

Analysis of Discrepancies Between Destination Image and Tourists' Perceived Image: Taking Fuzhou as a Case

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Abstract: Taking Fuzhou as a case study, this research analyzes tourist network travel notes, online comments, and official website reports of the tourism bureau, and uses the word frequency statistical function of semantic analysis software to extract high-frequency words of tourist perception and official website projection of tourism image, and constructs social relations and semantic networks to compare and analyze tourist perception and official website dissemination of tourism image. The research results show that the Fuzhou tourism image perceived by tourists can be summarized into four dimensions: tourist attractions, tourism environment atmosphere, tourism facilities and services, and tourism experience. Tourists' perception of tourist attractions is consistent with the official projection, and Sanfang Qixiang and hot springs have become representative resources of Fuzhou. The key points of official propaganda are inconsistent with the focus of tourist perception. The Fuzhou Tourism Bureau should pay more attention to tourism hotspots such as historical buildings in the city and Pingtan Island scenery, and actively create an ecological leisure city, focusing on parent-child study tours and rural revitalization. Tourists prefer historical buildings in the city and Pingtan Island scenery. Finally, based on the research conclusions, targeted suggestions are proposed for Fuzhou's tourism promotion.

Keywords: tourist perceived image, projected image, Fuzhou

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The rapid development of the Internet has further promoted the diversification of tourism virtual communities, with the emergence of tourism websites and tourism social spaces. The diversification of communication media has facilitated the dissemination of tourism destination images, but it has also made the representation of tourism images more complex, posing a serious challenge to the marketing and management of tourism destinations in the future [1]. Due to the differences in tourism motives, intentions, and positions, third-party communication media such as official tourism destination websites and Ctrip interpret destination images from the supply perspective and demand perspective, respectively, which makes certain differences between the tourism destination image that

official tourism departments try to disseminate and the tourism destination image perceived by tourists [2]. This is because the tourism projected image is often shaped subjectively, while the tourist perceived image is detached [3]. Therefore, assessing and studying the relationship between the two images can help to better understand destination marketing and tourist behavior, which is important for the official authorities to adjust tourism marketing plans, carry out innovative marketing, improve tourist satisfaction and willingness to revisit, and provide a reference basis for image shaping and communication of tourism destinations [4].

1.2. Literature Review

Destination image.

Tourism image refers to the impression and perception formed in tourists' minds by tourism destinations or tourism products, including the image of natural environment, human landscape, tourism products and services of tourism destinations, which is the core competitiveness of tourism destinations and an important factor to attract tourists. Research on tourism image began in the 1970s and initially focused on image building and promotion of tourism destinations [5]. With the development of tourism and the continuous innovation of research methods, many scholars have explored the influence of online media on the image of tourism destinations from an online perspective, especially the shaping and dissemination of user-generated content on large tourism websites and social media on the image of tourism destinations. In order to assess the image of tourism destinations more accurately and reduce the degree of subjective intervention of the measurer, some scholars have combined unstructured and structured methods to establish a new measurement model, which provides new ideas and methods for tourism destination image research [6].

Projecting images.

Tourism projected image refers to the image presented by tourism destinations or tourism products in the market, including government and corporate promotional advertisements, media reports, word-of-mouth communication, etc. For example, scholar Li Na believes that projected image is a marketing tool for tourism destinations, which can be disseminated through official promotional materials and media reports to influence tourists' tourism decisions [7]. Early research on projected image mainly concentrated on the analysis of certified promotional materials of destinations, and later gradually developed into a comparative study of tourists' perceived image and projected image. In recent years, with the popularity of the Internet, more and more scholars have started to understand the projected image of destinations by analyzing the content of authorized promotional materials, media reports, travel blogs and so on, starting from online resources [8].

Study of differences in tourism image communication.

The tourism projected image is the image transmitted to the outside world by the official or unofficial institutions of the tourism destination through diverse channels, while the tourist perceived image is the tourist's perception and evaluation of the destination in the actual tourism process [9]. It is noted that there is a definite difference between tourism projected image and tourist perceived image, and this difference may be due to factors such as the subjectivity of tourism promotion, the prejudiced feelings of tourists and the actual situation of tourism destinations. The focus of the comparative study of tourism projected image and tourist perception image is to explore in depth the consistency and difference between the two, analyze the influencing factors, optimize the marketing strategy, improve tourist satisfaction and loyalty, and promote the sustainable development of tourism [10].

2. Methodology

2.1. Content Analysis Methodology

Content analysis is a research method that transforms non-systematic qualitative symbolic content (e.g., text, images, etc.) into systematic and quantitative data information. In this paper, we adopt this method and use ROST Content Mining Content Mining System software to analyze Fuzhou-related travel guides and official promotional materials, and carry out a comparative study of the differences in 3 aspects: high-frequency words, semantic networks, and emotional images.

2.2. Selection of Sample Websites and Case Sites

Ctrip is a part of the largest online travel service providers in China. It provides travel tips, travelogues, attraction reviews, hotel bookings and airline ticket bookings, and is the preferred platform for travel enthusiasts. As of March 2021, Ctrip has over 450 million registered users, of which, the number of active users reached 180 million, with an average daily visitation of over 5 million. Relying on its huge user base, it has 789 popular travel tips about Fuzhou and 6,155 recommendations for attractions, with high authenticity and initiative of text content. The official website of Fuzhou Culture and Tourism Bureau is a great information platform for tourism promotion in Fuzhou. It has a special section “Meet Fuzhou”, which introduces a variety of Fuzhou tourism routes, such as cultural monuments, natural scenery, food and culture, etc. Therefore, this paper uses Ctrip.com as the sample website for travelers’ travelogues and the publicity report of Fuzhou Culture and Tourism Bureau as the sample website for official publicity materials.

Fuzhou is a part of the famous historical and cultural cities in China, with a long history and rich cultural heritage. By the end of 2022, there were 61 A-class scenic spots in Fuzhou, including 16 scenic spots of 4A level and above. During the National Day holiday in 2022, Fuzhou was received by 4.0780 million visitors, an increase of 61.6% year-on-year, and achieved a tourism revenue of 2.60 billion yuan. According to the “2022 National Day Tourism Consumption Trend Report” released by Touniu Travel, Fuzhou was selected as “In recent years, Fuzhou government and tourism department have been actively promoting the development of Fuzhou tourism by strengthening tourism infrastructure construction, holding festivals and events to promote the Fuzhou cultural tourism brand, and as Fuzhou tourism continues to increase its popularity, there are numerous travelogues and travel reports related to Fuzhou tourism on the Internet. In order to figure out the difference between the projected image of Fuzhou tourism and the actual perceived image of tourists, and to better shape the Foochow culture brand, this paper therefore chooses Fuzhou as the research object.

2.3. Data Collection and Pre-processing

The data in this paper are mainly obtained from two parts: firstly, travelers’ comments on Fuzhou travel tips or tourist attractions (points) published on online platforms (hereinafter referred to as “travelogue sample”); secondly, the main news about Fuzhou tourism published on the official website of Fuzhou Culture and Tourism Bureau (hereinafter referred to as “official sample”). (known as the “official sample”). In this paper, we searched the Ctrip travel portal with “Fuzhou” as the keyword, and the time range was from April 2018 to April 2023. The official sample was obtained from the Fuzhou Culture and Tourism Bureau. The official sample was obtained from the “Travel in Fuzhou” and “Cultural and Tourism Information” web texts of the “Meet Fuzhou” section of the Fuzhou Culture and Tourism Bureau, and the same time interval was used to obtain 112 pieces of news and information, totaling 52,381 words. A total of 112 news articles with a total of 52,381 words were obtained.

3. Comparative Analysis of Projected Image and Perceived Image of Tourists in Fuzhou

3.1. Comparative Analysis of Tourism Image Classification

Table 1: Categories of perceived and official projected images of Fuzhou tourists.

Main category	Subcategory	Visitor perception (some high frequency words)	Official projection (some high-frequency words)
Tourist attraction	Human landscape	Three lanes and seven alleys Park West Lake Architecture Museum Shangxiahang Ancient town	Village Base Historical and cultural block Three lane seven lane Museum Ancient town
	Natural landscape	Hot spring Beach Sea Minjiang Waterfall	Hot spring Forest
Tourism environment atmosphere	Position environment	Pingtai Yongtai Mawei	Yongtai Mawei Minhou Lianjiang
	Social environment	History Culture	Leisure Parent-child Ecology
Tourist facilities and services	Transportation infrastructure	Public Transport	Ticket Discount Free
	Tourism service	Ticket Hotel	Route Travel agency Tourists Study further Performance Show

Table 1: (continued).

Tourist propaganda	Tourist propaganda	——	Hold Launch Create Benefits people
Tourism experience and evaluation	Traveling experience	Feature Experience Delicious Flavour Rich	Enjoy Experience Leisure Happiness

“During the “14th Five-Year Plan” period, Fuzhou actively promoted the construction of Mindu cultural brand and continued to enhance the construction of historical and cultural districts such as Sanfang Qi Xiang, Shang Shang Shang Hang and Yantai Mountain. “architecture”, “park”, “hot spring”, “Shangxiahang”, “museum”, and the official reports of tourism attraction also focus on “Sanfang Qi Xiang”, “historical district”, “hot spring” and “museum”. Museums”, tourists’ perceptions of Fuzhou’s tourism attractions are consistent with official communication, which indicates that Fuzhou’s perceived image has been affirmed by tourists after long-term government promotion and development.

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In terms of tourism environment atmosphere, there are significant differences between tourists’ perceptions and official projections, with tourists perceiving history and cultural atmosphere, while official efforts are made to promote ecological leisure, probably because the high-frequency words in the official sample are mainly reflected in the planning of Fuzhou tourism industry, the creation of a model city of whole-area ecological tourism, short-term tourism policies and reports of festival series activities, indicating that the Fuzhou Culture and Tourism Bureau is seriously The implementation of the “14th Five-Year Plan” for tourism development issued by the State Council.

In terms of tourism facilities and services, it can be seen that officials actively provide tourists with services such as route design, travel agency recommendations, entertainment performances, and ticket discounts, but tourists perceive less of them, which shows that Fuzhou’s tourism services need to be improved, and no service characteristics have been formed in accommodation, entertainment, and shopping.

3.2. Preference Analysis

The frequency of occurrence of the tourist attraction in the two samples reflects the importance that government departments attach to the scenic spot and the preference of tourists for it, respectively [11-12]. From the high-frequency words in the text of the official report of the Cultural and Tourism Bureau, it is found that “hold,” “launch,” “build,” “benefit the people,” “rural” “base” “study”

“education” “parent-child” “leisure” “ecological” and other high-frequency words, indicating that the official focus on the revitalization of the countryside, efforts to build Yongtai, Minhou area for research and education base and ecological leisure resort. Ctrip travel guide mainly focuses on the description of Pingtan area and Fuzhou city attractions (the sea, Sanfang Qi Xiang, hot springs, architecture, etc.), and tourists focus more on tourism experience and feelings, such as (featured Experience Good food Taste) indicating that tourists are still more positive about the evaluation of Fuzhou’s tourism resources.

In addition, when screening and reading the data samples, it was found that the content released by the authorized website of Fuzhou Cultural and Tourism Bureau mainly recommended tourism routes, with parent-child tours and study tours as the theme [13]. The tour dates are mainly short trips of 1 to 2 days, and the recommended scenic spots are mostly located in the counties of Fuzhou, such as Changle, Langqi and Yongtai. Tourism activities mainly focus on folk festivals, tourism festivals and picking festivals to encourage tourists to travel to the countryside and promote rural revitalization. In terms of artistic promotion, it focuses on folk culture and she culture, and guides citizens and tourists to understand Fuzhou’s culture by holding cultural festivals. In general, the promotion of the Cultural Tourism Bureau is mainly aimed at the consumer groups within Fuzhou City or Fujian Province. The Ctrip website, on the other hand, provides travel tips about Fuzhou, mostly involving places like Quanzhou, Xiamen and Wuyishan, with multi-day tours. The focus of tourists from other provinces is mainly in Sanfang Qixiang and Shangxiahang in Fuzhou city, and less and less travel to Yongtai, Minhou and other county areas. However, the sought-after enthusiasm for Pingtan is high, which shows that the natural scenery such as the ocean beach of Pingtan is more attractive to tourists. In general, the official focus on rural tourism activities promotion, tourists prefer Pingtan and activities in the city.

3.3. Semantic Network Analysis of Tourism Image

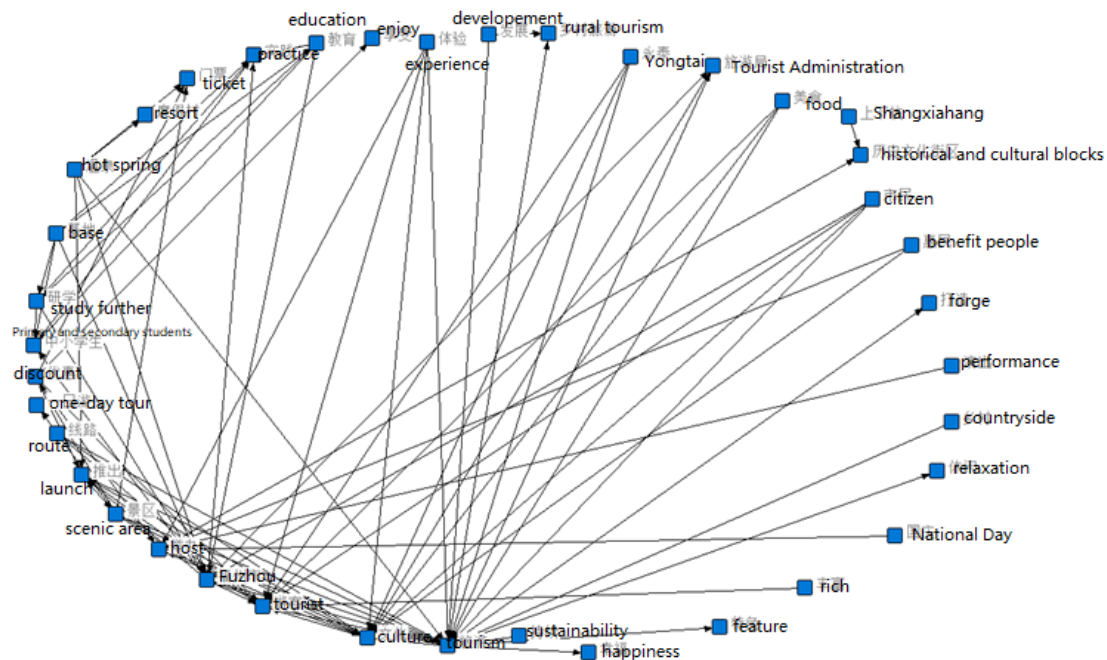


Figure 1: Network text semantic network diagram.

content is historical and cultural architecture, and the natural landscape perception is mainly “hot springs”, which is relatively single. Therefore, Fuzhou can expand the promotion of tourism resources in the future, highlighting natural landscapes such as jasmine flowers, wetlands and oceans to guide tourists’ all-round perception of Fuzhou’s image.

Tourists have a high degree of enthusiasm for the tourist attractions in Fuzhou city, and a relatively low perception of the attractions in the county, except for Pingtan County, which attracts a large number of tourists because of its unique marine scenery, which also reflects the great gap in the level of tourism development of each district and county. Acceptance is low. In order to promote the balanced development of each district, the government can design ecological theme tour routes, link the less fashionable tourism resources in the suburbs with the popular Pingtan, and launch preferential activities, thus playing a role in linkage development.

Lack of communal atmosphere and insufficient excavation of Mindu culture and She culture. The perception of tourists in terms of social environment atmosphere is rather monotonous, involving only the historical and cultural atmosphere created by the scenic spots, and the perception of local residents and culture is deficient. Despite the fact that there is official promotion of the folk culture festival, the exhibition and performance are the main activities, and there are fewer activities for tourists to experience first-hand. In the future, Fuzhou can strengthen the creation of social atmosphere, grasp the positioning of ecological leisure city, and build a first-class tourism and leisure city with comfortable climate, livable environment, leisure life style, characteristic Fuzhou taste, refreshing jasmine fragrance, and traditional tea production to brand jasmine tea culture.

4. Conclusions and Implications of the Study

This study takes Fuzhou as an example and conducts a comparative analysis of tourists’ online travelogues and reports on the official website of the Bureau of Culture and Tourism, and draws the following conclusions:

Tourists’ perceptions of Fuzhou’s tourism attractions are consistent with the official projections, in terms of humanistic landscape, the old neighborhoods with Ming and Qing Dynasty architectural features are the most popular tourism cards in Fuzhou, and the history of Fuzhou’s traditional architecture represented by “Sanfang Qi Xiang” and “Shang Shang Shang Hang” is deeply rooted in people’s hearts. The culture of Fuzhou’s traditional architecture, represented by the “Three Square and Seven Lanes” and “Shang Shang Shang Hang”, is deeply rooted in people’s hearts. Secondly, the brand of hot spring capital has been established, and the official promotion of Fuzhou’s unique natural resources has achieved good results and is successfully perceived by tourists.

Officials focus on the promotion of rural tourism activities, while tourists prefer activities within the city. In recent years, Fuzhou City has been actively building a model city for eco-tourism in the whole area, and has held folk culture festivals in Yongtai, Mawei and Minhou counties to boost the rural economy, but tourists’ perception of Fuzhou’s positioning as an eco-leisure city is extremely low.

Officials disseminate Fuzhou’s tourism image from the macro level, implement central policies and urban planning positioning, and focus on tourism public facilities services and rural revitalization development. Tourists mainly focus on the local specialties, interesting entertainment programs and the architectural neighborhoods where they can take photos from their personal experience.

In addition, the research in this paper only selected the reviews of one tourism website, Ctrip, and the content of one section of the official website of the Fuzhou City Bureau of Culture and Tourism, and the tourist user groups are mainly young people who use the Internet frequently and are willing to share, so the research process may have overlooked other groups, and future research can expand the scope of data collection and select different sample groups. To study the differences between the projected image of tourism and the perceived image of tourists by different groups of tourists, how to

target marketing strategies to improve the satisfaction of different groups of tourists, and to explore how to shape and communicate the destination image through different media channels and marketing strategies.

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