

Original Research Article

A study on the relationship between short-form video content expression and directional destination image correction

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Abstract: From the perspective of destination image formation, this study uses Macau short videos as a context to develop a model encompassing "perceived content expression – cultural understanding – directional adjustment of destination image," and examines the mediating role of destination familiarity. Based on 415 cross-sectional recall questionnaires, the results indicate that both perceived authenticity expression and perceived scenic expression are positively correlated with cultural understanding; cultural understanding mediates the relationship between these two expressions and deidealization and approachability adjustments; furthermore, Macau destination familiarity positively moderates the relationship between authenticity expression and cultural understanding.

Keywords: short destination videos; perception of authentic expression; perception of scenic representation; cultural understanding; directional modification of destination imagery; destination familiarity; Macau's tourism image

1. Introduction

Short video platforms have become important channels for travel information acquisition and destination perception. Through visual composition, subtitles, music, editing, and dissemination mechanisms, destinations are increasingly reconstructed beyond traditional promotion and personal experience. Previous studies show that social media and travel videos influence destination image formation, information processing, and travel decision-making (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; Gan et al., 2023).

However, existing research has insufficiently explained how audiences transform short-video perceptions into cultural understanding and subsequently modify destination images. Therefore, this study develops a mechanism model of "perceived content expression–cultural understanding–directional destination image modification" using Macau short videos as the empirical context. It examines the effects of perceived authentic and landscape-based expressions, the mediating role of cultural understanding, and the moderating role of Macau familiarity (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Chon, 1991).

2. Conceptual background and assumptions

2.1. Expression of perceived content and cultural understanding in previous experiences with short videos from different destinations

Perceived authenticity refers to audiences' perception that short videos realistically present Macau's daily life and local culture. Authenticity has been widely recognized as a perceptual construct rather than an objective attribute (Wang, 1999). Therefore:

H1: The higher the perceived authenticity of expression, the greater the cultural understanding.

H2: The higher the level of perceptual landscape expression, the greater the cultural understanding.

2.2. Cultural understanding and directional adjustment of destination image

Cultural understanding refers to audiences' ability to interpret and reconstruct Macau's lifestyle, historical context, local significance, social environment, and cultural differences through short-form videos. Rather than simple information acquisition or positive impressions, it represents a cognitive-cultural mechanism linking media representation with destination image modification (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Kim et al., 2017).

Directional destination image modification includes deidealization and affinity adjustment. Deidealization reflects the transition from stereotypical perceptions of Macau as a gambling, shopping, and consumption-oriented destination toward a more diverse and everyday understanding. Affinity adjustment refers to reduced psychological distance, increased emotional connection, and enhanced visitation intention through cultural comprehension (Kim & Chen, 2016; Trope & Liberman, 2010).

H3a: Cultural understanding positively influences deidealization modification.

H3b: Cultural understanding positively influences affinity adjustment.

H4a: Cultural understanding mediates the relationship between perceived authenticity expression and deidealization modification.

H4b: Cultural understanding mediates the relationship between perceived authenticity expression and affinity adjustment.

H4c: Cultural understanding mediates the relationship between perceived landscape representation and deidealization modification.

H4d: Cultural understanding mediates the relationship between perceived landscape representation and affinity adjustment.

2.3. Familiarity with the Macau destination as a boundary condition

Destination familiarity represents audiences' prior knowledge of Macau and may strengthen the influence of authenticity perception on cultural understanding.

H5: Macau's destination familiarity modulates the relationship between perceived authenticity and cultural understanding.

3. Method

3.1. Samples and data collection

sample characteristics detailed in **Table 1** (Qiu et al., 2024; Tan & Wu, 2016).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample and exposure patterns to short videos featuring Macau as a destination.

variable	class	frequency	percentage %
View counts over the past 6 months	1 Item	37	8.9
	2–3 items	82	19.8
	4–5 items	96	23.1
	Articles 6–10	89	21.4
	More than 10 items	84	20.2
Last viewing time	Can't remember/Can't explain clearly	27	6.5
	In the past week	105	25.3
	In the past month	136	32.8
	In the past 1–3 months	103	24.8
	Over the past 3–6 months	58	14.0
	Over 6 months ago / Can't remember	13	3.2
	Can recall quite clearly/very clearly	231	55.6
Memory clarity	Can recall some things	154	37.1
	Can only recall very little or cannot recall at all	30	7.2
sex	man	186	44.8
	woman	213	51.3
age	Refuses to disclose	16	3.9
	18–24 years old	158	38.1
	25–34 years old	144	34.7
	35 years of age and above	107	25.8
	Under 18 years of age	6	1.4
highest education	undergraduate course	228	54.9
	junior college	68	16.4
	Master's degree or higher	74	17.8
	High school and below	45	10.8

Note: N = 415. For brevity, some low-frequency categories are combined in the table. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place.

3.2. Questionnaire design and measurement tools

All constructs were measured using validated seven-point Likert scales adapted from previous tourism and destination-image studies.

3.3. Data analysis

SPSS PRO and R (lavaan) were used for descriptive statistics, CFA, SEM, mediation, and moderation analyses.

4. Research findings

4.1. Measurement model

The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Range of standardized loads, Cronbach's α , CR, and AVE.

Conception	Number of Items	Standardized Load Range	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Familiarity with the destination in Macau	6	0.707–0.736	0.869	0.869	0.526
Perception of Authenticity Expression	4	0.720–0.774	0.835	0.836	0.560
Perceiving the expression of landscape design	4	0.698–0.783	0.835	0.836	0.561
Cultural Understanding	5	0.735–0.755	0.859	0.860	0.550
Apply Idealization Correction	4	0.727–0.777	0.834	0.835	0.558
Proximity Correction	4	0.701–0.784	0.841	0.842	0.572

Note: N = 415; all standardized loads were statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level.

Discriminant validity was satisfactory based on the Fornell–Larcker criterion (results omitted for brevity).

4.2. Structural model

H1–H3 were all supported (**Table 3**).

Table 3. Results of structural path analysis.

hypothesis	way	β	SE	t	p	R ²	Result
H1	Perceiving the authenticity of expressions → Cultural understanding	0.433	0.043	10.095	<.001	0.329	support
H2	Perceiving the expression of landscape design → Understanding culture	0.126	0.043	2.953	.003	0.329	support
H3a	Cultural understanding → Deidealization and adjustment	0.395	0.053	7.450	<.001	0.217	support
H3b	Cultural understanding → Adaptation for greater familiarity	0.419	0.049	8.471	<.001	0.317	support

Note: N = 415. β = standardized path coefficient; R² represents the variance explained by the corresponding endogenous variable.

4.3. The mediating role of cultural understanding

Bootstrap results supported H4a–H4d (**Table 4**).

Table 4. Results of the mediation effect test for cultural understanding.

hypothesis	way	effect	Lower limit of 95% CI	95% CI upper limit	Result
H4a	Expression of authenticity → Cultural understanding → Deidealization and revision	0.171	0.115	0.233	support
H4b	Authentic expression → Cultural understanding → Adaptation for familiarity	0.181	0.130	0.240	support
H4c	Landscape-based expression → Cultural understanding → Deidealization and revision	0.050	0.013	0.093	support
H4d	Landscape-based expression → Cultural understanding → Adaptation for accessibility	0.054	0.014	0.095	support

Note: A bootstrap confidence interval that does not include 0 indicates a significant indirect effect.

4.4. Analysis of regulatory effects

Destination familiarity significantly moderated the relationship between authenticity perception and

cultural understanding (Table 5).

Table 5. Results of hierarchical regression analysis for adjustment effects (dependent variable: cultural understanding).

variable	M1	M2	M3	M4
Travel Interest	0.153*** (0.042)	0.086* (0.038)	0.078* (0.037)	0.078* (0.037)
Perceiving the expression of landscape design	0.267*** (0.047)	0.145*** (0.043)	0.119** (0.042)	0.124** (0.042)
Perception of Authenticity Expression		0.468*** (0.045)	0.432*** (0.045)	0.434*** (0.045)
Familiarity with the destination in Macau			0.202*** (0.042)	0.194*** (0.042)
B×A interaction term				0.102* (0.041)
R ²	0.113	0.296	0.333	0.343
adjust R ²	0.102	0.286	0.322	0.330
ΔR ²	0.113	0.183	0.037	0.010
F price	10.413***	28.597***	29.041***	26.488***

Note: N = 415; standard errors are shown in parentheses; continuous variables were centered; * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.

5. Theoretical significance

Theoretical contributions of this study are threefold. First, it extends the destination image formation framework by incorporating short-video content expression, showing that both authentic and scenic expressions promote audiences' cultural understanding. Second, it reveals that cultural understanding serves as the key mechanism through which content expression facilitates directional destination image modification. Third, it identifies destination familiarity as an important boundary condition that strengthens the relationship between authenticity perception and cultural understanding (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Kim et al., 2017; Tan & Wu, 2016).

From a practical perspective, destination marketers should combine authentic local life with iconic attractions to enhance audiences' cultural understanding. In addition, providing appropriate contextual information may improve communication effectiveness for audiences with different levels of destination familiarity (Gon, 2021; Jia et al., 2024).

This study has several limitations. The cross-sectional questionnaire design limits causal interpretation, and the findings may not be fully generalizable beyond the Macau context. Future research could adopt experimental designs and cross-destination comparisons to further examine the influence of different short-video strategies on destination image modification (Gan et al., 2023; Qiu et al., 2024).

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