

Optimizing Heritage Study Tour Spaces in Tourist Attractions: A Scene Theory Approach

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Abstract

This study focuses on consumer groups participating in Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) study-tour, conducting field surveys through questionnaire distribution at major historical and cultural sites in Nanjing, including Xinanli Historic Block, Nanjing Yunjin Museum, and Nanjing Chaotian Palace Museum - all recognized hubs for ICH study-tour. Employing scene theory as the analytical framework, the research examines tourists' perceptions and expectations regarding ICH study tour spaces, identifies key factors influencing visitor satisfaction, and proposes corresponding spatial optimization strategies. The empirical results demonstrate that among the subjective perception dimensions of ICH study tour spaces, dramatic quality exerts the most direct impact on satisfaction ($\beta=0.609$, $p<0.001$). While authenticity and legitimacy influence satisfaction indirectly through mediating variables, legitimacy shows a significant negative effect on dramatic quality ($\beta=-1.110$). Based on these findings, we propose establishing a tripartite synergistic mechanism for ICH study tour spaces, characterized by: 1. Authenticity as foundation - preserving cultural veracity; 2. Dramatic quality as driver - enhancing interactive experiences; 3. Legitimacy as safeguard - ensuring policy compliance; This integrated approach aims to optimize ICH study tour spaces through balanced cultural preservation, engaging experiential elements, and regulatory coordination.

Keywords

Scene theory, intangible cultural heritage study-tour, spatial optimization, structural equation modeling.

1. Research Background

Study-tour, as an educational activity that provides learners with authentic learning scenarios, have increasingly demonstrated their potential in enhancing the value of tourist attractions. The integration of ICH into scenic areas has created more immersive sensory experiences for heritage study-tour, fostering empathy and engagement among participants. ICH-themed study tour products enrich the cultural offerings of tourist sites, deepen their cultural significance, and promote the evolution and consumption of ICH products.

In recent years, China has introduced increasingly clear policies to promote study-tour and the integration of ICH with tourism. Since February 2013, when the General Office of the State Council issued the National Tourism and Leisure Outline (2013-2020) advocating the "gradual implementation of study-tour for primary and secondary school students," various forms of study-tour—including science-themed, red tourism, eco-tourism, ICH-focused, agricultural/industrial, and art-experience study-tour—have flourished nationwide. Subsequently, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the State Council have rolled out policies to Advance the integrated development of ICH and tourism by supporting the organic

incorporation of ICH into scenic areas and encouraging public participation in ICH education and training through practical activities and study-tour;[1]Develop distinctive ICH-themed tourist routes, study tour products, and performance-based offerings;[2] Define key tasks such as embedding ICH into tourism spaces, establishing experiential bases, and cultivating specialized routes, while encouraging tourist attractions to collaborate with ICH representative projects to enhance presentation methods and diversify tourism products.[3]On April 22, 2021, Jiangsu Province pioneered the Guidelines for Integrating ICH into Scenic Areas Without Designated Spaces (Trial), followed by the announcement of 25 pilot projects, including ICH integrations in Confucius Temple, Lingshan Buddha Scenic Area, and Yaowan Ancient Town. Against the policy backdrop of "ICH integration into scenic areas without spatial constraints," the rapid expansion of ICH-themed settings in tourist sites has provided rich experiential scenarios for heritage study-tour, elevating the cultural value of attractions and boosting tourism consumption. Consequently, scenic areas have become natural spaces for ICH dissemination and study-tour.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Current Research Status of ICH Study-tour

International scholarship on educational tourism has predominantly focused on participation motivations, influencing factors, and local development impacts. Smith et al. (2016), Axford et al. (2010) [4], and Hussein (2022) [5] categorize influencing factors into internal (student-related) and external (destination resources, expenditure levels, etc.) dimensions. Matahir et al. (2017) [6], Tomasi et al. (2020) [7], and Basri et al. (2023) [8] examine international study-tour, demonstrating how they enhance destination learning and promote sustainable local economic development.

Domestic scholars have investigated ICH spaces from multiple perspectives, including heritage sites and folk culture villages. Notable contributions include:Yang Ningdong et al. (2014), applying "Third Space" theory, propose that tourists' perception of authenticity is dynamic, capable of generating hybrid cultural forms distinct from mainstream and ethnic traditions [9].Fang Zhongkai (2023) advocates strengthening life-world connections in nature education curricula and optimizing spatial dimensions to enhance ecological value recognition[10]. Guo Yanbing (2021) emphasizes creating narrative-rich environments for ICH study-tour, prioritizing heritage transmission centers and museums as ideal destinations[11].

While existing research has advanced understanding of tourist experiences, cultural identity, curriculum design, and market development in ICH study-tour, significant gaps remain. Particularly, few studies systematically examine how optimized spatial scenarios affect visitor behavior and experience - a research void this study addresses through scene theory.

2.2. Scene Theory and Framework Construction

As a pivotal theory in post-industrial society studies, scene theory provides a novel perspective for understanding urban spaces and cultural consumption. Developed by a research team led by Professor Terry Clark from the University of Chicago, this conceptual framework defines "scenes" as cultural spaces comprising consumption patterns, experiences, symbols, values, and lifestyles. These spaces transcend physical locations to embody complex assemblages of social relations, cultural meanings, and consumption behaviors. Scene theory primarily comprises three core dimensions - Authenticity, Legitimacy, and Dramatic quality - which are interrelated and collectively shape the distinctive attributes of a scene. Beyond the objective structure of physical space, cultural scene theory also incorporates a subjective cognitive system, forming an interpretive framework that includes 3 primary cultural-value dimensions and 15 sub-dimensions [12].

Building upon the fundamental tenets of scene theory, this study conceptualizes the subjective cognitive system of ICH study tour spaces through a tripartite framework: Authenticity - Measured through: ICH artifacts, Instructors' attire/makeup, Teaching ambiance, Local characteristics, Cultural reproduction. Legitimacy - Evaluated by: Knowledge acquisition, Cultural identity, Heritage safeguarding, Site services, Safety protocols. Dramatic quality - Assessed via: Interactive experiences, Tradition innovation, Charismatic presentation, Welcoming atmosphere, Personal expression. Focusing on consumer groups, we investigate: The subjective perception system of ICH study tour spaces. Factors influencing public satisfaction. Spatial optimization strategies to enhance participation and satisfaction.

3. Data Sources and Sample Characteristics

The data for this study were collected during the summer of 2024 through random sampling surveys conducted at historical and cultural scenic spots in Nanjing, including Xinanli Block, Yunjin Brocade Museum, and Chaotian Palace Museum—areas with a high concentration of ICH study-tour activities. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, with 309 valid responses retained, yielding an effective recovery rate of 88.3%.

Among the valid questionnaires, the number of female respondents was greater than that of male respondents, accounting for 65% and 35% respectively. In terms of age, the proportion of respondents aged 13-15 was the highest, while those aged 16-18 accounted for the least. Respondents aged 12-22 made up over 80% of the sample. Regarding occupation, the proportion of students was the largest, at 82.8%. The majority of the respondents were young students, and the main audience of the ICH study-tour in the scenic area was also young students. In terms of average monthly disposable income, 60.5% of the respondents had an income of less than 1,500 yuan, which was in line with the situation of the student group.

4. Impact of ICH Study-tour Spaces on Public Satisfaction

Table 1. Summary of Research Hypotheses on Factors Influencing ICH Study-tour Satisfaction

Hypothesis	Content	Theoretical Basis
H1	The Dramatic quality of ICH study-tour has a significant positive impact on tourist satisfaction.	Theatrical elements (e.g., interactive experiences, digital technology) enhance visitor engagement and satisfaction (Axford et al., 2010) [13].
H2	The authenticity of ICH study-tour has a significant positive impact on Dramatic quality.	Authentic cultural contexts (e.g., ICH techniques, traditional architecture) provide a foundation for theatrical presentation (Clark, 2011) [14].
H3	The Dramatic quality of ICH study-tour has a significant negative impact on legitimacy.	Excessive dramatization may undermine visitors' perception of the seriousness of ICH preservation (Hussein, 2022) [15].
H4	The legitimacy of ICH study-tour has a significant positive impact on authenticity.	Standardized management (e.g., safety measures, services) helps maintain ICH authenticity (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2021) [16].
H5	The legitimacy of ICH study-tour has a significant positive impact on Dramatic quality.	Legal frameworks (e.g., ICH protection policies) support innovation in theatrical experiences (Tomasi et al., 2020) [17].

To investigate the relationship between ICH study-tour spaces and public satisfaction, this study employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. Based on the subjective cognitive

dimensions of ICH study-tour spaces and relevant theoretical frameworks, we established a structural model and proposed the following hypotheses (Table 1). Using the SPSSAU online analysis tool, we conducted correlation analyses to examine the interrelationships between variables, with the summarized model regression coefficients presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Model Regression Coefficients

Path	Std. Coefficient (β)	Unstd. Coefficient (B)	Std. Error (SE)	z-value(CR)	p-value	Conclusion
Dramatic quality → Satisfaction	0.609**	0.356	0.059	6.071	0.000*	Significant
Authenticity → Dramatic quality	0.380**	0.458	0.063	7.291	0.000*	Significant
Dramatic quality → Legitimacy	-1.110**	-1.085	0.079	-13.710	0.000*	Significant (Negative)
Legitimacy → Authenticity	0.988**	0.838	0.085	9.891	0.000*	Significant
Legitimacy → Dramatic quality	0.650**	0.665	0.074	8.942	0.000*	Significant

(Notes: → denotes directional relationship in the structural model\ ** indicates significance at the 1% level)

The analysis reveals two critical pathways that align with Clark's (2011) Scenario Theory[18]: Authenticity → Dramatic quality ($\beta=0.380$, $p<0.001$), Dramatic quality → Satisfaction ($\beta=0.609$, $p<0.001$). Legitimacy shows a significantly positive correlation with authenticity ($\beta=0.988$), but its relationship with dramatic quality exhibits both positive ($\beta=0.650$) and negative ($\beta=-1.110$) effects.

While these findings may appear contradictory, they actually reflect a complex dynamic equilibrium mechanism in this cultural consumption context. On one hand, legitimacy provides institutional safeguards and resource support, creating foundational conditions for dramatic innovation. On the other hand, excessive compliance processes may constrain creative freedom, which aligns with the "Cultural Preservation Paradox" proposed by Hussein (2022) [19].

The satisfaction of ICH study tour participants is primarily driven directly by dramatic quality, while authenticity and legitimacy exert influence through indirect pathways (e.g., authenticity → dramatic quality, legitimacy → authenticity). Scenic areas should prioritize interactive experience design while ensuring the standardization and authenticity of cultural presentations.

5. Optimizing ICH Study Tour Spaces in Scenic Areas

5.1. Enhancing Immersive Scenario Experiences

Design interactive immersion programs by integrating AR/VR technologies to create virtual ICH environments. Engage visitors through role-playing activities and ICH-themed mission challenges, utilizing NPCs (non-player characters) to guide them through diverse narrative tasks, thereby boosting participation enthusiasm and interactive communication.

Strengthen community involvement by inviting local residents and ICH inheritors to conduct on-site demonstrations. Regularly organize ICH exhibitions, folk festivals, and cultural celebrations while avoiding excessive commercialization. Ensure all presentations adhere to

traditional norms, achieving a dynamic balance between exhibition and performance. This approach allows tourists to experience authentic ICH living scenarios.

5.2. Balancing Compliance and Innovation

Standardize management and educational functions by prohibiting the fictionalization of core techniques or historical origins. Dramatic adaptations of ICH must prioritize the preservation of its authenticity, ensuring innovations do not compromise the seriousness of heritage safeguarding.

5.3. Optimizing Spatial Layout and Facilities

Implement zoning-by-function design to create distinct areas: Static Exhibition Zone, Dynamic Experience Zone, Hands-on workshops with inheritors, Leisure-Commerce Zone. Supporting Infrastructure Upgrades: Enhanced smart navigation systems with multi-language AR wayfinding. Ergonomic rest areas blending local architectural features. Universal accessibility compliant with ADA/ISO standards.

5.4. Policy and Collaborative Mechanisms

Establish a "Protection-Development-Benefit" through tripartite cooperation. Implement real-time visitor feedback systems with AI sentiment analysis. Align operations with *China's 14th Five-Year Plan for ICH Protection*, *Jiangsu's Guidelines for Boundary-Free ICH Integration in Scenic Areas*. Legitimize digital displays (AR/VR) and dramatic interactions through: Fiscal incentives for tech-enabled heritage interpretation, PPP (Public-Private Partnership) models for sustainable financing.

6. Conclusion

The ICH study-tour spaces in scenic areas must establish a tripartite collaborative mechanism based on "authenticity as foundation, dramatic engagement as attraction, and institutional legitimacy as safeguard." This framework effectively enhances visitor satisfaction and participation through three key approaches: safeguarding cultural authenticity, creating interactive experiences, and implementing policy coordination - ultimately achieving high-quality development of both ICH study-tour and scenic area tourism.

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