently conveying a sense of arduous work by picturing her husband carrying bales of hay in winter and under snow, representing his strength and fortitude as well as his morality by feeding animals regardless of unfavorable weather conditions. She referred this quality to state of being active and strong, and not the superiority of their hard work over reason and logic.
“It is just one guy doing this. This is Justin. He just works really hard and really fast....”

(Linda)

“That is all the peppers… it was lots of work, it was successful, the food looks like you know, perfect … but again it is the same thing of it just it signifies, all the work that we put in.”

( Kevin)
homogeneous groups, hence counter-Urbannormative. Even if the livelihoods of tourism microentrepreneurs looked limited to agritourism, they sought to demonstrate different services they offer. For example, Patricia referred to her different breeds of rabbits that people can buy or pet, and buying rabbit’s skin, meat or even manure. Kyle also exhibited this diversity through photographing farm tours, picking up chicken feed, pig petting event, stocking their store, making strawberry jam, and trying new products. (Figure 2.12).

“We sell our hops to breweries. what we are looking to do also is to diversify the market a little bit, we are making hop soap and also what we are gonna be doing is pairing with a florist or two florists in Chapel Hill for wedding corsages.” (Robert)

“Again this is just the tractor working I can’t tell ya: it is just all part of it… this is all the same farm. It is just diverse.” (Linda)

Figure 2.12. Linda’s husband doing diverse activities (left) and Robert making hop soap for diverse markets (right).

Competence across Many Complex Skill Areas

Rural tourism microentrepreneurs took efforts to brag about their skills and knowledge. Similar to the arduousness, this concept was easier to vocalize than to photograph. This concept served to counter the Urbannormative ideologies that rural people are uneducated and less capable of doing/solving complex duties/problems. This was evident in their way of talking, the
words they used, and the nuances and subtleties of their viewpoints too. For example, Kyle, Eileen, and Sarah showed how they outreach the urban events and conferences and presented their thoughts and products. Sarah detailed the benefits of Community Support Agriculture (CSA), and Kyle showed off his dexterity in doing many things such as plumbing, accounting, and management of large events at his farm (Figure 2.13 & 2.14).

“If you go the northern latitudes, hops grow in Germany 45th parallel… so at this latitude they just do not grow vibrantly … And also with the tilt of the earth, the more north you are, for the Summer and growing months, sun comes up earlier, sets later so they have longer growing seasons, so hop require 15 hours of daylight in the growing season.” (Robert)

Figure 2.13. Robert working with sophisticated machinery.

Figure 2.14. An accounting software used by Kyle (left) and Sarah’s husband looking at the map in a meeting with city officials.
Superiority over Enslaved Urbanites (Ignorant Urbanites)

Moreover, the rural tourism microentrepreneurs took other steps to counter the Urbannormative discourse, denouncing urban lifestyles and philosophy. They scorned and condemned the urban developmental policies and elaborated on how urbanites are blind to their dependency to rural geographies. They voiced that urbanites are ignorant of where their foods come from and disturbing the rural regions would deteriorate their own lives. They expressed urbanites’ limited knowledge about realities of rural life and what it takes to make the perfect products.

“It was a meeting with … they are considering putting high intention power lines into this property, so there is a session we meant to go and make comments ... I have heard from a farmer they have come and sprayed Roundup and killed peoples’ crops, like NOT REALLY KNOWING, plus it disrupts the forest and wetlands ↑” (Sarah)

“..she had chickens but came to buy chickens, after she bought meat, she went to grocery store to buy eggs, and I said why do you need eggs if you have chickens… she said my son wouldn't eat them because they come from the back end of the chicken <staring with amazement>... <laughing>... I was so taken aback by that <continued silence> ↑.” (Linda)

Discussion and Conclusions

This study proposed to empower and liberate the rural subaltern from ideological forces of domination perpetrated by urban centers through Urbannormative discourse. This aim was pursued with the active engagement of participants in the research process. They did so by self-representing their lives to an urban audience, discussing their choices and ultimately benefitting their wider communities. Through the authors’ deep familiarity with the subversive power of Orientalism and Urbannormative discourses, and acquaintance with the context and participants,
eight concepts through the CDA of the pictures and narratives were identified. These concepts functioned to create power imbalance and a space of difference between rural and urban socio-cultural and environmental geographies (Gee, 2005; Nazariadli, 2017).

The findings divulged heterogeneity between rural tourism microentrepreneurs’ self-representations and the degree they complied or resisted against Urbannormative ideologies. The rural tourism microentrepreneurs complied with the Urbannormative discourse, i.e., self-Urbannormativised by demonstrating their symbiosis with nature and giving human traits to the surrounding natural phenomenon. In the same vein, they communicated their astonishment and subservience to the God’s power and venerated the aesthetics of rural environments. These concepts exemplified the rural Idyllic as an idealized and stereotypical quality of rural socio-cultural and environmental geographies, emphasizing its *mythical static purity* (Kordel, 2016). Indeed, the rural inhabitants have been portrayed as superstitious and highly religious in contrast to the urbanites’ proclivity towards reason and secularity (Soares Da Silva, Figueiredo, Eusébio, & Carneiro, 2016).

Moreover, some participants’ representations apparently subscribed to but in fact, resisted the Urbannormative ideologies. This recognition was made by reference to their intentions, made clear through our personal acquaintance with participants and the broader context. Putting these concepts in a space of hybridity, eccentricity, anachronism, and whimsy caused them to be grouped together, making them strange when considered in an urban setting. The rural subaltern, and in a broader context the Orient, are frequently described as behaving eccentrically which to some extent make the urbanites/westerners scared or flabbergasted (Phillips, Fish, & Agg, 2001). They also have been intensely depicted as timeless and frozen in the past, in need of civilization both for their own good and for insulating more civilized people from the harm they may impose.
(Baylina & Berg, 2010). For this, exoticising rural people and their surroundings have been used by Orientals to justify and perpetuate their concern (Caton & Santos, 2009).

Discourse does not go beyond the surface and salient meanings and actually intends to conceal the realities by theatricalizing the surface (Potter, 1996). It portrays the Other people and places with biased angles and creates a space for judgment (Bell, 2006). In this article, the self-representation of rural tourism microentrepreneurs was thoughtfully elaborated through highlighting their capabilities, originality and uniqueness. In this hybrid space, rural tourism microentrepreneurs must be conscious that the use of some images may give the appearance that they are self-Urbannormativising themselves and their communities if they are not allowed to explain these images. More importantly, they should be aware that each picture taken from them, will frame the way the world understands them (Jenkins, 2003). Since pictures are mute, the rural people themselves may also be muted unless given a chance to speak up and explain the meaning that the pictures hold in their eyes (Scarles, 2012).

The rural idyll is also represented as having identical characteristics, homogeneous and mono-cultural, in laborious farmscapes (Rankin, 1999). However, rural tourism microentrepreneurs determined to combat the unidimensional representation of their socio-cultural and environmental spaces show their dexterity and knowledgeability, and even ridicule the urbanites’ foolishness. This is similar to stereotyping of urban (Han) visitor by Muso matriarchal rural community in China, by creating jokes about funniness and untrueness of the urban-generated stereotypes upon them (Wei, Qian & Sun, 2018). The urban media associates rural life with farming, cows and pastures, and children playing with cattle and climbing trees. Furthermore, while rural people and their children are viewed as growing healthily, they are also
viewed as less educated and inherently incapable of pursuing anything other than agriculture (Bell, 2006).

All of this makes the rural both a desirable space and also a source of dread, combining the advantages and disadvantages of rural places paradoxically, drawing the rural to a space of ambivalence and *urban ideological playgrounds* (Short, 1991). This space is imaginatively fabricated and is a product of discourse (Pink, 2007). However, this does not mean that the rural subaltern should not represent their assets which differentiate them from urbanites and urban space. Instead, rural tourism microentrepreneurs can earn agency by using photography and disseminating their favorite and accurate representation of their communities through social media. As a result, perhaps they also begin to influence tourism in their communities and overall economic development in areas where rural tourism is a leading economic sector.

Rural tourism development policies should take into account the voices of the rural subaltern, in making and disseminating any visual promotional materials aimed towards urbanites. These materials, if not explained well, may create stereotypical expectations, dialectically reinforcing the social status quo of the rural subaltern. Also, researchers are encouraged to try methods, which are participatory and empowering, which raise awareness and inform policy in a way that breaks down the discourse and dominance of urban hegemony. Last but not least, the future research can change the direction to urbanites and the image tourism microentrepreneurs have of their urban visitors.
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CHAPTER 3: Assessing the Visual Q Method (VQMethod) Research Tool: A Usability, Reliability and Methods Agreement Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Traditional paper-based Q method (henceforth TPQM) was introduced to the social sciences in the 1930s. Nonetheless, despite the TPQM’s unique capability in measuring individuals’ subjective opinions about any non-cognitive phenomena, it has not been widely utilized by researchers. Recent efforts to address this concern have seen Q method research administered via the Internet; however, existing tools only allow the use of text prompt, and do not support media such as images, video and audio. Most importantly there is no data on the reliability, usability and agreement between the online and traditional modes. The Visual Q method (henceforth VQMethod) described in this paper was developed to address these limitations specifically. Development of the VQMethod platform was a multi-stage process that started with debugging by five Q methodology experts to identify the potential problems the potential survey-takers may encounter. Then, a usability test conducted with 31 visitors at a local natural science museum identified in-effect problems with the VQMethod platform. Next, test-retest reliability analysis with a convenience sample of 37 students sample yielded higher test-retest reliability coefficient in contrast with the TPQM. The methods agreement analysis with a sample of 10 students revealed that there was a significant correlation between data collected using the two methods. Overall, the findings of this study provide evidence about the appropriateness of using VQMethod platform to conduct Q method research online.

Keywords: Q methodology; VQMethod; usability; reliability; methods agreement
Introduction

Q methodology was invented by William Stephenson in the mid-1930s to scientifically measure self-referent subjective viewpoints, mindsets, and attitudes (Brown, 1993; Good, 2010). The Q methodology is both a constructivist and social constructionist research approach, whether it focuses on the individualistic or social construction of the beliefs, knowledge or discourse about a subject matter (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Q methodology has received increased attention in social sciences because of its strong statistical component in the study of human subjectivity (Ellingsen, Størksen & Stephens, 2010). This method can be used to cluster like-minded people about a non-cognitive topic via by-person factor analysis in contrast with the more common by-variable factor analysis. Each factor represents a unique viewpoint about subject of investigation.

The Q method research routine is divided into eight stages, i.e., preparation, logistics, deliverance, data elicitation, data record, analysis, interpretation and write up (Brown, 1993). The preparation stage encompasses the formation of concourse of communication (COC), refining the COC to a representative sample (Q sample), securing the research participants (P set), designing a symmetrical graded grid and defining the condition of instruction. The logistics entail printing the grid sheet, condition of instruction, score sheet, and the Q sample items. The deliverance stage encompasses travel to a comfortable and convenient place for both researcher and participants which at least has a table that the grid sheet can be spread and the participants perform the Q sort.

Q method research is very appropriate for studies involving marginalized communities and for consciousness-raising and democratic decision-making (Brown, 2005; Nutt & Wilson, 2010; Previte, Pini, & Haslam-mckenzie, 2007). Q method’s suitability to include and contrast diverse stakeholders views has led to its successful application in the policy-making domain (Day, 2008; Naspetti, Mandolesi, & Zanoli, 2016). In Q method, unlike in quantitative research
methods, the use of a large representative sample from a specific population is less critical than the inclusion of a variety of voices and perspectives (Gabor, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Since its invention, the process of preparing and conducting Q method research has traditionally employed paper-based tools (TPQM). The face-to-face requirements in conducting TPQM may have inhibited some researchers from considering using it due to its demanding logistical considerations. Additionally, conducting TPQ method research has been noted to require significant time and money (Leary, Wobbrock, & Riskin, 2013). However, alternative methods that remove the researcher, such as having the Q method survey (henceforth Q survey) materials delivered by mail, have been deemed unwieldy and confusing for participants (Klooster, Visser, & Jong, 2008).

Beyond operational hurdles, some authors believe that in TPQ method research, the researcher creates a “feeling for organism,” with participants, which is only achievable through the researchers’ interaction and acquaintance with participants (Brown, 1989; Previte, Pini, & Haslam-McKenzie, 2007). Besides, in contrast with Internet-based surveys, in TPQM, researchers can make participants be more involved, committed and contemplative (De Tona, 2006). Nonetheless, while this interaction further may help researchers in the interpretation of visual Q sorts and analysis, it also raises concerns about the researchers’ bias influencing participants during the Q sorting (Cross, 2005; Scott, Baker, Shucksmith, & Kaner, 2014).

Simply put, the researcher’s close interactions with participants might influence participants’ Q sort patterns (Cross, 2005). For example, when investigating sensitive issues, such as sexual abuse, crime and political views, participants might form a perception that disclosing their views might threaten their social status, and as a result they might be less truthful and attempt to impress the researcher by complying with what they might perceive as well-
accepted opinions (Scott et al., 2014). Moreover, the influence of each researcher in face-to-face Q method interviews may undermine the reproducibility of findings, such that other researchers may not reach the same results if the same steps in research are taken (Goodman, Fanelli, & Ioannidis, 2016; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

Reliability is defined as “the capacity of a test or any other measurement tool to differentiate between respondents when measured twice under the same condition” (Berchtold, 2016, p. 1). Watts and Stenner (2012) assert that the reliability in TPQM reflects more of the stability of opinions rather than the consistency of findings. It means that the stability of the method itself has not been suitably tested because there is no standard “quality check” guidelines in the deliverance and preparation of Q surveys. Notwithstanding scholars assert that the number of viewpoints on any subject of interest is stable (Brown, 1971; Nicholas, 2011). Therefore, the number of viewpoints can be used as a benchmark for reliability by testing its stability over repeated measures. Nonetheless, no scholar has tested that if those who hold the views (henceforce view-holders) would again share thoughts with the same view-holders over repeated measures.

The agreement between two methods (methods agreement), is the extent to which identical findings can be obtained using two measurement tools (Martin Bland & Altman, 2010). In contrast to the reliability, the methods agreement looks for identification of systematic error rather than random error. The perfect agreement means the exact similar results, but perfect reliability means high correlation, while the results can be different (Thomas, 2017). The methods agreement is mainly conducted to unfold if a new method can replace an old gold-standard method, or if the method is rigorous enough to detect changes in participants’ opinions in longitudinal studies (Berchtold, 2016). That is, if measurement error is larger than the change
over time, the measurement tool would not be suitable to detect changes longitudinally (Berchtold, 2016). Hence, reliability underpins the assessment of methods agreement and needs to be analyzed before any contentions about the agreement between methods are made.

Several new tools recently have been developed to assist researchers in standardizing the research process and overcome previous limitations. To name a few, Q-assessor (Reber & Kaufman & Cropp, 2000), FlashQ (Hackert & Braehler, 2007), and most recently the Visual Q method (VQMethod) (Nazariadli, 2017). The VQMethod is a new Internet-based Q method research tool developed to diminish the resource-ladenness of visual Q method research and create a parsimonious methodology (Aarts, 2007). VQMethod makes Q method research systematized, standardized and accessible to a broad spectrum of researchers and participants, and makes the usage of images, video, and sound stimuli possible. This tool is developed by the ASP.Net Web framework and the C# (C sharp) programming language.

Hence, the purpose of this study was to test the psychometric properties of VQMethod research tool, in overcoming the limitations of the TPQM. Namely, in a first stage, its usability was observed and tested on potential users, with indicators of efficiency, effectiveness and user satisfaction. In the second stage, it underwent a test-retest reliability analysis to estimate its random error over two-time occasions. This reliability assessment also included the test for stability of factors and test for the effect of spending time completing the surveys on the reliability of the results. In the third stage, a method agreement analysis was conducted between the VQMethod and the TPQM to determine if there is any systematic bias between two methods.
Research Design and Development Strategy

Five milestones were considered for the concurrent tests and development of VQMethod:

1) Conducting a heuristic inspection of VQMethod’s survey interface (henceforth VQ survey), 2) identifying in-effect problems by conducting usability observations and tests (Davis, Bersoff, & Comer, 1988), 3) making interface improvements, 4) evaluating the VQMethod’s reliability, and 5) assessing its methods agreement with the TPQM (Figure 3.1). These milestones were pursued in three stages. The first stage encompassed the first, second and third milestones, the second stage involved the fourth milestone, and the third stage entailed the fifth milestone.

Stage One: Examining the Usability of VQMethod Research Tool

Usability studies are mainly conducted to assess how a new method or system can be easily used by potential users on which they have received no formal training (Holzinger, 2005). Usability is a measure of effectiveness and efficiency (overall performance) of a product and the degree of end-user satisfaction (ISO 9241-11). The effectiveness addresses the complete
accomplishment of the given tasks, efficiency the needed time and resources, and satisfaction both the overall and task-specific ease of use. Two main types of usability assessments which deal with and without end-users are usability test and heuristic inspection methods, respectively.

**Usability Heuristic Inspection on VQMethod**

Introduced by Nielsen and Molich (1990), the heuristic inspection is a “debugging” method which demands a small set of experts (3-5) to assess the interface against a set of principles (heuristics). Each expert evaluates the given system separately and shares their findings together. This method removes the cost associated with recruiting users and *saves users* for the real study. The heuristic inspection method belongs to discount evaluation methods which are quick and cheap to perform but are rarely used as standalone usability method due to its detachment from the real users (Hollingsed & Novick, 2007). Besides, it is harder to discover minor problems than major problems by heuristic inspections (Nielsen, 1992).

**Sample and data collection**

The purpose of this section was to identify the potential usability problems of the VQMethod’s survey interface. For this, a sample of five Q method experts was recruited to evaluate the VQ survey’s interface based on ten usability heuristics adapted from Nielsen & Molich (1990). The Q method experts did not have previous experience nor expertise in the heuristic evaluations which were not crucial in heuristic evaluations (Jeffries & Desurvire, 1992). They were emailed a hyperlink to a VQ survey, with a set of 10 usability heuristics by a short description of each heuristic. They were asked to identify the heuristic that had been violated and rate their intensity (with a 5-point Likert scale) which might degrade the survey-takers ease of
use (Holzinger, 2005). The experts were cautioned to not base their judgments on the survey topic and the content.

Data analysis and findings

The preliminary heuristic inspection evaluation by Q method experts revealed 67 usability problems, 15 of which were reported only by one expert. The severity rating was diverse among the evaluators (M = 2.55; SD = 1.9). As Q method experts evaluated the system, in some instances they indicated their opinion about the effect of design on the quality of data for which no heuristic they could identify. Table 3.1 represents a summary of the identified problems and associated heuristics by Q method experts and the solution identified by authors (Saavedra et al., 2009).

Table 3.1
Examples of identified problems, their corresponding heuristic and solution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Heuristic</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colored grid, psychologically affecting the participants</td>
<td>Not identified</td>
<td>Apply neutral colors used throughout the interface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents may forget the instructions of pop-up menus</td>
<td>Recognition rather than recall</td>
<td>Make instructions constantly visible on the interface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ screenshot and email of data is unwieldy</td>
<td>Flexibility and efficiency of use</td>
<td>Automize the record and export of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of data by the press of “back” button</td>
<td>User control and freedom</td>
<td>Save the data after each Step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not seeing the whole grid at computer monitor</td>
<td>Match between system and the real world</td>
<td>It depends on the size of monitor. Drag of images removes the need for scrolling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating rather than reading instructions</td>
<td>Flexibility and efficiency of use</td>
<td>Optional addition of Audio and Video messages instead of written instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not following the survey’s progress</td>
<td>Visibility of system status</td>
<td>Add progress bar, image countdown and guiding messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pale grid line colors and fonts in general</td>
<td>Consistency and standards</td>
<td>The lines and fonts were turned into pure black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For each full set of heuristics, Table 3.2 lists the mean severity of usability problem and the proportion of problems which had the severity of 3 or more (Nielsen, 1994). The findings show that the heuristic H6 (recognition rather than recall) was most severe potential problem (M = 4.12), followed by H1 (the visibility of system status) (M = 3.81). The findings also show that the consistency of design was of less concern among the Q method experts.

### Table 3.2
The severity of each usability heuristic problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Usability Heuristics</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
<th>Problems with a rating of 3 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Visibility of system status</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Match Between System and the Real World</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>User Control and Freedom</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>Consistency and Standards</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>Error Prevention</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>Recognition Rather than Recall</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7</td>
<td>Flexibility and Efficiency of Use</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8</td>
<td>Aesthetic and Minimalist Design</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9</td>
<td>Help Users Recognize, Diagnose, and Recover from Errors</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H10</td>
<td>Help and Documentation</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Usability Laboratory and Questionnaire Tests on the VQMethod**

In the usability laboratory test, the potential end-users are invited to a laboratory wherein they perform certain tasks without recognition that they are being observed. The method can be conducted through one-way mirror promoting *unobtrusive observation*, i.e., the observation room is divided from the experiment room (Kaikkonen et al., 2005). This strategy prevents the researcher from influencing experimenters’ performance (Lin et al., 1997). Besides, post-survey questionnaires or interviews can complement the usability tests of a new system by digging into the sources of problem.
Sample and data collection

The purpose of this section was to identify the in-effect usability problems of the VQMethod’s survey interface. The usability laboratory and questionnaire tests were conducted at the Visual Investigate Lab, Museum of Natural Sciences, Raleigh, NC. It was intended to observe the operations of potential survey-takers on the VQMethod’s survey interface and find the problems first hand. This test was then followed by a post-survey questionnaire to measure the task-specific level of satisfaction, uncover their sources of discomfort and their self-identified solutions (Holzinger, 2005). This process was aligned with the participatory design principles in which potential users express their preferences and needs into the design process (Spinuzzi, 2005).

The museum visitors were intercepted in front of the Visual Investigate Lab, and informed about the research topic, estimated time of completion, required tasks and the incentive ($15 Amazon gift certificate). Among 35 people who were approached, 31 agreed to participate. The participants were purposefully approached to represent different age groups (21-73) and races (White, African-American, Asian, Hispanic and Caucasian). Nonetheless, the sample resulted in rather unbalanced gender split, i.e., 64.3% female and 35.7% male.

The usability tests at the Museum was conducted in five sessions lasting between three to six hours. The VQ survey was set up on a desktop computer connected with the Internet (with i3 Intel processor, Microsoft Windows 10 Professional, 4 GB memory RAM, GeForce GTX 1050 graphic card) with two vertically cascaded 19” monitors that enabled the researcher to observe the experimenter’s operations throughout the survey via the upper monitor. Resembling a one-way mirror, the equipment was set up in a fishbowl laboratory surrounded by glass-walls (Kaikkonen et al., 2015).
Participants were directed to the lab, sat behind the monitor, were instructed about the study, and were briefed about the post-survey questionnaire. The researcher stood behind the glass-wall to unobtrusively monitor the participants’ operations. The researcher strived to promote a normal working condition for participants. For this, he swapped his position between inside and outside the lab to make his presence unobtrusive (Holzinger, 2005) (Figure 3.2). The researcher asked the participants to raise their hand if stuck, puzzled or encountered any errors.

In the body of the survey, first, the participants affirmed their consent in taking the survey. Second, they sorted the stack of images into three boxes, i.e., most like, neutral and most unlike their views about rural life (Step 2). Third, they dragged and dropped the images from the three boxes into a graded grid with a forced distribution of -4(3), -3(3), -2 (5), -1(6), 0(6), +1(6), +2(5), +3(3), +4(3)\(^5\) from most like to most unlike their expectations of what rural lives are like in rural NC (Step 3). Fourth, they reasoned about their extreme placements of images at -4 and +4 columns, and fifth, answered some general demographic questions.

![Figure 3.2. The unobtrusive observation in a fishbowl laboratory setting.](image)

\(^5\) i.e., column grade = +4 and Column depth = 3
After completing the online survey, the participants were handed the post-survey questionnaire. The post-survey questionnaire contained screenshots of five steps of the VQ survey they took and inquired how difficult/easy was to accomplish each task, through a 5-point Likert scale Single Ease Question (SEQ). Also, they were asked to draw or write on the screenshots and propose their solution to the encountered problems. Additionally, the success rate in completing the survey (measure of effectiveness) was recorded, system errors were captured, and field-noted were taken.

Data analysis and findings

The in-effect problems on the sample of museum visitors was measured through the post-survey questionnaire. Participants mainly expressed their uneasiness with the forced distribution grid, the font size and the initial lack of comprehension about the subject matter before Q sorting. Indeed, in the consent form the research purpose and steps were noted but participants spent short amount of time reading. They also expressed their inability to move the images between grid and the three boxes and the researcher’s sole interest in knowing about the reasons behind placement of certain images at the edges of the grid. Additionally, they both illustrated and stated that recalling the images by their thumbnails would be helpful in comparing, prioritizing and sorting the images (Figure 3.3).

The post-survey questionnaire also revealed that the participants had less difficulty doing the Q sort (M = 2.05, SD = .99), than doing the pre-sort (M = 1.47, SD = .69), writing reflections about extreme sorts (M = 1.35, SD = .83), and in the final questionnaire (M = 1.05, SD = .12).
Overall, the findings and insight from the Q method experts and museum visitors were weighed and the most practical solutions were implemented. The practicability of solutions was mainly measured in terms of compliance with the tenets of Q methodology (McKeown, & Thomas, 2013). Subsequently, in form of action plans, the solutions were reported to a web-developer to take place before the reliability and method agreement analysis at the stage 2. Figures 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 illustrate some of major improvements undertaken at the VQ survey’s interface.

Besides, the familiarization step was added make an overall understanding of the topic, and the expected duties. The progress bar, image countdown and guiding messages were added to highlight the research status. The image sizes got smaller in the form of thumbnails, in order for survey-takers see more of pictures at once with less need to scroll. The images can get bigger by clicking on them. The transition between the boxes and grid cells were enabled to increase
flexibility. The video instruction was added to be used instead of textual instructions.

Figure 3.4. Step 1, familiarization with Q items and the topic.

Figure 3.5. Step 2, dragging and dropping images into the three boxes.
Stage Two: Reliability Analysis

The purpose of this stage was to evaluate the psychometric characteristics of the VQMethod research tool through a test-retest analysis. Hence, a research question and two hypotheses guided this stage:

**RQ:** To what extent is the VQMethod a reliable instrument to conduct Q method research?

**H1:** The number of factors remains stable at the VQMethod in repeated measures

**H2:** The pattern of factor membership remains stable at the VQMethod in repeated measures.

**H3:** The time spent on the Q survey significantly increases the reliability of VQMethod.
The Q method research seeks to identify and distinguish between viewpoints surrounding a topic. This central focus of Q method research will be undermined if the individual Q sorts are unreliable. That is, the composite reliability of Q sort items (K) affects the factor reliability ($r_{xx}$) ($P = \text{number of Q sorts significantly loaded under factor}$) which in turn sets a basis for the calculation of the standard error of factor scores ($SE_{fs}$) ($S_x= \text{Standard deviation of Q sorts}$). Next the $SE_{fs}$ of each factor is used in the calculation of standard error of the differences ($SED_{x-y}$) between two factors. The $SED_{x-y}$ multiplied by significance level i.e., 1.96 ($p < .05$) or 2.58 ($p < .01$) and rounded to the nearest whole number will determine the Q items which distinguish one viewpoint from others (Figure 3.7) (McKeown, & Thomas, 2013).

An equation for calculating the factor reliability ($r_{xx}$) is given as:

$$r_{xx} = \frac{(0.80)p}{1 + (p-1)0.80}, \quad SE_{fs} = S_x \sqrt{1 - r_{xx}}, \quad SED_{x-y} = \sqrt{SE_x^2 + SE_y^2},$$

**Figure 3.7.** Series of computations effecting affecting each other towards recognition of distinguishing Q sample items.

**Sample and Data Collection**

To address this underlying psychometric property in Q method research, a sample of 37 undergraduate students were recruited for their voluntary participation in the study. It was stressed that the research would be anonymous and would not affect their grades or student-professor relationship. They were between 18 and 24 old, comprising of 19 females, 16 males and 2 students who did not specify their gender. The sample encompassed 3 African-Americans, 1 Asian, 30 Caucasians, 2 Hispanics and 1 Palestinian. They took two identical VQ surveys at two occasions one week apart (Times A & B) in a class setting. They either used personal laptops (majorly MacBook) or university laptops (Hp 14” Chromebook).
The website automatically saved the total and step-wise time participants spent to accomplish the survey. The overall relative efficiency of the VQ survey was calculated through the ratio of the time taken by the users who completed the task over the total time taken by all users (Seffah, Donyaee, Kline, & Padda, 2006). The effectiveness of the VQMethod was measured by computing the ratio of completed surveys over the total number of surveys, multiplied by 100. Their overall satisfaction with the VQMethod survey interface was measured via a System Usability Scale (SUS) including 10-item 5-point Likert questions. The SUS was distributed to the students at Time B and after completing the survey. The SUS developed by John Brooke (1986) is a reliable and valid measure of user satisfaction (Kortum & Bangor, 2013) which promotes the comparison of the usability of different systems by generating a 0-100 score (Kortum & Bangor, 2013). The SUS questionnaire in this study was adapted from United States Patent and Trademark Office.

**Data Analysis**

Two measures were considered for assessing the reliability of the VQMethod, i.e., the composite reliability of the Q sorts and factor stability. The two surveys’ data at Times A and B were saved and exported into an Excel sheet via the VQMethod platform forming a data matrix of 40 images and 37 participants (Table 3.3). Then, all the Q sort data at Times A and B were combined and entered in the KenQ online software and a series of Pearson product-moment correlations were performed. Next, a matrix of inter and intra participant correlations was created at Times of A and B. This attempt generated a matrix of size \((A + B) \times (A + B) = (37 + 37) \times (37 + 37)\). Next, the mean correlation between all different pairs at Time A \(\bar{r}_{aa}\) and Time B \(\bar{r}_{bb}\) and different pairs between Times A and B \(\bar{r}_{ab}\) were computed. The \(\bar{r}_{aa}\), \(\bar{r}_{bb}\) and \(\bar{r}_{ab}\) represent
the average of \( \frac{1}{2} (37)(37 - 1) \) correlations above diagonal at the upper left, lower right and upper right quadrants of the Table 3.4 respectively.

**Table 3.3**
The data format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Phase A</th>
<th>Phase B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image no.</td>
<td>Image no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1  2  3  40</td>
<td>1  2  3  40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa1</td>
<td>3  4  1  ...  -3</td>
<td>3  4  3  ...  -3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa2</td>
<td>3  -2  3  ...  1</td>
<td>2  0  2  ...  1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa3</td>
<td>4  0  -3  ...  1</td>
<td>3  1  -3  ...  -2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa4</td>
<td>4  -3  4  ...  -1</td>
<td>4  -4  3  ...  -1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa37</td>
<td>2  -4  3  -2</td>
<td>2  -3  2  -4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.4**
The test-retest correlation matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Time A</th>
<th>Time B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pa1  Pa2  Pa3  Pa4  ...  Pa37  Pb1  Pb2  Pb3  Pb4  ...  Pb37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa1</td>
<td>Time A</td>
<td>Time B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa2</td>
<td>( \Gamma_{aa} )</td>
<td>( \Gamma_{ab} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pb1</td>
<td>Time B</td>
<td>Time B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pb2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pb3</td>
<td></td>
<td>( \Gamma_{bb} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pb4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pb37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Pa1 = Participant no. 1 at phase A. Pb1 = Participant no. 1 at phase B.

In testing the hypothesis 1, the factor stability was measured by comparing the number of factors (viewpoints) after the factor analysis of the combined and separated Q sorts at the two-time occasions. In testing the hypothesis 2, the patterns of factor membership were compared by
the McNemar’s test of significance at the two-time occasions. Besides, in testing hypothesis 3, a linear regression analysis was conducted to examine if the time spent in taking the VQ survey is a significant predictor of the reliability of VQ sorts. Hence, two separate factor analysis were performed at Times A and B, via Principal Component Analysis as a factor extraction method and the Varimax as a rotation method (Stephenson, 1935). Eight factors with Eigenvalues above 1 were kept for further considerations (Shinebourne, 2009). If the number of defining sorts per factor was equal or above 2, they were kept for further analysis (Brown, 1980).

Findings

Composite Reliability of Q Sorts

In estimating the composite reliability of the VQ sorts, some assumptions were met, i.e., the number of correlations more than 30 and the scatterplot of the correlations was normally distributed (Figure 3.8). The correlations between all different pairs averaged at .42, .41 and .38 at Times A (\( \bar{r}_{ab} \)) and B (\( \bar{r}_{bb} \)) and between Times A and B (\( \bar{r}_{ab} \)), respectively. Then, the composite reliability of the Q sorts was calculated via the Spearman’s formula for the correlation of sums or differences (\( p = \text{number of sorts at Time A} \), \( q = \text{number of sorts at Time B} \)) (Brown, 1971).

\[
\gamma_{\text{composite}} = \frac{\sqrt{37 \times 37 \times 0.38}}{\sqrt{1 + (37 - 1) \times 0.41}} = 0.88
\]
Factor Stability

Both the combined and the separate factor analysis of the VQ sorts at Times A and B generated a similar number of factors (three) with factor reliabilities of over 95%. The VQ sort factor loadings that exceeded .37 \((\frac{SD}{\sqrt{N}} = \frac{2.27}{\sqrt{37}} = .374)\) were considered significant (defining sort) and flagged under the corresponding factor – highly representing the point of view. Hence, at this point, hypothesis 1 was accepted because the number of factors remains stable (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5
Generated factors at Times A and B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>characteristics</th>
<th>Time A</th>
<th></th>
<th>Time B</th>
<th></th>
<th>Times A &amp; B combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>Factor 2</td>
<td>Factor 3</td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>Factor 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of defining variables (Sorts)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%variance explained</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>0.976</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.978</td>
<td>0.986</td>
<td>0.952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3952</td>
<td>0.5463</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2</td>
<td>0.3952</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5547</td>
<td>0.392</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 3</td>
<td>0.5463</td>
<td>0.5547</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4542</td>
<td>0.222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.8. The normal distribution of the VQ sorts’ correlation coefficients.
In testing the pattern of factor membership the extracted factors were split and positioned side by side. Each row represented a person’s correlation with the factor (factor loading) at Times A and B. The visual inspection of pattern of defining sorts highlighted by red cells revealed marked difference at Time A and B when VQ sorts were separately analyzed. However, the pattern of factor membership after the factor analysis of combined VQ sorts (shaping a correlation matrix of 74 × 74 cells) revealed nearly similar patterns (Table 3.6). It shows that majority of combined VQ sorts that loaded under the same factor had a high-reliability coefficient estimate.

For the combined model, McNemar’s test of significance for the within-subject binary dependent variable (1= loaded under the same factor, 0= loaded under different factor) was used to examine the difference in the pattern of factor membership (Table 3.7). The results indicate that the participants’ factor membership did not change significantly over the period of 1-week between two tests ($p = .80$). Hence the hypothesis 2 was accepted that the pattern of factor membership remains the same, only in the condition that Q sorts are combined.
Table 3.6
Factor membership analysis of defining sorts at Times A & B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Separate analysis of VQ sorts</th>
<th>Combined analysis of VQ sorts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase A</td>
<td>Phase B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ftr 1</td>
<td>Ftr 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ftr 1</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ftr 2</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ftr 3</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The blue and orange cells identify the VQ sorts which were loaded under only one and different factors, respectively. The red cells identify VQ sorts loaded under same factor. The red and green arrows stand for the times below the first and above the third quantiles respectively. The yellow circle identifies the between one and third quantiles.

Table 3.7
McNemar’s test of difference within combined VQ sorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time A</th>
<th>Time B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not sig. loaded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sig. loaded</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. Loaded</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exact Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.804</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effect of Time on Reliability of Individual Q Sorts

In this section, it was tested if the time the participants spend in taking the VQ survey, predicted the reliability of their VQ sorts. On average participants needed twice as much time to accomplish the VQ survey at Time A (M = 779.78, SD = 158.45) than at Time B (M = 412.19, SD = 78.47). Participants averagely spent more time on Step 2 (M = 160.22, SD = 47.36), then Step 3 (M = 222.95, SD = 83.34), Step 4 (M = 149.87, SD = 138.28), and Step 5 (M = 47.41, SD = 20.21) (Figure 3.9). Time for Step 1 was not recorded.

In testing hypothesis 3, a linear regression was run to recognize the effect of average time spent taking the surveys (independent variable) on the correlation of VQ sorts at Times A and B (dependent variable). To assess linearity, some prerequisites were met. The boxplot inspection of the correlation (dependent variable), showed the presence of two outliers (r_p1 = .13 and r_p8 = .20).

Figure 3.9. The time consumption per Step.
The box plot inspection of mean time (independent variable) also suggested us to remove P36 who outlied the time for Step 1 and Step 2 (Figure 3.10). The scatterplot of average total time taking the surveys against the correlation of VQ sorts with superimposed regression line indicated a positive linear relationship (Figure 3.11). Besides, dividing Skewness by its Standard Error (-.752/.398 = 1.89) being less than ±1.96 ($p < .05$), indicated an acceptable normal distribution (Table 3.8) (Mertler & Reinhart, 2016). Also, there was no observable correlation in the Residual by Predicted Plot – by balanced spread of residuals around zero (Figure 3.11).

**Figure 3.10.** The identification of outliers.

**Figure 3.11.** Residual by Predicted Plot (left). Average time-correlation scatterplot (right).
The results show that average total time taking two surveys did not significantly predict the correlation of VQ sorts (reliability estimate), $F(1, 35) = 1.772, p < .05$. Average time accounted for 5.1% of the variation in VQ sorts’ correlations with adjusted $R^2 = 2.2\%$ (Tables 3.9 & 3.10), which according to Cohen (1988) is a small effect size (Hypothesis 3 rejected).

**Table 3.9**

**ANOVA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Adjusted $R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>1.772</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>1.019</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean time</td>
<td>1.073</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.10**

**Simple regression model for correlation coefficient of VQ sorts ($n=37$)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B(95%CI)</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.423 (-.048 , 0.798)</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>2.294</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (Minute)</td>
<td>.000 (.000 , 0.001)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.226</td>
<td>1.331</td>
<td>.192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B = Unstandardized beta coefficient, SE = Standard error, $\beta$ = Standardized beta coefficient, t = t-test statistic, Sig. significant value.

**Overall Satisfaction, Effectiveness and Relative Efficiency**

In this test, all the students were able to finish the survey. Therefore, the 100% relative efficiency and effectiveness were recorded for the VQ survey. The results of the SUS questionnaire on the VQMethod’s interface uncovered its above average score (above 68%) ($M = 69.31, SD = 10.65$) (Alomar et al., 2016). This was an encouraging finding as Kortum and Bangor (2013) in their evaluation of 14 everyday products reported an average SUS score of 56.5% for Excel, 74.6% for PowerPoint, 78.5% for iPhone and 81.8% for Amazon.
The most impactful criteria in raising the participants’ overall satisfaction were their indifference to technical assistance (4th question) \( (M = 4.53, \ SD = .68) \). Indeed, this finding is significant for an online research tool which operates in the absence of a researcher. In contrast, the lowest score \( (1^{st} \text{question}) \) \( (M = 2.88, \ SD = .79) \) showed the respondents’ resentment in re-taking the survey \( (\text{Table 3.11}) \). One explanation can be their fatigue in taking a survey twice within a 1-week period.

\textbf{Table 3.11} \\
\textit{The question-based SUS scores}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I think that I would like to take similarly designed online surveys</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>51.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The online survey was unnecessarily complex</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>58.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I thought it was easy to perform on the online survey</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>62.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I think that I could take the survey without the support of a technical person.</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>85.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I found the various functions in the online survey were well integrated</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>69.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I thought there was too much inconsistency in the online survey</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>68.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I imagine that most people would learn to take the online survey very quickly</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>75.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I found the online survey very intuitive</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>67.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I felt very confident to perform on the online survey</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>69.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I could take the online survey without having to learn anything new.</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>82.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Stage Three: Methods Agreement Analysis}

The purpose of this section was to shed light on the extent to which the VQMethod can replace the TPQM. For this, a method agreement analysis was conducted to contrast the patterns of Q sorts that one person generates via two methods over two identical surveys. Hence, a research question guided this section:

\textbf{RQ:} To what extent do the traditional paper-based Q method and the online VQMethod-generated Q sorts converge?

The method agreement analysis sheds light on the extent one method systematically overestimates/underestimates the results of another method. Although, the accuracy of beliefs (validity) is irrelevant to Q method research \( (\text{Kampen & Tamás, 2014}) \), the agreement between
the methods elucidates the extent to which Q method researchers can alternate between
VQMethod and the TPQM (Berchtold, 2016).

**Sample and Data Collection**

A convenience sample of ten students aged 18-24 was recruited to take two Q surveys at
two-time occasions. Five participants randomly started from printed survey and five participants
from the online survey. The printed survey was taken in a controlled private room and on a
rectangular table (Figure 3.12). The online survey was taken at their preferred location. For each
participants, the research was completed within a one week to 10 days timeframe. The
participants taking the printed surveys were given a printed instruction, identical to that of the
online survey. The grid with distribution of -4(3), -3(3), -2 (5), -1(6), 0(6), +1(6), +2(5), +3(3),
+4(3) and the three boxes on top of that occupied a sheet of paper sized 28″ × 32″. The Q items
were evenly sized 4” × 4”.

![Student taking the paper-based survey](image)

**Figure 3.12.** Student taking the paper-based survey.

**Data Analysis**

The Bland-Altman diagram has been extensively used for analysis of the agreement
between two measurement methods (Bunce, 2009). The resulting graph is a scatter plot, in which
the Y-axis shows the difference between the two paired measurements (A-B) and the X-axis represents the average of these measures. The Bland-Altman diagram suggests that the 95% of differences should lie within ± 2SD of the mean differences. The Bland-Altman does not determine if the agreement is sufficient or not. Nonetheless, it is possible to say that the bias is significant if the line of equality (Y = 0) does not lie between the confidence interval of mean differences. The Analyse-it add-in for Excel was used in generating the Bland-Altman diagram.

**Findings**

The positioning of Q items in the grid (henceforth Q score) were recorded, and the differences and the mean Q scores were computed (Table 3.12). As a foundational pre-requisite in the methods agreement analysis the scatterplot of the mean and SD of each method visually inspected. The inspection did not manifest any pattern of relationship, indicating the reliability of each method (Figure 3.13).

![Figure 3.13. The Mean-SD plot for each method.](image)

Then, the mean of the mean, and mean of differences of Q scores were respectively plotted on the X and Y axis, shaping the Bland-Altman plot (Figure 3.14). This plot showed the normal distribution of mean differences per positioning of images in the grid. Nonetheless, given the overall mean positioning of Q items in a symmetrical distribution is always zero, both the
overall mean of differences (M = -.0025, SD = 2.17) and mean of mean (M = .01, SD =1.97) scores approximated zero. The standard deviation of differences was computed to generate the 95% limits of agreement between to methods: Mean difference ±1.96×SD (differences) = 0 ± 1.96×.6 = ± 1.18. It means that, in average, 95% of Q score differences between the two methods reside between ± 1.18, 95% CI[1.58, 0.88] lower limit and 95% CI[.89, 1.58] higher limit (Table 3.13). Besides, there seems to be a trend in the diagram which is affected by the shape of grid itself, i.e., there are more spots in the middle than to the sides.

Table 3.12
The schematic entry dataset for the Bland-Altman diagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant sorting Q items</th>
<th>TPQM</th>
<th>VQMethod</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1Q1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2Q1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3Q1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1Q2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1Q40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2Q40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3Q40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10 Q40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. P1Q1 = Participant number one’s scores for Q item 1

Table 3.13
The methods agreement table, based on mean differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean difference</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% Lower LoA</td>
<td>-1.18</td>
<td>-1.58</td>
<td>-0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% Upper LoA</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD (mean)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Given that the measure of center (mean) was not an insightful estimator of overall bias between two methods, we investigated the column-wise relative bias between methods. Thus, for each TPQM’s Q scores (-4 to +4) corresponding VQMethod’s Q scores were singled out and averaged (blue horizontal line in Figure 3.15). Then the results were subtracted from each other (TPQM score – average VQMethod Q score). Figure 3.15 indicates that the participants positioned the images in the middle of the grid with less discrepancy in the online and printed methods (bias = -0.1). However, gradually moving to the edges of the grid, the discrepancy between the scores increased (Table 3.14).

Figure 3.14. The Bland-Altman plot.
Figure 3.15. The average positioning of images in VQMethod (X axis) as compared with the fixed positioning of images in TPQM (Y axis). The above plot summarizes the relative bias between the two methods.
Nonetheless, as the range of data is limited in Q scores (i.e., -4 to +4), we also performed a least linear regression to identify convergence between two methods. The 45-degree diagonal line in Figure 3.16 is a reference line that shows perfect equality between the two variables and suggests that there is a significant linear relationship between TPQM and VQMethod. This indicated that the correlation coefficient is significantly different from zero ($\beta = -0.9287, t(399) = -1.06, p = .29$). Equation: VQMethod = 0.00357 + 0.9287 TPQM (Table 3.15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TPQM Score</th>
<th>VQMethod Mean</th>
<th>Bias 95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.14
The relative biases

Figure 3.16. The line of equality between two methods.
Table 3.15

Ordinary least-squares fit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t statistic</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-0.2 to 0.2</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.9715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slope</td>
<td>0.9287</td>
<td>0.7925 to 1.065</td>
<td>0.067286</td>
<td>-1.06</td>
<td>0.2960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. H0: α = 0. β = 1. The intercept is equal to 0. The slope is equal to 1.
H1: α ≠ 0. β ≠ 1. The intercept is not equal to 0. The slope is not equal to 1.

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to test the psychometric properties of VQMethod research tool, in overcoming the limitations of the TPQM. The study aimed to inject some critical quality inquiries about the usability and rigor of the TPQM in providing credible findings. This motivation was based on the inherent resource-ladenness of visual TPQM and its reported limitations in ensuring inclusive, transparent and rigorous research (Brown, 1989; Previte, Pini, & Haslam-McKenzie, 2007). This study was conducted in three stages: 1) usability test and inspection informing the improvement of VQMethod’s survey interface, 2) test-retest reliability and 3) the methods agreement analysis.

In stage one (usability inspection and test), the heuristic inspection conducted with five Q method experts identified potential problems the VQMethod’s survey interface may cause for the survey-takers. Via observation of 31 potential users at a local museum of natural sciences, the ineffective problems were further identified. Moreover, the post-survey questionnaire incorporated the potential users more in the process of design by asking their task-specific level of satisfaction and ways to improve sources of confusion/discomfort. This is along with the maxims of participatory design of systems (Spinuzzi, 2005). The insight from Q method experts and potential users, inspired a series of improvements and primed the VQMethod for reliability and methods agreement analysis at stages two and three.
In stage two (reliability analysis) through repeated measures, a sample of 37 undergraduate students revealed high composite reliability estimate for their VQ sorts which was higher than the TPQM reliability (Brown, 1980). Moreover, the number of viewpoints and the pattern of factor membership remained stable when the pre and post data were combined in a pot and analysed (hypothesis 1 and 2 were accepted). Besides, the average time spent taking the VQ survey did not significantly predict the stability of VQ sort patterns, when the students sorted identical surveys twice under same conditions (hypothesis 3 was rejected).

Further, participants marked a high degree of satisfaction with the VQMethod’s survey interface, while 100% measures of effectiveness and efficiency were also recorded. However, the measure of efficiency would be most obvious discriminant criteria between the TPQM and the VQMethod. This is mainly because the resources used in the conduct of Q method research by two methods are substantially different.

In stage three (methods agreement analysis), the Q item-wise analysis of the agreement between VQMethod and TPQM’s Q scores shed light on the variance of each Q sorts’ placements between the methods. The Column-wise analysis of the agreement between two methods, disclosed more of the structural differences that averagely participants tended to rank Q items higher in TPQM than in the VQMethod. However, the importance of this discrepancy will remain under question that how significantly it may affect the data analysis and interpretation in a Q method research. Hence, a least linear regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictability of one method’s Q scores by another. The findings showed a significant correlation as their line of best fit highly matched the 45-degree line of equality.

Nonetheless, the Q item-wise assessment of bias by the Bland-Altman diagram in repeated measures upon one method can shed light on the Q items which can be considered
outliers (over the ±1.96 SD). That is, the identification of Q items that are indecisively placed by participants, or convey confusing messages to the participant. The agreement analysis over repeated measures on one method can also be potentially used in longitudinal Q method research, in discovering participants’ changing attitudes over Q items. For this, unimodal distribution of the grid can better visually demonstrate the increase/decrease in the participants’ Q scores over time.

In sum, the VQMethod online research tool proved to be highly rigorous in the conduct of the visual Q method research, by providing reliable and transparent data which highly converges with the results of the traditional paper-based Q method. This tool was developed by concurrent integration of potential survey takers’ inputs into its developmental stages to enhance its user-friendliness and overall user satisfaction. Moreover, the additional ability of this tool in enabling the video communicability of researcher and survey-takers would potentially mitigate the bafflement of survey-takers in the absence of researchers. Future development plans are thought out over the VQMethod’s integration with immersive virtual environments (Tabrizian, Baran, Smith, & Meentemeyer, 2018) or 3D simulations (Millar et al., 2018). The image database can also be expanded to accommodate big data such as such as photograph scraped from social media (Van Berkel et al., 2018).
References


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CHAPTER 4: Contrasting Rural Tourism Microentrepreneurs’ and Their Potential Urban Visitors’ Images of Rural Life

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ABSTRACT

Ample scholarly literature documents that tourism representations seldom reflect the self-narratives of host communities and as a result, they pave the way for the neo-colonial exploitation of economically disadvantaged areas as pleasure peripheries of urban centers. Tourism media often portrays rural destinations as exotic and host communities as backward to meet the perceived desires of the primarily urban and affluent mainstream markets. While the power dynamics and biases underlying the touristic representation of Oriental destinations by the West have been extensively examined, this process has received scant attention over the relationship between urban and rural places. Accordingly, this paper aims to examine the extent to which rural tourism may reflect and possibly reinforce Urbannormative biases by contrasting how rural tourism microentrepreneurs and their potential urban visitors envision rural life. Web-based administration of visual Q methodology was adopted to examine mindsets about rural life among a sample of participants comprised of 20 rural tourism microentrepreneurs in the piedmont North Carolina, and 20 urban residents in the Southeastern region of the US. The analysis revealed four different mental models among which rural residents seldom shared same viewpoints with urbanites. This study sheds light on the contested urban-rural dichotomy and its implication in inclusive tourism development.

Keywords: Rural subaltern; Tourism representation; Orientalism; Urbannormativity; Q methodology
Introduction

Literature in the United States has long fostered derogatory stereotypes of rural people. For example, William Byrd II portrayed mountain inhabitants from North Carolina with “hillbilly” caricatures (Roggenkamp, 2008). William Gilmore Simms in “Guy Rivers” portrayed the mountain dwellers as savage hunters and Mark Twain in “Gilded Age,” describes Tennessee Hillbillies as shiftless “buzzards” (Flora, & MacKethan, 2001). In recent times, the derogatory representations of rural people in American have penetrated TV programming in reality shows like “Rat Bastards” and “Duck Dynasty,” labeled as “Hixploitation,” that portray rural Southern Americans as unintelligent “hicks” and “swamp people” (Deggans, 2013).

The urban-driven representations of the rural Other are prejudiced projections of real life in such geographies. This trend finds its legacies in postcolonialism, and the exploitation of people and regions by economic power centers and institutions (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2013). In this direction, rural places and communities are considered as stagnant and mal-adjusted to today’s socio-economic realities (Roggenkamp, 2008). Reinforcing the rural areas as pleasure peripheries underlines the cultural authority and economic superiority of urbanites upon their rural counterparts.

Scholars have problematized the depiction of the Third World, previously colonized regions, and minority groups in reinforcing the dominance of Western ideologies upon the Rest (e.g., Echtner & Prasad, 2003; Jafari & Scott, 2014; Santos, 2006). The sociocultural polarization of the world into us and them is strategically intertwined with politics and drives racism, discrimination and socio-historical, cultural, economic and environmental degradations (Carter, 2004). Taking this view of the human condition, diversity becomes problematic and a dialectical process of estrangement (Carter, 2004).
The polarization of the world is underpinned by the prospects of Otherness, i.e., the association of hierarchical attributes to specific groups and geographies (Wang & Morais, 2014). Otherness centers on postcolonial ideologies that rely on (re)production and (re)invention of differences and continued exercise of colonialism upon a politically marginalized and suppressed society (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015). Postcolonialism operationalizes Otherness through representational methods (Nazariadli, 2017a). That is why representation is intertwined with the socio-political geographies, denoted as “politics of representation” (Bandyopadhyay & Morais, 2005).

Certainly, the geopolitical polarization of the Globe into the East and West can happen within one country’s rural and urban geographies (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2013). Nonetheless, postcolonial theorists disproportionately speak within the international epitomes and marginally attend to the urban and rural geographies (Bandyopadhyay & Morais, 2005). What is more, rather than writing and speaking on behalf of oppressed and silenced groups of people, researchers have rarely empowered the rural subaltern to speak for themselves (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015; Spivak, 1988).

Tourism industry builds images of destinations to match the desires of appealing markets, but this has yielded discrepancies between reality and representations (Holloway, 2007). Halfacree (1995) contends that, in this postmodern world, the signified and the signifier, are detached from each other, and as a result symbolism takes precedence over reality. Indeed, the hegemonic representations through tourism, shape the expectations of tourists (Baylina & Berg, 2016). Nonetheless, although the created expectations in the context of international tourism is confounded with the effect of visual media (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998), the urban tourists’
expectations of rural tourism destinations and their discrepancy between reality have not yet been investigated.

The rural peoples’ compliance with tourists’ desires and unrealistic/unknown demands, can disable them in shaping and preserving their identities (Wang & Morais, 2014). For example, tourism media has shaped the Mosuo as a matriarchal but sexually libertine rural community who are open to tourists’ hedonistic desires. Nonetheless, the overwhelming fabrications and symbolic requests (walking marriage) have disempowered the community tired of rejecting the tourists’ expectations (Weo, Qian & Sun, 2018). Through some strategies, whether covert or overt, rural subaltern can resist while reaping benefit from the tourism industry.

For example, a group of West Virginia high school students created a short movie to voice their disapproval of a reality TV show named *Buckwild*, in perpetuating bigoted stereotypes against Appalachian people. In the same vein, Elizabeth Barrett in a 2000 documentary film called “Stranger with a Camera” makes the audience aware that how strangers *mine* the images of the local Appalachian people as like they did *mine* their natural resources for decades (Baldwin, 2001).

Non-conspicuously through humor, the rural subaltern gaze back and create occidental stereotypes based on the urban tourists’ ignorance, superficiality, and gullibility (Bunten, 2008). These strategies are ambivalent, mediated and do not necessarily subjugate the urban tourists’ expectations but “exercise more control over frequently uncomfortable situations” (Evans-Pritchard, 1989, p. 102). Further, “there is no escape from representation” (Jørgensen, & Phillips, 2002) and activists have strived to shed light on the ways subaltern can resist and “speak” for themselves (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015; Spivak, 1988).
Tourism microentrepreneurs have been among those who show higher degrees of
determination and agency in taking resistive actions in rural communities (Ferreira, Morais &
Lorscheider, 2015). However, this mechanism is affected by the expectations created by the
urban media and followed by urban tourists. Nazariadli et al. (2018), embarking on proactive
concerted actions as essentialities of resistance (Dogan, 1989) and the need of apt resistance
method, posit that sustainable resistance can take shape by the integrations of pervasive
photography and tourism microentrepreneurship. Importantly, concerted actions need community
support, which can be instigated by the pioneering role of rural tourism microentrepreneurs
(Morais et al., 2017).

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to uncover the similarities and differences between
rural tourism microentrepreneurs and urban peoples’ expectations of rural place as a tourism
destination in the piedmont North Carolina. It was hoped that through dissemination of research
findings with ideological emphasis on the inclusion of voices of those who are represented under
prism of rural tourism, apt community-friendly and oriented strategies be schemed. Hence, the
following question guided the research:

Q1: What perspectives do rural tourism microentrepreneurs share with their potential urban
visitors about rural place as tourism destination?

**Theoretical Background**

**From Discourse of Orientalism to Discourse of Tourism Media**

Discourse is a system of meaning and “a large-scale, ordered, integrated way of
reasoning/constituting the social world” (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000, p. 1125). Understanding
the importance of discourse is crucial, since it may empower and disempower people by
influencing the generation of new knowledge, thereby defining and governing categories, and
influencing whose voices are heard (Yan & Santos, 2009). Said (1978) coined the term Orientalism to describe a form of discourse that reflects the West’s hegemonic domination, and authority over the East (Wang, Morais, & Buzinde, 2009). Through Orientalist discourse, the East is established as the Other in contrast to the West; as if the West is cultural, politically and economically at the center of the world, and the East is undeniably positioned at the periphery (Chang & Holt, 1991).

Said (1978) asserts that there is no actual Oriental people, cultures or religions, but people still are Orientalized. Symbolically, the West is portrayed as civilized, masculine, advanced, normative, and rational while the East is cruel, sly, backward, mysterious, exotic, and irrational (Said, 1978). Thus, Orientalist discursive practices, “justify the inspection, exploitation, colonization, and civilization of the East” (Echtner & Prasad, 2003, p. 667).

Postcolonial representations stress that, although formerly colonized regions gained independence from the colonialists, they are depressed and deprived of their former prosperity. Although “a burden for the white men” they need help as they do not suffice for themselves (Said, 1978). However, deconstructive and emancipatory postcolonial studies strive to counter the essentialized representations of the West upon the Rest and swing the focus to the West (Wang & Law, 2017). Notably, Gayatri Spivak (1988) questioned if/how Subaltern can speak by opening a counter-discourse dialogue on the voice of unheard and misrepresented people. She believes that the disenfranchised people are initially not allowed (or) invited to speak given the authority and hegemony of colonizer’s media in fueling discourse.

Tourism as a mediator of colonialist beliefs on destinations has chiefly resorted in representational techniques (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015). Tourism media creates discourse which is unrealistic and destabilizes the under-resourced and misrepresented people to speak up
in defending their realities and disempowered and destined to reflect upon the discourse. Indeed, discourse ramifies the social status quo of host communities which reciprocally is affected by the situation (Babu, Mishra, & Parida, 2008). The effect of tourism media in shaping discourse can be seen the Jenkin’s (2003) conception of a “representational loop”. That is, a people’s stereotyped images are (re)iterated, (re)constructed, (re)negotiated and perpetuated by tourism media in a way that rural people are not given outlets and apt resources to speak up (Yan & Santos, 2009). The authority of who has the right to represent, whose story should be told and eventually who owns the past all result from a battle between the representer and the represented.

Discourse of media in tourism self-servingly fragments and manipulates the realities of destinations, without inclusion of indigenous people’s voices which creates an arena of discrepancy between rural and urban people about expectation and reality (Jicha, 2016). “These fragments come to stand for the whole or the essence, often in representations which may extend, symbolically, far beyond that which is photographed” (Markwick, 2001, p. 420). These incorrect depictions create misconceptions which fuel the expectations of urban people, affecting people’s dignity, identity and contemporary history (Wei, Qian & Sun, 2018).

From Self-Orientalism to Self-Urbannormativization

Feighery (2012) criticized the national Omani tourism promotional video (Welcome to My Country) that attempted to promote international tourism by extracting frames that look Oriental to the Western tourists. This conscious and contended Oriental portrayal (self-Orientalism) attempts to customize cultural assets as per expectations and ideals of the potential tourists for which they spend money. In the same vein, Yan and Santos (2009) point out the self-orientalism of the Chinese government by broadcasting a video named “China Forever,” and
mystifying, mythologizing themselves as exotically timeless while also conforming to West understanding of modernity.

Orientalism is ideologically embedded between the Imperial West (Occident) and the colonial East (Orient), but also be internal to a country (Internal Orientalism) (Jansson, 2005). For example, Schein (1997) disclosed the Internal Orientalism between Han and the rural indigene's people, in a way that indigenous people are recruited in low-paid and labor-intensive jobs, and also paid to dress and perform in traditional ways. Jansson (2005) also portrays the identity relationship between the south and north in America within states. He argues that in the form of internal colonialism, North portrays the South as Other accompanied by negative connotations.

Combining the notions of self-orientalism and internal Orientalism, the constructed dissonance between rural and urban geographies results in the notion of Urbannormativity (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2013). Urbannormativity refers to the tendency of placing urban norms in the center and rural norms in the periphery (Seale, 2013). Rural individuals monetize their cultural assets into commodities sought by urban markets in attempts to reap benefits from tourism industry as well as preserve their cultural assets (Kordel, 2016). Urbannormativity turns to self-Urbannormativization when followed by the victim communities as a form of (ostensible) compliance to what urban lexicon defines as the norm (Nazariadli et al., 2018).

Urbannormative discourse assumes that the conditions and experiences of the city are normal and desirable, often casting the non-urban (i.e., rural) as non-normal. Rural people are seen as rednecks, drunk with loose behavior, and having limited social skills (Bell, 2006). These representations are mainly propagated by the media, which affects the popular conceptions of rurality (Cloke, 2006). Media often represent the countryside as strange, peculiar, unfamiliar,
stagnant, insular, underdeveloped, depopulating, aging and desolate (Vepsäläinen & Pitkänen, 2010). Rural people are most often represented as homogeneous groups, dominated by white people, and less reflective of cultural diversity and richness (Holloway, 2007).

Da Silva (2016) postulates threefold narratives emerged from the urban lay discourse namely as pre-modernity, productivist and pastoral. They tend to characterize rural areas as backward and uncivilized, sacrifice places of food production, and repository of cultural and natural resources, respectively. Nonetheless, to varying degrees, they tend to convey Urbannormative biases.

**Methods**

This research employed Q methodology to study individuals’ viewpoints and mental models about a subject matter; rural lives in North Carolina’s piedmont North Carolina. Q methodology as a social constructionist approach fits research examining and contrasting voices of people with varying levels of empowerment (Stainton Rogers, 1995). Q methodology has received increased attention by researchers focused on issues of empowerment (Brown, 2005). Nevertheless, some researchers have noted that this approach may have critical limitations when researchers rely on researcher-generated images. Therefore, in this study we tried to mitigate this limitation by using images of rural life previously generated by rural tourism microentrepreneurs in North Carolina through a process of autophotography (Nazariadli et al., 2018).

In doing Q methodology research, participants (P set) rank-order (Q sort) a set of research stimuli (Q sample), generally consisting of statements or images on a graded spectrum of boxes with bell-shaped symmetrical distribution (grid). Each Q sample item (Q item) represents a broader universe of opinions surrounding a topic, namely a concourse of
communication (COC) (Ramlo, 2015). After sorting the Q items on the grid the participants are interviewed to ascertain their extreme opinions about the Q items placed at the edges of the grid.

**Study Setting and Participants (P Set)**

The P set consisted of rural tourism microentrepreneurs from the piedmont North Carolina, USA, as well as urbanites from cities and towns in the Southeastern USA. In Q methodology, the (P set) is to be equal or less than the number of the stimuli (Q items) (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). In addition, the number of Q items is advised to range between 40 and 60. Therefore we chose to have 40 items to reduce respondents’ fatigue, increase discrimination between images and enhance engagement (Brown, 1980). Hence, since we used 40 images as Q items, we set out to recruit 20 urban participants and 20 rural participants to form a P set of 40 participants. According to McKeown and Thomas (2013) and other authors, P sets should capture a diversity of perspectives and it is less important to ensure that they reflect the characteristics of a homogeneous population. The rural participants consisted of rural tourism microentrepreneurs participating in a longitudinal participatory action research project (Morais et al., 2017) for periods ranging from several months up to five years. Consequently, the rural participants were keen to participate in the study. A total of 22 rural tourism microentrepreneurs from piedmont North Carolina completed the survey, but two were removed from the sample because they had lower RSI scores (i.e., we selected rural participants with markedly rural self-identities).

The urban participants were recruited via the Amazon Mechanical Turk Website. MTurk is an online marketplace where requesters can post tasks to be completed by skilled workers. Requestors can recruit workers who have achieved a desired qualification status to complete their tasks. In this study, only workers who had obtained a Master qualification status were
eligible to take the online survey. The request was posted on the MTurk website explaining the required tasks, estimated time of completion, criteria (being urban NC resident) and designated incentive ($1.5). In addition to the place-based criteria, the P set’s zip code and rural social identity (RSI) (Krok-Schoen et al., 2015) were measured. The zip-code based urban residency of the MTurk sample was checked via www.ruralhealthinfo.org website which uses the Census 2010 to classify locations as rural or urban. The Census categorizes the urban geographies into “urbanized areas” (population > 50000) and “urban clusters” (2500 < population < 50000). Accordingly, among 52 MTurk participants, 47 were identified as urban. Then we selected 20 participants in this group with the lowest SRI scores (i.e., we selected the urban participants with urban self-identities).

Data Collection

Some preliminary steps must be taken before delivering a visual Q method survey (henceforth VQ survey) to the P set, including the design of the grid, the sampling of Q items (Q sampling) from a concourse of communication (COC), and the setup of the VQ survey. This study used VQMethod web application (Nazariadli, 2017b) to collect data from both urban and rural samples using two identical online VQ surveys.

The grid’s range relates to the number of Q items (generally -4 to +4 for 40-50 Q items) and the grid’s kurtosis depends on the research topic. A platykurtic shape gives more items to the ending boxes of grid, and the leptokurtic shape places more boxes in the middle. The platykurtic shape is deemed best for topics on which the P set are expected to have extreme opinions (Brown, 1980). Besides, since in this study the Q survey was administered via the Internet and the probability that the participants be less talkative than in a normal interview situation, the
platykurtic design enabled the researcher to gain ample information by having six images at the end of spectrum (Figure 4.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most unlike my views</th>
<th>Most like my views</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.1.** The grid design with normal kurtosis.

We developed the Concourse of Communication (COC) for this study from a pool of images generated in a previous study (Nazariadli et al., 2018) in which 13 rural tourism microentrepreneurs from the piedmont North Carolina were asked to take photographs representing the aspects of their rural lives that they wished to showcase to potential urban visitors. Consequently, the act of autophotography resulted in a pool of 130 shaping the COC.

Next, a systematic and structured deductive Q sampling method was adopted to select a representative Q sample of 40 images and also to refrain from under- or over-sampling of opinions surrounding topic (Paige & Morin, 2015). For this, two Urbannormative and anti-Urbannormative attributes were considered first. In identifying the levels, thematic analysis of the 130 photos, (discussed and agreed by two experts familiar with the Urbannormative ideology) revealed five binary levels namely as systematic work/unsystematic work, connectedness with nature/disconnectedness with nature, idyllic/productive, primitive-backward/modern-forward, and romantic/intimidating. Then, a 2(attribute) × 5(level) factorial design solution was designed. The salient meaning of the images (interpretation at surface level by two of the authors) guided their assignment into the matrix.
Given the target of creating a Q sample with 40 photos, we sought to assign four photos per matrix cell. The selection of 40 images representing 2 attributes and 5 levels constituted four steps: 1) removing images with low quality, identifiable signs, and with photographer’s mistakes like finger thumb covering the camera lens (reduced the photos from 130 to 118), 2) expert content validity analysis and 3) lay peoples’ judgements about the clarity of images 4) reconciling the overrepresented and underrepresented levels.

**Content Validity Checks by Expert and Lay Peoples’ Judgments**

To ensure content validity, the researchers reviewed the Q items (Brown, 2004). The examination of the content validity by experts was meant to remove the irrelevant items to (anti)Urbannormative ideologies. For this, three experts were asked to rate the photos with a 1-item, 4-point Likert scale question (0 = “not relevant to (anti)Urbannormativity”, 4 = “highly relevant to the (anti)Urbannormativity”). The content validity index was computed by summing the number of raters that rated the image by 3 or 4 and dividing by total number of raters (Paige & Morin, 2015). The content validity index for 64 items exceeded .80 and so, were kept for the lay people’s appraisals. Then, five students with no domain knowledge were asked to rate the clarity of the photos with a 1-item 4-point Likert scale question (0 = “clear”, 4 = “unclear”). It was meant that remove images that confused lay people’s regardless of topic under investigation (55 images left). Nonetheless, some anti-Urbannormative levels were overrepresented. For this, similar photos were removed, and the compositional effect of images in skewing the observer’s perceptions was controlled (Nazariadli & Morais, 2016). The final 40 images were uploaded on the VQMethod website (Nazariadli, 2017b), each image was assigned with a number to numerically record the Q sort patterns for the participants (Figure 4.2). The above 20 images were Urbannormative, and the below 20 images were anti-Urbannormative.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connectedness with nature</th>
<th>Idyllic</th>
<th>Primitive/backward</th>
<th>Intimidating</th>
<th>Unsystematic work</th>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disconnectedness with nature</td>
<td>Productive</td>
<td>Modern/forward</td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Systematic work</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
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**Figure 4.2.** The structured design for securing representative Q sample items.
Data Elicitation

An anonymous link to the VQ Survey was generated and emailed to the rural participants. The urban participants received the link via the MTurk website. After confirming their consent, they went through five prescribed Q methodology steps (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). First, familiarization with the Q sample and explaining the forthcoming steps (Step 1). In this step, it was emphasized that all the images are from rural piedmont NC, and “most unlike” does not necessarily equal urban. Besides, provided the grid with forced distribution, in a pilot test on 37 potential participants, some complained about their dishonest placement of photos within the grid (Nazariadli et al., 2018). Hence to make up for this concern, we clarified up front (Step 1) that the participants’ rank-ordering of photos should be relative to the other images and not isolation.

Then, they were guided to the Step 2 (pre-sort) and drag and drop the stack of 40 photos into one of designated boxes, i.e., “Most like” and “Most unlike” their expectations from rural NC as tourism destination, and “Neutral” (Figure 4.3). Next, they were directed to Step 3 (Q sorting). In this step the participants were asked to distribute the photos on a broader spectrum of boxes, starting from +4 and -4 piles and gradually to the middle (Figure 4.4). Upon their completion of the Q sorting activity, with the full placement of photos, they were notified that they could still change the pattern, by pressing the redo button or moving the photos back and forth between three boxes and the grid.
In Step 4 participants were asked to deliberate on why they felt extreme about the photos placed in the +4 (most like) and -4 (most unlike) piles. Lastly in Step 5 participants answered demographics questions as well as questions regarding questions their rural social identity; i.e., 

**Figure 4.3.** The pre-sort (Step 1).

**Figure 4.4.** The Q sorting activity shaping the Q sort (Step 2).
four-item, 5-point Likert scale (0 = “Not at all” to 5 = “Extremely”) adapted from Krok-Schoen et al. (2015).

**Data Analysis**

Data from rural and urban participants were combined, and factor analyzed to uncover patterns in the image sorts among all participants. Namely, the Q sorts conducted by urban and rural participants were inserted into the KenQ online dedicated software, and a series of Pearson product-moment correlations were performed. Principal component factor extraction and Varimax as an orthogonal method of rotation were used to detect similar viewpoints and their view-holders (participants significantly loaded under each factor) about rural life (Stephenson, 1935). Q sorts exhibiting similar patterns, were grouped into the same factor. The extracted factors identified different points of view concerning what rural lives are like in North Carolina.

The view-holders’ mental models are summarized and represented by a composite Q sort. Each Q item in the composite Q sort is defined by a factor score which is a “normalized weighted average Q-item score (z-score) of respondents that define that factor” (van Excel & de Graaf, 2005, p. 9). Also, disassembling the composite Q sort of factors, factor score arrays for the 40 Q sort items were generated (Table 4.1). The factor arrays, participants’ comments on the photos, and distinguishing (differentiate one factor from others) and consensus statements (do not discriminate among pair of factors) were used for interpretations (Stenner, 2009). Besides, seeing more, hearing more and feeling more (Stephenson, 1939) through visual inspection of composite Q sorts, fostered the interpretation of data.
### Table 4.1

**Factor scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
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<td>-4</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. ►* = Distinguishing photo at $p < 0.01$, z-Score is higher than in all of the other factors.

*◄ = Distinguishing photo at $p < 0.01$, z-Score is lower than in all of the other factors.

21 and 31 are consensus statements with similar Z scores across factors.

### Findings

To choose the most appropriate number of factors, we first examined the number of factors with Eigenvalue of 1 and higher, and also looked for factors with at least two significant factor loadings exceeding ± .41 ($±1.96 \times$ standard error; with SE = $1/\sqrt{\text{number of photos}}, p < .05$) (Watts & Stenner, 2005). Examining the scree plot also helped identify the number of factors that best fit the data. Namely, three, four, and five-factor options behind and beyond the elbow were considered for factor rotation (Figure 4.5). The four-factor option appeared more amenable to interpretation, consisting of 36 participants (16 urban/20 rural) representing 58% of the variance. Each factor clearly defined distinct points of view.
Factor one nearly equally represented both populations (7 rural/5 urban), while the factors 3 and 4, dominantly represented the rural and urban participants, 6 rural/2 urban and 2 rural/9 urban respectively. Factor 2 only exemplified the viewpoint of rural participants (5 rural). Four urban participants did not load significantly under any factors indicating they did not share any common views with identified factors. Two participants loaded negatively under factor 3 and 4 representing a mirror image of that viewpoint, making the factors bipolar (Stenner, 2009). The composite Q sorts represent the mental models of the view-holders of each factor as explained in the next section.

**Factor 1: Productive and Quint Rural**

Proponents of the “productive and quint rural” associated livestock as indispensable to rural life, grazing in boundless perimeters and pointed to smallness, randomness, disrepair and implicitly to underdevelopment. This factor consisted of 12 participants who explained 20% of variance (2 male/5 female rural + 2 male & 3 female urban). The average factor loading of .64 and Rural Social Identity Index (RSI) of 11.33 were recorded (above 10 = more rural). Besides, the Q sort patterns of younger adults were more correlated with the composite Q sort demonstrated below (having higher factor loading) (Table 4.2).
The five top ranked photographs (images 1, 7, 10, 5 & 3) mainly demonstrate randomness, and free-range herds of animals grazing in open range lands (Figures 4.6). These images mainly correlated with the Urbannormative ideologies namely as unsystematic work (images 1, 10 & 3) and connectedness with nature (5). Regarding the distinguishing image 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>RSI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R5</td>
<td>0.8302</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>R20</td>
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Note. RSI = Rural Social Identity Index. Factor loadings indicate the extent to which a participant agrees or disagrees with factor. R = rural. U = urban.

Most unlike

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<td>3</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

Most like

Figure 4.6. The top and bottom-ranked photographs extracted from the Factor one’s composite Q sort. Red frame identifies the distinguishing images at $p < .05$. The five top ranked photographs (images 1, 7, 10, 5 & 3) mainly demonstrate randomness, and free-range herds of animals grazing in open range lands (Figures 4.6). These images mainly correlated with the Urbannormative ideologies namely as unsystematic work (images 1, 10 & 3) and connectedness with nature (5). Regarding the distinguishing image 10
R5 stated “Rural life usually includes livestock. “These free-range pigs, would not be allowed near a town” and regarding distinguishing image 1(F1), -1(F2), -2(F3), 0(F4)) the R3 stated “Ramshackle yard, too many animals for the size of the paddock, random assignment of the critters. That looks like a small homestead”. U20 reflecting on the distinguishing image 5 (3(F1), -1(F2), 1(F2), -1(F3)) said “This is typical farmers day in the winter. Working through the winter is part of rural life.” The five bottom-ranked photographs (images 32, 20, 27, 19 & 35) composed of a variety of photos illustrating anti-Urbannormative ideologies. Regarding the distinguishing image 20 (-4(F1), -1(F2), -2(F3), 0(F4)), the U19 stated “This house does not look like a farm or rural house. It looks like a more urban or suburban design.”

The view-holders of Factor 1, revealed a mental model that sees rural lives disorganized and cluttered with random assignment of free-range livestock in open landscapes (Halfacree, 2007). They seemed to subscribe to two of the three lay discourses surrounding rural place (Da Silva et al., 2016), i.e., pre-modernity and productivist. By the former, the rural place is portrayed as backward and less developed, and by the latter, they associated less-modernized agriculture and production to the rural place.

**Factor 2: The Idealists: Small Scale and Healthy Food Production**

The group of five rural participants who had the “small scale and healthy food production” view of rural piedmont North Carolina, visualized and articulated their idealized rural life irrespective of the status quo of rural life in piedmont North Carolina. They adopted a language of a knowledgeable and concerned person who strives to- and advises healthy lifestyle

---

6 The Q item’s factor scores on factors 1-4
and discretions for the good of the planet. The participant constituents of the factor explained 12% of variance (3 female and 2 male) with average RSI of 12.4 and average factor loading of 86.6. Interestingly, this factor consisted of 5 of the 6 Native American participating in the study (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3
Summary information for those representing Factor 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>RSI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Native American</td>
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<tr>
<td>R8</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>28372</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R11</td>
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<td>25-34</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>28372</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R7</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>28372</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R10</td>
<td>0.82</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>28372</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. RSI = Rural Social Identity Index. Factor loadings indicate the extent to which a participant agrees or disagrees with factor. R = rural. U = urban.

The five top-ranked photographs (images 2, 26, 24, 4 & 17), emphasized aspects of agriculture, three of which were categorized as anti-Urbannormative through the earlier Q sampling process (Images 2, 4 & 17) (Figure 4.7). Regarding the distinguishing image 24 (1(F1),
4(F2), 1(F3), 2(F4)), R10 said “we must learn to recycle and compost everything for the good of the planet. We should not have landfills and mountains of garbage floating out in the ocean and blowing all over our plant”. Also reflecting on the distinguishing image 2 (-1(F1), 4(F2), 0(F3), 0(F4)) R9 voiced that “we need to eat more greens”. The bottom-ranked images included two images which were similarly rejected by individuals associated with Factor 1 (32 & 27). The three remaining images encompassed the “disconnectedness with nature”, “modern/forward” and “systematic work” anti-Urbannormative concepts earlier defined in the Q sampling process (images 14, 29 & 19). Altogether, the view-holders seemed to resist the mechanized and mass production of (unhealthy) food. Regarding distinguishing image 14(1(F1), -4(F2), -2(F3), 2(F4)), R11 declared “Now we have too many corporate farms that use unsafe farming practices and get subsidies and this is wrong… Poisonous Chemicals that are put on our food should be banned”.

The view-holders of Factor 2, had productivist views about the rural North Carolina (Da Silva, 2016). Moreover, given the long-term familiarity of the researchers and the participants, it was evident that they denied the existence of preconceptions and stereotypical linkages of images with power and authority of certain groups of people over the other. Instead, they were showing their knowledgeable which according to the Foucault (1980), is linked to power.

**Factor 3: Peaceful Rural Idyll**

Participants with the “peaceful rural idyll” perspective believed in peaceful rural North Carolina while dissociating any indicators of irrationality, brutality and space of terror to the region. They believed in a laid-back, peaceful and alluring rural, which is not limited to pursuits of production and agriculture. These people seemed obsessive and concerned about the representations of rural lives which impact the reality. The rural idyll (placed at the right side of the grid) was positioned in response to the negative portrayals of the rural lives in North Carolina.
This factor consisted of mostly older rural adults (2 female/4 male rural + 2 female urban) who explained 12% of total variance. Their factor loading and RSI averaged .61 and 11.37 respectively. Only U3 shared viewpoints with the rural proponents of this factor given the negatively loaded U12 (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4
 **Summary information for those representing Factor 3**

<table>
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<th>Participant</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
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<th>Location</th>
<th>RSI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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</table>

*Note.* RSI = Rural Social Identity Index. Factor loadings indicate the extent to which a participant agrees or disagrees with factor.  R = rural. U = urban.

**Figure 4.8.** The top and bottom-ranked photographs extracted from the Factor three’s composite Q sort. Red frame identifies the distinguishing images at \( p < .05. \)
The top five ranked photographs (images 37, 30, 28, 40 & 26), demonstrated more of the peaceful, beautiful and picturesque aspects of rural life (Figure 4.8). Nonetheless, these images complied with the Urbannormative bias namely as “idyllic” (37 & 28), “romantic” (30 & 40) and “connectedness with nature” (26). Regarding the distinguishing image 37 (0(F1), 0(F2), \textbf{4(F3)}, 0(f4)), R3 said “Beautiful, peaceful looking sunset. Love this time of day and enjoying the beauty of nature on my farm.” Reflecting on image 30(-2(F1), 0(F2), \textbf{4(F3)}, -4(F4)), R4 detailed “Quiet country living… Celebrating agriculture, views and slowing down of life”. The view-holders rejected the stereotypes by placing three photographs associated with “intimidating” anti-Urbannormative concept (images 32, 27, & 11) at the bottom. Regarding the distinguishing image 11 (2(F1), 1(F2), \textbf{-4(F3)}, -2(F4)), U3 said “that totally is least like my expectations of rural life. I know it is a part of farming and raising livestock, but it is not what I like to see.” The R5 reflected on the image 32 by stating that “perceptions of dogs in rural areas, impact, negatively, reality”.

The view-holders of the Factor 3, overtly introduced an alternative system of meaning (Wei, Qian & Sun, 2018) to the stereotypical and intimidating portrayals of rural life. This mental model was manifested by juxtaposing the bright (place of wellbeing) and dark sides (Place of terror) of rural idyll (anti-idyll) towards reinforcing “popular imagination”’ of “bucolic tranquility and communion with nature” (Bell, 2006, p. 410; Da Silva et al., 2016).

Factor 4: The Realists: The Pastoral Rural NC

Proponents of the “common to rural NC” highly associated the production to the rural NC, but were picky on which aspects or representations of production more accurately represent the region. They were realists who sought for the status quo of rural North Carolinean lives and landscapes and rejected what the elevated and/or fictitious representations. The Factor 4 was
mostly comprised of urban respondents (4 female/5 male) and only two rural participants (2 female). The factor explained 14% of the variance, and the participants’ factor loading and RSI, averaged on 59.6 and 8.18 respectively (Table 4.5).

### Table 4.5
**Summary information for those representing Factor 4**

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<th>Participant</th>
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<td>U2</td>
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<td>White</td>
<td>27407</td>
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<td>R14</td>
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*Note. RSI = Rural Social Identity Index. Factor loadings indicate the extent to which a participant agrees or disagrees with factor. R = rural. U = urban.*

![Figure 4.9](image)

**Figure 4.9.** The top and bottom-ranked photographs extracted from the Factor four’s composite Q sort. Red frame identifies the distinguishing images at \( p < .05 \).
The five top-ranked images (17, 7, 28, 8 & 29) mostly portrayed productive aspects of rural life (Figure 4.9). Although image 29 & 28 were not set to reflect the “productive” concept of Urbannormative ideology, looked from the same lens. In respect with the distinguishing image 29 (0(F1), -4(F2), -3(F3), 4(F4)) the U6 stated “North Carolina has one of the greatest pig population in the States” and the U2 confirmed “pig farms very common in NC”. Among the five bottom-ranked photographs, two distinguishing images (30 & 40), belonged to the “romantic” concept of Urbannormative ideology. U6 reflected on the distinguishing image 30 (-2(F1), 0(F2), 4(F3), -4(F4)) saying “Looks like a scene out of a Nicholas Sparks Book [romance novels]”. In respect with the distinguishing image 40 (-3(F1), -2(F2), 3(F3), -4(F4)), the U18 exclaimed “Not many places have log cabin themed bathrooms in the area. It is a bit fictitious to assume such a thing in a country-oriented environment.”

The other two bottom-ranked photographs (22 & 35) belonged to “connectedness” and “disconnectedness with nature” (anti)Urbannormative concepts earlier identified in Q sampling process. It shows that this group looked at the images differently than researchers. Regarding the image 22, U10 stated “I don't really think of rural when I look at this picture. There's a lot of man-made objects in the picture. When I think "rural" I think of being outside with a lot of farms around. Or just being outside in the middle of nature without a lot of buildings, cars, people, etc. around.”

The view-holders of the factor 4 de-problematized the harmful or inhumane aspects of production and merely sought the commonplace. They held hegemonic and global pastoralist vision of rural place, which are mainly affected by tourism promotions and media (Bell, 2006; Da Silva et al., 2016).
Discussion and Conclusions

This study demystified the potential host (rural tourism microentrepreneurs) and potential urban visitors’ visual mental models about rural lives in rural piedmont of North Carolina. This purpose was followed through employment of Q methodology that statistically clusters like-minded people (Watts, & Stenner, 2005). Participants sorted 40 images of rural piedmont North Carolina on a graded spectrum of boxes from most like to most unlike their expectations (but NOT what they would like to see) of what rural lives are like in the piedmont region of North Carolina. The two sets of data (Q sorts) from urban and rural participants were mixed and factor analyzed, revealing four perspectives.

The first group believed in “productive and quint rural”. Their proponents included both the urban and rural participants. The composite Q sort belonging to this factor shows that they tended to imagine a productive rural with less indicators of modernity and development. Their views had slight touches of Urbannormative ideologies on depicting the rural lives of piedmont NC in a disorganized and primitive manner, in a “less-hurried lifestyle”, “refuge from modernity”, and void of technology and order (Short, 1991, p. 34; Uusitalo & Assmuth, 2013).

The view-holders of Factor two emphasized the healthy aspects of small-scale agriculture, protesting the unhealthy and massified practices in agriculture (Figueiredo & Raschi, 2012). The five Native Americans who made up Factor two covertly denied the correlation of any postcolonial and/or Urbannormative ideologies with the images (Wei, Qian & Sun, 2018). In other words, despite their awareness and alertness about the “white privilege” and the media’s biased and narrow representations of their livelihoods, at the first place, they remained silent about the existence of such a power to mute the stereotypes. Their strategy was instead to acquire power by demonstrating their knowledgeability and discretion (Foucault, 1980; Jäger, 2001). This recognition was captured through the researchers’ long-term acquaintance, longitudinal
research and spontaneous discussions about the colonial powers and stereotypes inflicting their communities.

Factor 3, consisting mostly of older rural participants, overtly illustrated (Q sort) and objected the existence of rural stereotypes. On the one hand, they agreed with peaceful and colorful visualization of rural lives in North Carolina, and on the other hand, they disagreed with biasedly representing the area with threat and savagery. In other words, they proposed an alternative system of meaning (Wei, Qian & Sun, 2018) to the stereotypical representations of rural North Carolina. Moreover, unlike the Factor 4, the Factor 3 looked from a different vantage point to the images 30 (wine, grape and view of lush landscapes) and 40 (log cabin bathroom). In those images, they saw peace and idyll, while the Factor 4 conceived them as fictitious representations (not representing the area). This gap of perceptions may be due to the expectations created by media (Cloke, 2006), which led the view-holders of Factor 4 (comprised of mainly urban participants), give up their self-referent Q sorts to the objective and global perceptions of rural lives in North Carolina.

The image 29 (pig factory) and the image 14 (mechanized plantation) typifies the contrasting views that Factors 4 and Factor 2 held. Factor 2 (dominated by rural participants) problematized and Factor 4 (dominated by urban participants) de-problematized the practice of unhealthy/inhumane agriculture. The overall inspection of the composite Q sort of Factor 4 and their explanations creates the perception that they visualized rural areas as sacrificed places of production and leisure peripheries to the urban centers.

The findings raise the question that if commonalities and differences between Factors are contextually bound and perhaps age-related. This is because two groups of rural participants (groups two and three), living in two different regions, differently (covertly and overtly,
respectively) showed their resistance towards the Urbannormative biases, expressed through their act of Q sorting. Besides, despite the initial mixture of Q sorts for analysis, the emergence of three perspectives that roughly consisted either of urban or rural participants (Factors 2, 3 & 4), made us believe that rural and urban participants seldom shared common views about their expectations about rural lives in piedmont North Carolina.

Nonetheless, capitalizing on the areas of agreement is as important as the areas of disagreement between host and guest communities (rural and urban). This is important as the exposure of a tourism destination is highly dependent on its representations (Beldona & Cai, 2006). Hence, the marketing of similarities would be advantageous by putting less pressure on rural communities to self-Urbannormativize their cultural assets according to the urban visitors’ expectations (Aitchison, 2001; Silver, 1993). At least the concentration and priority of marketing rural destinations is to be given to what and how the rural guest communities rather to represent to urban visitors (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). Last but not least, tourism policy makers and researchers are all encouraged to approach and hear people whose socio-cultural and environmental assets are represented and sold for profit in tourism.
References


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https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776409356215


CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

The philosophical underpinning of this research centered on critical realism which believes in the effect of history and broader social context in the perception of reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The study’s theoretical framework revolved around postcolonial concepts namely, Orientalism and Urbannormativity (Said, 1978; Fulkerson & Lowe, 2013). This study was divided into three articles investigating how rural tourism microentrepreneurs self-represent themselves to the potential urban visitors and how potential urban visitors yearn to see them and their socio-cultural environments. No identified studies have ever strived to give agency to the rural subaltern groups to voice their opinions against tourism representations. Besides, no identified studies ever wondered to examine the convergence of the rural subaltern and urban elite groups’ opinions about visual manifestations of rural geographies.

The purpose of first article was to hear the voice of rural subaltern which in the context of this research are rural tourism microentrepreneurs, on how they want to self-represent themselves and their cultural assets to urban visitors. Expecting that the third study would use a democratic and inclusive methodology, namely Q methodology, the purpose of the second article was to examine if the newly developed web application (VQMethod) was a reliable, usable method which can replace the traditional paper-based Q method. The purpose of the third article was to unfold the rural tourism microentrepreneurs and potential urban visitors’ views about the visual representation of rural piedmont NC.

Article Summaries

Article 1

The rural subaltern have turned into passive tourists vulnerable to representations of their lives fabricated by an urban-centric tourism system. They have been forced to glean only scraps
not worthy of collection by formal tourism industry (Morais, Ferreira, Nazariadli & Ghahramani, 2017). These cohorts of people who possess different cultural identities and are subordinate to elites have been muted through the hegemonic and disabling representation of their identities by others (Wang & Morais, 2014). This problem captured attention of postcolonial theorists and activists such as Said (1935-2003), Bhabha (1949-present) and Spivak (1942-present). These prominent postcolonial scholars have problematized writing on behalf of silenced subaltern and exclaimed if/let the subaltern speak (Amoamo, 2011).

The rural subaltern have been besieged by dominant, reinforcing and urban-driven tourism media which aim to self-servingly represent and sell the most profitable and exotic aspects of rural subaltern’s lives. But these all come at the expense of rural subaltern’s identity. The struggle for recuperation of the identities through the postcolonial tourism forces, has urged the activists to search for the most appropriate and strategic methods, in reclaiming lost identities (Hoare, & Nowell-Smith, 2005). To be specific, tourism media frames and propagates fragments of the subaltern’ social life. These fragments are then visited and photographed by tourists, creating a circuit that marginalizes, alienates and shapes rural subaltern, namely, “loop of representation” (Jenkins, 2003).

Indeed, the perpetuation of colonial ideologies in tourism in the context of West and East is massively explored under the prism of Orientalism (Said, 1978) and Urbannormativity in the context of urban and rural (Fulkerson & Thomas, 2016). The Urbannormativity refers to the bipolarization of the world into urban and rural, as the former is the way forward, rational, educated, brilliant and worthy of investment, while the latter is the servant, backward, primitive, sly and bigoted who are destined to serve the urban areas and populations. Nonetheless, this paper, regarding the isolated and disempowered rural as rural subaltern, comes with an
empowering model, to emancipate the rural subaltern from the urban-driven ideological destabilizing forces.

The rural space is artistically made-up and is an artifact of discourse (Pink, 2007). However, this does not have to hinder represent from showcasing their assets that distinguish them from their curious urban visitors. Instead, they can earn agency through photography and broadcast their preferred and accurate representation of their communities through social media. Perhaps this way, they can also start to influence tourism industry by defining what urban visitors should expect them while visiting their region, and hence, gradually correct the fabricated images of their lives.

This paper used the tourism microentrepreneurship as a mechanism to enable alienated rural subaltern articulate their real versions of identities (Morais et al., 2017). Further this article employed the notion of mimicry or camouflage of Bhabha (1997), and used autophotography, as a community-driven method of photography (Berglund & Johansson, 2007). In this article, 13 tourism microentrepreneurs of piedmont NC took photographs through which they want to represent their socio-cultural and environmental assets to potential urban visitors. After doing the follow-up interviews the concurrent critical discourse analysis of their explanations and images divulged eight concepts through which the rural tourism microentrepreneurs complied, resisted or both to the Urbannormative ideologies (image and the explanation represent both compliance and resistance: hybrid). The hybrid space raises the need for accompaniment of picture with explanation and refutes the long-held belief that the picture never lies. That means, although the picture shows a particular behavior or scenery, the actual truth or story explaining the occasion might be different.
The findings showed that the rural tourism microentrepreneurs complied through concepts of “symbiosis with nature”, “Amazement with God’s and/or Nature’s power”, “Aesthetics of natural and rural landscapes” and “Healthy-minded for their family and community”. They also resisted through concepts of “multi-dimensionality of their livelihoods”, “competence across many skill areas” and “superiority over enslaved urbanites”. They both resisted and complied through concepts of “eccentric, anachronistic, whimsical” and “arduous work and life”. These self-representational themes should be taken into account as voices of subaltern in rural tourism development policies. Besides, if indigenous and represented people do not well explain the promotional materials, they have the potential to (re)create stereotypes and expectations which dialectically reinforce the social status quo of rural subaltern.

**Article 2**

Q methodology is grounded in Quantum theories in the sense that “one can never know the exact location of a particle but only predict its behavior” (Paige, 2013, p. 136). Q methodology has received increased attention in social sciences because of its combined qualitative and quantitative strengths (Kampen & Tamás, 2013). It also has been regarded as an empowering method for the study of marginalized communities, consciousness raising and democratic decision-making (Brown, 2005).

On the one hand, some believe that in Q methodology research, the researcher should have a “feeling for organism” through interaction and familiarization of the researcher and participant (Brown, 1980). On the other hand, researcher’s influence in conduct of a non-cognitive research topic has been of concern (Scott, Baker, Shucksmith, & Kaner, 2014). In other words, the observer’s interactions with participants and observing their card-sorting behavior, may change the way participants perform and reflect on the topic (Cross, 2005). For example,
topics associated with sensitive issues such as sexual abuse, crime, political views, etc., may create a perception that their opinion may spoil their social status and start impressing the research towards giving socially accepted responses (Scott et al., 2014).

In addition, the Q methodology research involves intensive participation in eliciting deep data rooted in peoples’ beliefs. Thus, relatively a small number of participants are required in Q methodology research as practical/theoretical implications rather than the generalization to the wider population are concerned (Watts & Stenner, 2005). However, the provision and deliverance of traditional paper-based Q methodology research have been challenging for researchers. Even the mail deliverance of printed Q method research materials bear out unwieldy and confusing for the participants (Klooster, Visser, & Jong, 2008). Besides, these practical hurdles turn into psychological concerns and then discouraging factors in the pursuit of paper-based traditional Q methodology research. There are also another reasons for uneasiness with the Q methodology research such as reproducibility, repeatability and reliability, in respect with the researcher’s positioning, the apparatus and research conditions (Reber & Kaufman, 2000).

Hence the VQMethod web application was created to overcome all the shortcomings of the traditional paper-based Q methodology research, by standardizing the survey design, dissemination and data collection processes. To safeguard its usage in approaching wide-range of geographically dispersed populations, this application underwent a series of psychometric analysis such as reliability, usability and its convergence with the traditional paper-based method. This research was conducted in two phases: a) Debugging and improving the VQMethod platform (heuristic evaluation), laboratory usability tests, in informing second series of informed improvements, b) reliability, methods agreement, overall satisfaction and relative efficiency tests on the real product.
In Stage one (debugging session) heuristic inspection and usability test were integrated to make up for each method’s weaknesses (Jaspers, 2009). For the heuristic inspection, five Q methodology experts were recruited to inform the most fundamental and pressing improvements. The experts did so by identifying the most potential problems referencing to the 10 heuristics defined by Nielsen (1994). In the next test, a sample of 31 potential survey-takers were intercepted at Museum of Natural Sciences, Raleigh, NC, asking them to take a sample survey in a fish-bowl laboratory through which they were seen but not able to see the researcher. The derived insight from this two-session debugging phase, propelled the creation of the VQMethod’s Beta version, to undergo the reliability and methods agreement tests at phase 2.

Stage 2 tested the reliability of the VQMethod survey interface on a sample of 37 undergraduate students, by asking them to take identical surveys within a one-week interval at a classroom setting. Its reliability estimate ended up being more than the traditional paper-based Q methodology’s purported reliability coefficient. Moreover, the number of factors (viewpoints) remained stable when the pre and post data at the test-retest analysis were combined (another indicator of factor stability). The students’ average level of satisfaction with the VQMethod’s interface, was above the well-known average satisfaction level between systems. Moreover, the average time spent taking the VQ survey, did not significantly predict the stability of VQ sort patterns, when the students sorted identical surveys twice under same conditions.

Stage three tested the methods agreement between the paper-based and online (VQMethod) modes of Q method research. The average diversion of the placement of the Q items within the grid diverged by ±1.18 on 95% of occasions, respecting the .8 and .80 reliability coefficients respectively for the VQMethod and traditional paper-based Q method. Q methodology researchers can decide the strength and practical significance of this divergence.
Nonetheless, the column-wise inspection of the VQ and Q scores shed light on increasing difference between the placements of Q items from edges to the middle of grid.

The Bland-Altman diagram though used in the method agreement analysis, it happened to be informational for visualizing Q method research findings. For example, the images which reside over the 95% limit of agreement can further undergo reliability and validity checks. The Bland-Altman diagram indeed can be used to diagnose the Q items before use into the actual Q survey. Besides, given the ipstative nature of the Q methodology research meaning that the total score for each participant are kept same and their scores average on 0, the use of correlation between two methods as a method of agreement seemed legitimate which uncovered 95% fit.

The results of this study, inform us about the high reliability of the VQMethod web application for the conduct of Q methodology research, indicating its high stability and repeatability. Besides, the results of the methods agreement analysis give us certainty that (r = .95) the VQMethod can be alternatively used instead of the traditional method. The usability tests and inspections, helped the researcher to negotiate the findings and potential survey-takers’ inputs with web-developers to enhance its user-friendliness. This method is along with the tenets of participatory design which potential users partake in system development (Spinuzzi, 2005)

**Article 3**

Tourism industry builds images of destinations to match the desires of appealing markets, but this has yielded the discrepancy between reality and representations (Holloway, 2007). Halfacree (1995) contends that, in this postmodern world, the signified and the signifier, are detached from each other, and as a result symbolism takes precedence over reality. Indeed, the hegemonic representations through tourism, create power asymmetries and shape the expectations of tourists (Baylina & Berg, 2016).
The rural peoples’ compliance with tourists’ desires and unrealistic/unknown demands, can disable them in shaping and preserving their identities (Wang & Morais, 2014). For example, tourism media has shaped the Mosuo as a matriarchal but sexually libertine rural community who are open to tourists’ hedonistic desires. Nonetheless, the overwhelming fabrications and symbolic requests (walking marriage) have disempowered the community tired of rejecting the tourists’ expectations (Wei, Qian & Sun, 2018).

But this study steps further to see how rural subaltern share common/different views about rural life with potential urban visitors. This examination was due to the research’s egalitarian philosophy and approach in marketing of similarities, by investigating commonalities between rural and urban, and capitalizing on assets rather than problems. For this, 20 rural tourism microentrepreneurs and 20 potential urban visitors took online visual Q surveys. They were asked to sort 40 images of rural piedmont NC, on a graded grid from most like to most unlike their expectations from the region.

The results divulged the rural and urban participants’ heterogeneous beliefs about rural place, nonetheless, rural and urban people seldom shared similar views. Four perspectives were demystified namely as 1) pastoral and quaint productive place, 2) place for small-scale and healthy food production, 3) peaceful rural idyll and 4) indiscriminate sacrifice place for food production. The first group is the only group that roughly equally comprised of rural and urban participants. Their views ostensibly viewed rural place associated with disorganized and cluttered animals, demonstrated in vast landscapes. They did not believe in the association of modernity with the rural life, as rejected by a semi-modern house which distinguished their beliefs from other groups.
Group 4 (dominated by urban participants) and group 2 (dominated by rural participants) emphasized productive aspects of rural life. However, group 2 revealed their preference for living healthy and producing healthy agricultural products, the group 4 merely equated production an indispensable aspect and symbol of rurality. For example, group 2 referred to the unhealthy and inhumane system of raising pigs crammed in lots but the group 4 only referred to the association of pig with rural North Carolina. To some extent, this finding confirms that in the metropolitan societies, symbolism has overtaken the relationship between signified and signifier (Halfacree, 1995; Markwick, 2001, p. 420).

The group 2 serendipitously was formed by only rural Native Americans. However, they did not refer to the postcolonial interpretations of the photos despite the author’s expectations. This expectation was due to the long-term acquaintance of authors with them and their previous discussions surrounding topics of postcolonialism and discrimination in their areas. The authors’ interpretation is that these adopted a mediated and covert model of resistance (Wei, Qian & Sun, 2018), that is, though aware, they ignored the stereotypes and indicators of power within images. Instead, they highlighted their high levels of knowledgeability and consciousness about healthy lifestyle.

Group 3, consisting mostly of older rural participants, were the only group that overtly divulged their bipolar understanding of rural stereotypes. On the one hand they believed in a peaceful rural life. On the other hand, they rejected the indicators of irrationality and brutality associated with rural geographies. Their idealized and picturesque pictures which were indicators of peaceful rural place, were observed by group 4 as most unlike their expectations from rural place. This is because the urban individuals consisting of group 4 considered those pictures as
inauthentic and elevated. This criterion highlights the main difference between the group 3 consisted mostly of rural residents and the group 4 mainly consisted of urban residents.

**Methodological Considerations**

The subaltern have been disempowered and disabled to voice and record the true version of their history and associated identities. Moreover, the alteration of realities has been solidified by visual representations rampant in tourism promotional materials (Aitchison, 2001). The selection of a liberating and de-colonial method has been imperative for the recuperation of the colonized from the consequences of colonization (Norman, Denzin, & Yvonne, 2008). Gramsci (1891-1937) in his essays in prison against the Italian fascist regime of that time (Prison Notebook) also directs attention to the absence of a solid methodology of subaltern’s histography through which subaltern can defend their real version of history and realities. Hence, choosing an appropriate method in stimulating self-representational attitudes of tourism microentrepreneurs which is empowering in itself was vital for this research.

In this study, believing that knowledge is socially constructed and “truth is discursive effect rather than a transparent account of reality”, critical social theories were adopted to situate reality and knowledge within the socio-historical contexts and challenge the taken for granted beliefs. Critical ethnography is densely theory-oriented qualitative research which demystifies the hidden interests and reveals forms of domination and power (Creswell, 2013). Critical ethnography is emancipatory than sole hermeneutics (Jupp, 2006).

Hence, autophotography as an empowering ethnographic and participatory method was employed to disclose and critique the real realities by act of self-representation. This method was used to uncover how rural life is self-represented by tourism microentrepreneurs, and to what extent these representations are resistant and/or compliant with the Urbannormative ideologies.
Furthermore, this method gives the researcher the ability to incorporate deep conversations and stimulate critical consciousness (conscientization) (Freire, 1998; Kantowitz-Gordon, Altman, & Vandermause, 2016).

The use of photographs for research finds its roots in nineteenth-century anthropology. Pictures of the colonized were derogatorily snapped to serve the scientific interests of the researchers yielding “crisis of representation” (Stewart & Floyd, 2004). In response, autophotography was born in an attempt to expose how the represented people themselves want to portray themselves. Nonetheless, autophotography is a recuperative method of piecing collective memories together even within illiterate populations (Phoenix, 2010). This method is participatory and can catalyze change in marginalized communities by engaging the individuals into research which will ultimately affect them (Murray & Nash, 2017; Packard, 2008).

Moreover, this study utilized the Q methodology to disentangle the groups of opinions within the rural subaltern and potential urban visitors of those regions. The choice of this method was also aligned with the study purpose to contrast the rural subaltern and potential urban visitors expectation of rural lives in piedmont region of North Carolina. The Q methodology as a social constructionist approach has the power of by-person factor analysis to cluster like-minded people, and this is what this research was looking for, that is, group people based on a non-cognitive topic (Stainton Rogers, 1995). Indeed “Q methodology provides the basis for a scientific approach to subjectivity that enables poor people or any other group to express themselves with minimal involvement from outsiders and minimal bias from externally imposed or ostensibly derived meanings”.

Nonetheless, the selection of Q items for the Q survey, underwent rigorous filtering steps, to ensure, those images representatively reflect the photos taken through autophotography of
rural tourism microentrepreneurs. Those steps entailed expert and lay people’s judgments on the relevance and clarity of images respectively. The experts helped the researcher to get closer in selecting a balanced set of (anti) Urbannormative images and the lay people’s judgment was needed to secure the naked, and untrained eyes would not be confused by photos taken by amateurs. Hence, through this filtering process, several photos that taken by participants were removed and replaced by similarly looking ones from the Internet.

**Theoretical Implications and Recommendations for Future Research**

This study has significant theoretical implications in the realm of tourism sociology studies examining the livelihoods and identities of marginalized rural communities. Tourism sciences knowledge has been criticized as imperial because tourism research rarely incorporates the voices of the Othered hosts (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015). This study, aspired to disrupt the Western ways of production of knowledge, by engaging rural subaltern into a participatory action research. In this manner, this study provides a benchmark case in which participants influence the research process the study leaves improved agency in its wake (Morais et al., 2017). This approach is particularly needed in the context of rural tourism studies because tourism is a highly competitive and vertically integrated industry and as a result research findings have limited opportunity to influence policy in a meaningful and timely manner.

Postcolonial activists and authors have emphasized the limited autonomy of subaltern in influencing and defending their identities (Hoare & Nowell-Smith, 2005). This study, applying the concept of subaltern in tourism, aimed to enable the rural subaltern to earn more human agency. Namely, through this study, participating rural tourism microentrepreneurs were encouraged to practice counter-hegemonic actions through autophotography. This study invited
participants to use Bhabha’s (1997) mimicry by representing the true and most favored versions of their socio-cultural and environmental realities to potential urban visitors.

One of the major contributions of the study is to demonstrate the practice of a model of research as emancipation. This action is supported by earlier claims that tourism microentrepreneurship can play an integral role in the rural subaltern’s emancipation because these individuals operate in under-regulated spaces and supply unscripted experiences to visitors in search of genuine encounters (Wang and Morais, 2014). Accordingly, tourism microentrepreneurs use of photography and their dissemination through simple marketing and social media communications to potential markets emerges as a key strategy to disrupt the hegemonic circle or representation that perpetuates hegemonic Orientalist and Urbannormative discourses oppressing rural communities (Figure 5.1).

![Figure 5.1. The study’s guiding conceptual framework.](image)

Rural studies have been characterized as consisting of efforts placing the rural is a subject of study in order to elevate the urban knowledge and supremacy upon rural. However, in this study, Q methodology enabled me to examine the voices of urban and rural participants about visual manifestations of rural life. The findings revealed that there were several instances in which some rural and some urban participants shared similar views. Accordingly, this study
transcended apparent urban-rural false dichotomies and allowed for a more nuanced examination of the mental models that are at times shared by these increasingly complex populations. This approach, in turn, encourages researchers and markets to explore similarities in identities and travel and entrepreneurial motivations between urban and rural to avoid the previously criticized misguided and counterproductive fetish for difference (Aitchison, 2001).

Through this study I have also unearthed evidence that rural microentrepreneurs may opt to self-Urbannormativize themselves to the expected urban visitors’ desires to appeal to them; nonetheless, these individuals simultaneously employ covert (soft) ways of resisting urban hegemony and control (Wei, Qian & Sun, 2018). The ambivalence in rural tourism microentrepreneurs’ resistance indicates that the subaltern both comply and resist however consciously in order to both reap benefit and voice/claim their true identities/histories through tourism. In fact, tourism microentrepreneurship is both a form of business that must meet the needs of the market and a form of activism which catalyze counter-hegemonic movements.

The development and validation of the VQMethod web-based research tool was another critical contribution of this study. This application allows the administration of big-scale participatory visual research in more efficient and further reaching ways. The traditional paper-based administration of Q Method requires extensive time and financial resources for researchers to meet with participants face to face, which has had limited the involvement of participants to smaller samples, and to participants located more conveniently close to the research teams. Additionally, the cost of administering the traditional form of Q method has limited the use of this approach to better-funded research teams, constraining its use to teams conducting less well-funded projects (source needed here). Additionally, VQMethod underwent rigorous psychometric tests, e.g., reliability, usability and methods agreement which outshined over the
standards set by the traditional paper-based method. Accordingly, this dissertation generated a research tool that has the potential to make Q methodology more accessible and widely used by participatory action researchers.

Lastly, while this study examined the discourses used to describe the rural subaltern, I discovered that the rural participants describe who they are in opposition to who they are not, the rural people. This finding is consistent with critiques of Orientalism and Urbannormativity that explain how people at the growth centers Otherize Oriental and rural people by characterizing them as the opposite of what they are, or what they perceive themselves to be (Said, 1978). Interestingly, my probe into rural subaltern self-representations unearthed seminal evidence that the rural subaltern turns their gaze onto their urban visitors and they, in turn, Otherize them in juxtaposition to the ways they want to see themselves. Namely, they characterized their urban visitors as agriculturally illiterate, which is consistent with earlier findings by Peroff (2016). The rural participants also portrayed their visitors and physically fragile and disconnected with nature in contrast with their own stamina and physical capability. Moreover, rural participants even characterized their urban people as enslaved by the capitalist systems that rule urban areas and pitied them for eating unhealthy food, living a passive life with disconnection with family and community. These findings are in my view novel to the subaltern studies literature and beg for additional research examining the gaze of the rural tourism microentrepreneurs on their visitors.

Practical Implications

The first article encompassed a modest practice in breaking down the loop of representation circulated and reinforced by urban-centered tourism media. The conceptual framework guiding the first study was aimed to catalyze and inform counter-hegemonic actions within rural subaltern participants and later be copied in larger scales once the study findings are
disseminated among microentrepreneurs, policy-makers and the public. Furthermore, the findings will inform ongoing efforts by the P1tLab to promote income-earning opportunities for rural microentrepreneurs; the findings are informing the design of promotional materials and social media communications in ways that bridge perceived interests by urban tourist markets as well as the desired voices of rural microentrepreneurs.

The VQMethod web application tested in the second study may be used to enable a wide range of community engagement initiatives using image, audio and video as stimuli. This online tool enables participatory action researchers and community development practitioners from a variety of disciplines e.g., visual arts, film, music, graphics, etc., to more easily employ Q method in their work, and therefore allowing them to engage more easily with a wider set of their populations thanks to the cost-effectiveness and ubiquitous access of the web (versus the traditional paper-based method).

The third study sets an example on how the voices of guest and host communities can be democratically contrasted in order for tourism industry to emphasize and invest on their similarities and commonalities. In fact, capitalizing on the areas of agreement is as important as the areas of disagreement, as the marketing of similarities may put less pressure on rural communities to commodify according to the urban visitors’ expectations (Aitchison, 2001; Silver, 1993). Additionally, the findings illustrate how different groups of urban and rural people have very contrasting mental models about what rural lives are like, which reflects public support for policy and planning. It also possibly has implications to policy and planning efforts focused on engendering regional planning that positions rural areas as healthy and prosperous places to live, and not as simple sacrifice areas that produce food for cities.
References


Article 1

Appendix A: Consent Form Script

You are cordially invited to participate in a study titled "Understanding the visual self-representation of piedmont rural farmscapes". If you agree to be part of the research study, we will lend you a digital camera and teach you how to use it to capture 20-25 pictures from the farming-related practices which you believe are representative visuals of your everyday agrarian rural life. Then after a week, in a convenient place for you, we will need you to turn kindly in the camera with the images saved on it and discuss the pictures with us. This dialogue will approximately take 20-25 minutes of your time; and it will be audio recorded. Here, we caution you, NOT to take pictures you do not want to share with us or public, as the pictures might be depicted through conference presentations or journal publications. In addition, please Do NOT take pictures of other people as we are interested primarily on farmscapes.

Neither risk nor specific benefits have been recognized for your participation in this research. However, you will learn how to use the digital cameras, and we will inform you about the most representative images of rural agrarian life in the piedmont region after the study is finished. A $15 gift card is designated for your participation in this research.

The results of this study will be published in academic and applied papers. However, your participation is confidential, and the findings will be reported in aggregate form, with no information that would identify the participants. We will store your data to use for future research studies. Your name and any other identifying information will be secured and stored separately from your research data. Only the Principal Investigator, will have access to your research files and data. Research data may be shared with other investigators but will never contain any information that could identify you.
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision of whether or not to participate in this study does not affect your participation on the People-First Tourism project. Even if you agree to participate now, you may change your mind later and/or stop at any time. If this was the case with you, please contact us with the information provided below to find a convenient time and place to return the camera.

If you have questions about the nature, scope, goals, and outcomes of this study, please contact (Mr.) Shahab Nazari at snazari@ncsu.edu (tel 919.448.8826) or his Advisor, Dr. Duarte B. Morais at dbmorais@ncsu.edu (tel 919.926.8052). Please also take one of these business cards with our contact information.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to obtain additional information, to ask new questions, or to discuss the study with someone other than the researchers, please contact:

North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board
Debra Paxton, CB 7514
Raleigh, NC 27695
Tel (919) 515-4514
debra_paxton@ncsu.edu

If you are 18 years old or older and accept to participate in this survey, please print and sign your name to proceed with the study.

Full Name ________________________  Signature ________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Project: Understanding the visual self-representation of piedmont rural landscapes

Date ___________________________

Time ___________________________

Location ________________________

Interviewer ______________________

Interviewee ______________________

Consent form signed? ____

Notes to interviewee:

- Thank you for your participation and making an invaluable effort to share the pictures of your rural life with us. I believe your input will be priceless for this research and in helping grow all of our professional practice.
- Confidentiality of responses is guaranteed.
- Approximate length of interview will be 20-25 minutes, including 1 major question.
- Interview purpose: This interview will help us to ascertain about the reasons you took those pictures.

**Question 1**: Please tell us shortly why you took those pictures picture by picture. But please elaborate more about those 10 pictures you find it are more representative of your rural agrarian life.

Response from Interviewee (Notes taken by interviewer):

Pic 1: : -------------------------------

Pic 2: : -------------------------------
Reflection by Interviewer

- Thank you to interviewee
- Reassure confidentiality
- Ask permission to follow-up _____
Appendix C: The Recruitment Statement

"Hello, I am Shahab Nazariadli, a Ph.D. student at NC State and a research assistant in the People-First Tourism project. I am calling you to ask for your participation in my research examining how farmers want to portray themselves to visitors. If you were willing to help me, I would come for a visit sometime soon and leave you with a digital camera that I would ask you to use for a week to take photos of your farm and your life. After a week, I will come visit you again to get the camera back and interview you about your pictures. Would you be willing to participate in this study? Great... in that case, let's find a time for me to come bring you the camera and explain the study in detail. In the end, please be mindful that your participation is completely voluntary and you can refuse at any time."
Appendix D: The Questions Asked From Experts for the Measurement of Image Content Validity

A) On a four-point scale please identify the degree of clearness/unambiguity of the following images (circle the number)

1) Not clear at all  
2) Somewhat clear  
3) Mostly clear  
4) Completely clear

B) Are there any other pictures in this concourse of images which you believe better represents the 10 dimensions on the factorial design matrix?
Appendix E: Consent Form Script

Museum visitors

Title of Study: Evaluating the Visual Q method (VQMethod) research tool: A usability, reliability and methods agreement analysis

Principal Investigator: Dr. Kyle Bunds

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty.

You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from participating in this study. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form, inquire by contacting Mr. Shahab Nazariadli (snazari@ncsu.edu) (tel 919.448.8826) or Dr. Duarte B. Morais (dbmorais@ncsu.edu) (tel 919.926.8052) before taking the survey. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The overarching purpose of this study is to test the usability of the instrument.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sort 40 rural images of piedmont NC in a graded grid based on how you believe the images are representations of rural life. Moreover, some basic demographic questions will be asked. After you completed the survey, you will be questioned orally by researcher generally on how user-friendly was this application, and which parts you liked to change/was confusing to you. The estimated time of completion is 15 minutes.
**Risks and Benefits**

There are no risks associated with participation in this research. There are no direct benefits to your participation in the research. However, your contribution to this research is highly valued and will enrich our understanding of the usability of the designed online survey.

**Confidentiality**

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely in a locked university computer and in a locked office at NC State University. The notes taken by researcher will also be kept confidential in the lockable cabinet in a lockable office while not used. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

**Compensation**

For participating in this study, you will receive small gifts from researcher.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study itself or the procedures implemented in this study, you may contact the researcher, <Shahab Nazariadli, 3026 Biltmore Hall- NC State University, snazari@ncsu.edu, (919) 448-8826>

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator at dapaxton@ncsu.edu or by phone at 1-919-515-4514.
Consent to Participate

“I have read and understand the above information. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Agree  Don’t agree

Students at NC State University

Title of Study: Assessing the validity and usability of the VQMethod online application

Principal Investigator: Dr. Kyle Bunds

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty.

You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from participating in this study. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form, inquire by contacting Mr. Shahab Nazariadli (snazari@ncsu.edu) (tel 919.448.8826) or Dr. Duarte B. Morais (dbmorais@ncsu.edu) (tel 919.926.8052) before taking the survey. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The overarching purpose of this study is to test the validity of the online application.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

7 Buttons on the online survey
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in a two-phase research. You will need to come to the 3032 student computer lab at PRTM, Biltmore Hall, to do a survey online and offline (printed) within a period of 1 week-10 days. For this, you will be asked to sort 40 rural images of piedmont NC in a graded grid based on how you believe the images are representations of rural life. Moreover, some basic demographic questions will be asked. The estimated time of completion is 15 minutes for each.

**Risks and Benefits**

There are no risks associated with participation in this research. There are no direct benefits to your participation in the research. However, your contribution to this research is highly valued and will enrich our understanding of the validity of the designed online survey.

**Confidentiality**

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely in a locked university computer and in a locked office at NC State University. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

**Compensation**

For participating in this study, you will not receive rewards of any type.

**Emergency Medical Treatment**

If you are hurt or injured during the study session(s), the researcher will contact the University’s emergency medical services at 515-3333 for necessary care. There is no provision for free medical care for you if you are injured as a result of this study.

**What if you are a NCSU student?**

Participation in this study is not a course requirement and your participation or lack thereof, will
not affect your class standing or grades at NC State.

**What if you are a NCSU employee?** Participation in this study is not a requirement of your research/teaching assistantship at NCSU, and your participation or lack thereof, will not affect it.

**What if you have questions about this study?**
If you have questions at any time about the study itself or the procedures implemented in this study, you may contact the researcher, <Shahab Nazariadli, 3026 Biltmore Hall- NC State University, snazari@ncsu.edu, (919) 448-8826>

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**
If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator at dapaxton@ncsu.edu or by phone at 1-919-515-4514.

**Consent to Participate**
“I have read and understand the above information. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature ___________________________ Date ____________

Investigator's signature ___________________________ Date ____________

---

**Appendix F: The Recruitment Statements**

**NC Museum of Natural Sciences, the Visual World Investigate Lab Visitors**
Hey, how are you today? Have you enjoyed your visit so far? Well.. I would like to introduce you to research I conduct at NC State. Please come over this computer if you have time. I have
developed an online application to study how different people perceive the rural life of piedmont NC. Your input by participation in this study will help me understand how useful this application is for the study as well as how you perceive rural life of piedmont NC. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sort 40 rural images on a graded grid based on how you believe the images are representations of rural life. Moreover, some multiple choice questions will be asked on the computer. After you completed the survey, I personally will ask some question on how user-friendly was this application, and which parts you liked to change/was confusing to you.

**Eligibility:** Age 18-64

**Yes?** O thank you. Please fully read this consent form and take your seat here.

**No?** It is fine. No worries. However, thank you for listening to me describing my research.

**NC State University Students**

Interested in sharing your views on how does rural life in piedmont NC seem to you? Shahab is conducting a study to have your opinion by asking you to sort 40 rural images on a graded grid based on how you believe the images are representations of rural life. Moreover, some multiple choice questions will be asked. This research is conducted in two phases within 1week-10 days interval: online and offline (printed).

**Eligibility:** Age 18+

Please email Shahab Nazariadli (snazari@ncsu.edu) to arrange a time for taking two surveys at the students’ lab (3032), Biltmore Hall which will each approximately take 15 minutes.

With Wolfpack Spirit
Appendix G: The Post-Survey Questionnaire, Evaluating the Usability Of The VQMethod Survey Interface

Date-------------
Time-------------

Consent form read and confirmed?
Gender: Age: Zip code:

1) On average, how many hours per day do you spend working with computer?
   A) Less than 1 hour  B) 1-3 hours  C) 3-5 hours  D) 5-7 hours  E) More than 7 hours

2) Had you ever done an online survey before?
   □ Yes  □ No

*For these questions use the pen and highlighter and feel free to draw and/or write on the paper.

3) In the first task (dragging and dropping the stack of images into three columns)

Instruction was
Clear 1 2 3 4 5 Not clear
Operations with computer and the mouse was
Easy 1 2 3 4 5 Hard
Ways to improve it:

Additional comments:

4) **In the second task** (dragging and dropping images from three columns to the grid)

Instruction was

Clear 1  2  3  4  5  Not clear
Operations with computer and the mouse was
Easy 1  2  3  4  5  Hard

Ways to improve it:

Additional comments:
5) **In the third task** (reasoning why you put distinct four images at the end of grid)

Instruction was

Clear 1 2 3 4 5 Not clear
Operations with computer and the mouse was
Easy 1 2 3 4 5 Hard

Ways to improve it:

Additional comments:
6) **In the fourth task** (The multiple choice and open ended questions)

Instruction was

Clear 1  
2  
3  
4  
5 Not clear

Operations with computer and the mouse was

Easy 1  
2  
3  
4  
5 Hard

Ways to improve it:

Additional comments:
7) **Did you encounter errors? If so, where?**

*So many thank you for your participation  
*Please receive researcher’s contact information card and the gift.
Article 3

Appendix H: The Consent Form Script

Title of Study: Contrasting the emic and etic perceptions of rural realities

Principal Investigator: Dr. D.B. Morais

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of this research study is to gain a better understanding of different peoples’ perception of rural life.

You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from participating in this study. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form, inquire by contacting Mr. Shahab Nazariadli (snazari@ncsu.edu) (tel 919.448.8826) or Dr. Duarte B. Morais (dbmorais@ncsu.edu) (tel 919.926.8052) before taking the survey. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of the study is to generate knowledge about how different people see rural life at piedmont NC.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sort 40 rural images of piedmont NC in a graded grid based on how you believe the images are representations of rural life. Later, for four pictures you will need to explain why you put the images at the given places of the grid. Moreover, some multiple choice and text entry questions will be asked. The estimated time of
completion is 15 minutes.

**Risks and Benefits**

There are no risks associated with participation in this research. There are no direct benefits to your participation in the research. However, your contribution to this research is highly valued and will greatly enrich policy makers and advertisers’ knowledge about what is different peoples’ perception of rural life at piedmont NC.

**Confidentiality**

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely in a locked university computer and in a locked office at NC State University. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

**Compensation**

For participating in this study, the rural participants will receive $25 Amazon gift certificate at their designated address.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study itself or the procedures implemented in this study, you may contact the researcher, <Shahab Nazariadli, 3026 Biltmore Hall- NC State University, snazari@ncsu.edu, (919) 448-8826>

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator at dapaxton@ncsu.edu or by phone at 1-919-515-4514.
Consent to Participate

“I have read and understand the above information. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Appendix I: The Recruitment Statements for Article 3

Amazon Mechanical Turk Recruitment Notice

Survey Name: The real rural life of piedmont NC

Estimated time of completion: 15 minutes

Compensation: 20 cents

Description: The overarching purpose of this research is to generate knowledge about how different people see rural life. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sort 40 rural images on a graded grid based on how you believe the images are representations of rural life. Later, for four pictures you will need to explain why you put the images at the given places of the grid. Moreover, some multiple choice and text entry questions will be asked.

Eligibility: Age: 18+

If you are willing to participate, please find the online survey here

NC Rural Tourism Microentrepreneurs Recruitment Email

Survey Name: The real rural life of piedmont NC

Estimated time of completion: 15 minutes

No compensation

Description: The overarching purpose of this research is to generate knowledge about how different people see rural life. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sort
40 rural images on a graded grid based on how you believe the images are representations of rural life. Later, for four pictures you will need to explain why you put the images at the given places of the grid. Moreover, some multiple choice and text entry questions will be asked.

**Eligibility:** Age: 18+

If you are willing to participate, please find the online survey here
## Appendix J: The Q Sorts for Urban and Rural Participants

| Respondent | 1 | 2 | 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 | 32 |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| U1         | 0 | -1| -1| 0 | -2| -2| 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 2 | -1| 2 | -1| 2 | -1| 2 | 4 | -2| -3| 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 1 | -4| -4|   |
| U2         | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 4 | -4| 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | -1| -2| -1| -1| -3| -1| 1 | 2 | 1 | -4| -2| 4 | -2| -3| -4|   |
| U3         | -2| 2 | 3 | 4 | -1| 1 | 0 | 0 | -2| -4| 1 | 2 | -1| -2| 2 | 1 | -1| -1| -2| -3| 0 | -1| -2| 0 | 3 | -4| 2 | 0 | 4 | -3| -4|   |
| U4         | 1 | 4 | 4 | 2 | -2| -2| 2 | 2 | -1| 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | -1| 0 | -2| 0 | -1| -1| 1 | 1 | -1| 1 | 4 | 0 | 3 | -2| 0 | -3|   |
| U5         | 2 | -3| 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 2 | -3| 1 | 2 | -3| 1 | 2 | 1 | -1| -1| 0 | -1| -2| 4 | 3 | 1 | -4| 0 | 2 | 2 | -3| -1|   |
| U6         | 3 | -1| 1 | 3 | -1| 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 | -2| -3| -2| 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 2 | -1| 1 | 2 | -1| 2 | 1 | -1| -2| -1| 4 | -2| -3| -4|   |
| U7         | 2 | -1| 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | -2| -2| -3| 1 | -1| 4 | -2| -1| -2| -1| -1| 1 | 0 | 0 | -2| -4| 0 | -4| 2 | 0 | 0 |   |
| U8         | 2 | -2| 4 | 4 | 1 | -1| 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0 | -1| 3 | 3 | -2| 3 | -1| 0 | -1| -3| -1| -3| 1 | 1 | -2| 0 | -2| 2 | 4 | -1| 2 |   |
| U9         | 4 | -2| 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | -1| -2| 3 | 1 | 3 | 0 | -1| -2| 0 | -1| -4| 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | -2| 4 | -4| -1| 3 |   |
| U10        | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | -1| 3 | 3 | 1 | -1| -1| -1| -3| 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 0 | -2| -2| 1 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | -1| -4| 4 | 3 | -4| 0 | -2|   |
| U11        | 2 | 4 | -1| -4| 1 | 1 | 1 | -1| -2| 0 | 4 | -4| 4 | 0 | -2| 3 | 2 | -2| 2 | 3 | 0 | -3| 3 | 1 | -1| -1| -3| 2 | -1| -4| 1 | 0 | -2|   |
| U12        | 0 | 0 | 1 | -1| -4| 3 | 1 | 1 | -2| 1 | 2 | -1| -3| 0 | 1 | 3 | -2| 4 | 3 | 4 | -1| 2 | -1| 0 | -2| -2| 4 | -1| 2 | -3| 1 | 0 |   |
| U13        | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | -4| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | -2| -4| -2| 0 | -3| -2| -1| 1 | 4 | -1| -4| 2 | -2| 0 | -3|   |
| U14        | 4 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | -1| 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | -1| -2| 0 | -3| -2| -1| -1| 1 | 2 | 2 | -2| -2| -3|   |
| U15        | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | -4| -1| 0 | 0 | 4 | -4| 3 | -1| 1 | 1 | -3| 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | -2| 1 | 1 | -1| 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | -3| 1 | 4 | -4|   |
| U16        | 2 | -3| 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | -3| 0 | 2 | -3| 0 | -1| -2| 1 | 3 | -1| 0 | 0 | -1| -4| 2 | 2 | 1 | 4 | -1| 4 | -2| -1| -1| -4|   |
| U17        | 3 | -1| 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | -2| 2 | -4| -1| -1| -2| 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | -4| -3| 0 | -1| 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | -3| 1 | 4 | -2| -4| -3|   |
| U18        | -3| 2 | 3 | 0 | -4| 4 | -1| 3 | -1| -1| -1| -1| 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | -1| 0 | 0 | -2| -3| -2| -1| 1 | 4 | -1| -4| 4 | 3 | -4| 0 | 0 |   |
| U19        | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | -1| 4 | 1 | -2| 2 | 0 | -1| -2| 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | -1| -1| 2 | 1 | 1 | -3| 4 | 4 | 4 | -4| -4| -2|   |
| R1         | 4 | -1| 4 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | -1| 2 | -1| 2 | 3 | 1 | -4| -3| -4| 2 | -2| -2| -3| 0 | 1 | -1| 0 | -2| -2| 1 | -3|   |
| R2         | 4 | -2| 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | -4| -1| 1 | -1| -3| 1 | -2| 0 | 4 | -1| -3| -2| 0 | -2| -1| 0 | 2 | -2| -4| 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | -4|   |
| R3         | -3| 1 | -1| -1| -4| 0 | 3 | -2| 0 | 1 | -3| 1 | 4 | -2| -2| -1| 2 | -1| 0 | -1| 1 | -2| 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | -4| 4 | 4 | -4| 3 | -2| -3|   |

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8 The data for participants 33-37 due to the limited space was not included. Please contact snazari@ncsu.edu, to get the full data.
### Appendix J (continued): The Q Sorts for Urban and Rural Participants

| Respondent | 1  | 2  | 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 | 32 |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| R4         | -1 | -1 | -2 | 1  | -1 | -2 | -2 | -1 | 0  | 0  | -1 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 2  | 1  | -3 | -4 | -3 | 0  | 2  | 4  | 1  | 2  | 3  | -4 | 4  | -2 | 4  | -3 | -4 |
| R5         | 4  | -1 | 1  | 2  | 4  | 0  | 3  | 1  | -2 | 4  | 2  | 1  | 3  | 2  | 1  | 1  | 2  | -3 | -2 | -4 | -1 | 0  | 3  | 0  | -1 | -3 | -4 | 2  | -2 | -2 | -3 | -1 |
| R6         | -2 | -1 | 0  | 0  | -3 | -4 | 1  | -2 | 1  | -1 | -3 | -1 | -4 | -3 | -2 | -2 | -1 | -1 | 0  | 0  | 0  | -2 | 2  | -1 | 2  | 1  | 2  | 4  | -4 | 4  | 0  | 4  | 1  | 1  |
| R7         | -2 | 4  | 0  | 4  | -1 | 0  | -2 | -1 | 1  | -2 | 1  | 2  | 2  | -3 | -3 | 1  | 3  | 1  | -3 | 0  | -1 | 2  | -1 | 3  | 2  | 4  | -4 | 2  | -4 | -1 | -2 | -4 |
| R8         | -1 | 2  | 0  | 2  | -1 | 1  | -1 | -2 | 4  | -2 | 4  | 2  | 1  | -4 | -3 | -2 | 2  | -1 | -4 | 0  | 1  | 3  | -1 | 2  | 1  | 4  | -3 | 1  | -4 | 0  | -2 | -3 |
| R9         | -1 | 4  | -1 | 2  | -1 | 1  | -2 | -2 | 2  | -2 | 0  | 3  | 2  | -3 | -3 | -2 | 3  | -1 | -3 | -1 | 1  | 2  | 0  | 4  | 2  | 3  | -4 | 1  | -4 | 0  | -2 | -4 |
| R10        | -1 | 4  | 2  | 4  | 0  | 1  | -1 | -2 | -2 | -1 | 0  | 3  | 1  | -4 | -3 | 0  | 3  | -3 | -3 | 0  | 2  | -1 | -1 | 4  | 1  | 2  | -1 | -2 | -4 | 1  | -2 | -4 |
| R11        | -1 | 2  | -1 | 4  | -2 | 0  | -2 | -1 | 3  | -2 | -1 | 3  | 1  | -4 | -3 | -2 | 4  | -1 | -4 | 0  | 1  | 1  | -1 | 4  | 2  | 3  | -3 | 0  | -3 | 2  | -2 | -4 |
| R12        | 2  | 0  | 2  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 3  | -1 | 2  | 2  | 0  | 1  | 4  | 3  | 1  | 0  | -2 | -1 | -2 | 0  | 1  | 0  | -1 | -3 | -2 | 1  | 4  | -1 | -2 | -4 |
| R13        | 4  | -3 | 4  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 0  | -2 | 4  | 2  | -3 | 0  | -2 | -2 | 2  | 1  | 0  | -4 | -1 | 2  | -1 | 0  | 1  | 1  | 3  | -4 | -1 | -2 | -3 | 0  | -4 |
| R14        | -3 | -2 | 1  | 1  | -1 | 2  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 4  | -1 | -1 | -4 | 2  | -3 | -1 | 2  | 2  | 4  | 0  | 0  | -1 | -2 | 3  | 2  | 1  | -4 | 1  | -1 | -4 | 0  | -3 |
| R15        | 4  | -2 | 2  | 3  | 2  | -2 | 1  | 3  | -1 | 3  | 1  | -4 | 0  | 1  | 2  | -1 | 1  | 1  | -2 | -2 | -2 | 0  | -1 | 2  | 4  | 2  | 0  | -4 | -1 | 1  | -3 | 0  | -3 |
| R16        | 1  | -3 | 0  | 2  | 1  | 4  | 2  | 4  | -1 | 0  | -1 | -3 | 0  | 2  | 3  | 1  | 3  | -1 | -1 | 2  | 0  | -2 | -2 | -1 | 0  | 0  | -2 | 4  | 3  | -4 | 2  | 1  |
| R17        | -1 | -1 | 1  | -1 | -1 | 1  | 2  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 4  | 0  | 4  | -2 | -1 | -1 | 1  | 3  | 0  | 2  | -2 | 0  | 1  | 1  | 2  | 4  | -4 | 3  | -4 | 3  | -2 | -2 |
| R18        | -2 | -1 | 1  | -2 | 1  | 2  | 1  | 3  | -1 | 1  | 2  | 0  | -1 | -4 | -4 | -2 | 2  | 2  | 2  | 0  | -1 | -2 | -3 | -1 | -1 | 2  | 4  | -3 | 3  | -4 | 1  | 2  | -3 |
| R19        | -1 | 1  | -2 | 4  | 4  | 2  | 3  | 1  | -1 | -1 | -3 | 1  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 0  | -1 | 0  | -4 | -2 | -1 | -4 | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0  | -4 | 3  | 0  | 2  | -2 | -3 |
| R20        | 2  | 1  | 2  | 2  | 0  | 4  | 3  | 1  | -2 | 2  | 1  | 1  | 2  | 1  | 1  | -1 | 4  | -1 | 0  | -2 | 4  | -1 | 0  | -1 | -1 | -3 | -4 | 3  | -2 | -2 | -4 | -4 |
Appendix K: The Correlation Matrix of Urban Participants. 9

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9 The data for participants U17-20 due to the limited space was not included. Please contact snazari@ncsu.edu, to get the full data.
Appendix L: The Correlation Matrix of Rural Participants.10

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10 10 The data for participants R18-R20 due to the limited space was not included. Please contact snazari@ncsu.edu, to get the full data
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Appendix P: Factor Q-Sort Values for Statements Sorted By Consensus vs. Disagreement

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Appendix Q: The Survey Used Coherently Identical Between All the Study Experiments

Step 0: Familiarization

**Instruction:** Please familiarize yourself with these images. They are 40 images taken from rural areas in North Carolina piedmont region. You will be later asked to compare the images and order them on a grid based on the degree to which you believe they are most-to-least like WHAT YOU EXPECT FROM RURAL LIFE.

![Image of images to be familiarized with](image)

**Step 1:** Obtaining consent and familiarizing with the Q sort items and research topic.

**Instruction:** Please organize your thoughts by dragging and dropping the stack of 40 images taken from rural areas in North Carolina piedmont region into one of designated piles: Most like, least like WHAT YOU EXPECT FROM RURAL LIFE and those you feel neutral about.
Step 2: The pre-sort

**Instruction:** Please distribute the images on a broader spectrum of piles (below grid), starting from those you feel are most like WHAT YOU EXPECT FROM RURAL LIFE (+4) then least like what you expect from rural life (-4). Then, continue placing the images upon which you feel less extreme gradually to the middle of the grid, i.e., pile +3, then pile -3, then pile +2, then pile -2, then pile +1, then pile -1, then pile 0.

*Note that you can change your mind anytime by moving the images between the grid cells.*
Instruction: Please explain WHY you felt extreme about those images you placed at the +4 (most like you expectations about rural life) and -4 (least like your expectations about rural life) piles. Please give us as much detail as you can.

Step 3: Reflections on the ending images of the grid
Step 4: Questionnaire

Instruction: Please answer the following questions

1) Please indicate the extent to which the following statements define you, from 1 (least like me) to 5 (most like me).
   - I am involved in cultivating crops for sale to others
   - I follow agricultural news
   - I am involved in raising small stock (e.g., chickens and rabbits)
   - I am involved in raising livestock (e.g., pigs and cattle)
   - I visit and help friends involved in farming

2) What is your gender identity?
   a) Male
   b) Female
   c) Prefer not to respond

3) Please indicate the zip code of your home address

4) What is your age?
   a) Under 12 years old
   b) 12-17 years old
   c) 18-24 years old
   d) 25-34 years old
   e) 35-44 years old
   f) 45-54 years old
   g) 55-64 years old

5) What is your race/ethnicity?

6) How much do you see yourself as belonging to a RURAL community?
   a) Extremely
   b) Very
   c) Moderately
   d) Slightly
   e) Not at all

7) How much do you identify with people who live in URBAN areas?
   a) Extremely
   b) Very
   c) Moderately
d) Slightly  
e) Not at all

8) To what extent do you feel that you are typical of people who live in RURAL communities?
   
a) Extremely  
b) Very  
c) Moderately  
d) Slightly  
e) Not at all

9) To what extent do you consider yourself an URBAN person?
   
a) Extremely  
b) Very  
c) Moderately  
d) Slightly  
e) Not at all
Appendix R: The Images Used for the VQ Surveys across the Study

Connectedness with nature
Disconnectedness with nature
Idyllic
Idyllic
Primitive/Backward
Modern/Forward
Intimidating
Peaceful
Unsystematic work
Systematic work