

# Audience Participation and Destination Image: The Popular Traditional Cultural Program

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**Abstract-**With the in-depth development of cultural tourism integration, the popularity of cultural programs may boost the development of tourism. This paper takes the Tang Palace Night Banquet series of cultural programs on Henan TV as an example, and studies the differences in the perceptions of destination image among different groups by comparing the different stages (First stage: Non-participating group VS Participating group)×(Second stage: Low participating group VS Medium participating group VS High participating group). The results of the study show: the participation in excellent traditional cultural programs can positively influence the audience's destination image perception; there are significant differences in destination image perception among different participation groups; the high participation group can construct a positive and significantly different destination image. Thus, combined with marketing theory from the perspective of marketing content, target market and marketing channels to provide some suggestions to achieve innovative marketing of tourism destinations.

**Keywords-** destination image; audience participation; cultural programs; perceived differences

## 1. Introduction

In the Spring Festival Gala 2021, Henan TV's *Tang Palace Night Banquet* successfully became well-known and attracted wide attention and discussion on many online social media. As a result, the image of Henan Province has changed from a province of population and a province of grain to a province of culture with the deep cultural heritage, truly realizing *Culture Enhancing Province* <sup>[1,2]</sup>. Thus, cultural marketing as one of the important means of shaping the image of the destination <sup>[3]</sup>, the successful cultural program plays a positive role in establishing a positive image of destinations. But is there any difference in the impact of cultural programs on the different dimensions of destination image? Is there any difference in the perception of destination image between different levels of audience engagement? Since there is no definite conclusion, this paper takes them as the starting point for discussion.

In movie and TV tourism, the influence of film and TV on destination image is derived from the filming process of film and TV itself and relevant things <sup>[4]</sup>. The core content of cultural programs is rooted in the long-standing excellent traditional culture. Cultural programs are aimed at the general public, with the purpose of cultural education, shouldering the mission of cultural transmission, and constantly pursuing innovation in form and content with the development of technology <sup>[5]</sup>. Nowadays, the research on the combination of cultural programs and destination image is more focused on the influence of pan-cultural programs including film

and TV and tourism performing art on the image of tourism destinations, but few studies have been conducted on the combination of cultural programs and tourism destination images using traditional culture as the dissemination content.

Therefore, this paper takes cultural programs such as *Tang Palace Night Banquet* on Henan TV as an example, combines user behavior participation theory to distinguish the degree of audience participation, and uses the Likert scale to measure audience's perception of destination image in different dimensions by using questionnaires, and conducts differential analysis in stages. Through quantitative analysis, we aim to understand the influence of cultural programs and the differences in destination image among different participant groups. It will help to better realize the *14th Five-Year Plan*, which mentions "the creation, production and dissemination of outstanding cultural works" and "the promotion of the integration of culture and tourism".

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Audience Participation**

With development of media, the delivery of information has shifted from one-way to interactive delivery, and the audience is not only the receiver of information. Therefore, audience participation is receiving more and more attention in the media field<sup>[6]</sup>. In the era of TV as the main media, audience participation refers to the direct or indirect involvement of audience in the production and broadcasting of television programs through certain channels<sup>[7]</sup>. Based on the level of participation, the audience can be divided into light viewers, viewers, lovers and contributors<sup>[8]</sup>. According to the specific participation behavior, the participant behavior can be divided into interactive and non-interactive. With the rapid development of Internet, new media-based user engagement is gaining more and more attention.

### **2.2 Tourism Destination Image Dimension**

Tourism destination image is the combination of individual impressions, perceptions and emotions of destination<sup>[9]</sup>. And destination image is a multidimensional concept<sup>[10]</sup>. Different scholars have put forward different views on it. Among them, cognitive image and affective image are generally recognized. For the measurement of different dimensions of destination image, scholars have also summarized and generalized the corresponding methods. Russell (1980) indicates that human emotional dimensions are interrelated, proposing the structure of unpleasant-happy, depressed-excited, sleepy-excited, and painful-easy emotional experiences<sup>[11]</sup>. Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) verified the applicability of this affective spatial structure to large scale environments, breaking through the original destination image research that was limited to the cognitive image dimension, and providing new ideas for affective image research<sup>[12]</sup>.

### **2.3 Audience engagement and destination image of cultural programs**

Cultural variety shows have become a new hotspot based on the combination of government, media and audience<sup>[13,14]</sup>. With the gradual shift from pan-entertainment to pan-culture in TV program, they fully demonstrate China's excellent traditional culture<sup>[15]</sup>. At present, there is no unified definition for cultural programs. However, it is indisputable that culture is the core and

soul of such programs<sup>[16]</sup>. With the further integration of culture and tourism, it is important to take advantage of the inclusiveness and wide communication capability of cultural programs to provide a boost to tourism development. However, the research on cultural programs and tourism destination image is still relatively rare. Wang Yukun et al.(2019) argue that the integration of culture with the program through diversified, living, storytelling is more conducive to creating destination image. And through government participation, stage competition and audience voting to improve audience participation to convey the content of program<sup>[17]</sup>. Bu(2014) believes that the program combines authentic and diversified narrative means to convey the local culture can attract the audience's recognition and resonance<sup>[18]</sup>. In addition, Xiong (2017) points out that the positive behaviors of public marketing subjects in cultural programs can also have a positive impact on the shaping of destination images<sup>[19]</sup>.

In summary, it is evident that the successful cultural programs can provide an effective contribution to shaping the image of tourism destinations, and only program content that shows distinctive regional culture can guide the audience to form a unique destination image better. In addition, most existing studies take the perspective of program producers to discuss how to successfully create and innovate cultural programs, but lack the audience's perspective to analyze the impact and effect of cultural programs. Moreover, most of the studies are conducted from the perspective of media and art, with a focus on qualitative analysis and a lack of empirical analysis. Therefore, combining the theory of user participation behavior, this paper studies the differences in the perceptions of different levels of audience participation on the cognitive and affective images of destinations, and investigates the impact of popular cultural programs on the image of destinations.

### **3. Study Design**

#### **3.1 Questionnaire design**

The measurement of destination image dimension is mainly divided into cognitive image and affective image. The measure of cognitive image was mainly adopted from domestic and foreign scholars' cognitive image items and modified with the characteristics of Henan destination to form 13 questions<sup>[20,21,22]</sup>. Affective image mainly refers to the four affective image dimensions proposed by Baloglu and Brinberg, and combines them with related studies to form the corresponding questions<sup>[12,23]</sup>. The above questions are all on a 5-point Likert scale, with a score of 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. In addition, fewer studies have measured the level of audience involvement in TV programs. The level of involvement in the production process of products or services is generally divided by vertical depth levels, mostly high, medium and low levels or high and medium levels<sup>[24]</sup>, and objective indicators such as number of times and items are mostly used as measurement criteria in the setting of questions<sup>[25]</sup>. Therefore, this paper is based on the analysis of the Tang Palace. Therefore, in this paper, the format (text, picture, video), completeness (having watched part of the program in its entirety), and number (the number of programs watched) of information about the series of *Tang Palace Night Banquet* are used as indicators to measure the degree of audience engagement in the program, which is divided into low, medium and high engagement groups.

### **3.2 Questionnaire collection**

A total of 259 valid questionnaires were returned, of which the number of groups with no knowledge of the program at all was 48, and the number of groups with low, medium and high participation was 104, 73 and 34. In this questionnaire survey, the ratio of men to women is close to 1:4; the age of 18-30 years old accounts for the largest proportion, reaching 90.38%; the education level of undergraduate and college accounts for the largest 67.31%, and a total of 94.62% of college and above.

### **3.3 Research Methodology**

This paper uses a two-stage analysis of variance. First, the cognitive images were divided into dimensions using factor analysis, and the affective images were subdivided according to excitement, pleasure, relaxation and novelty in the question items. Secondly, we compared the differences in the stages: in the first stage, we compared the perceptions of the non-participating and participating audiences on the image of Henan destinations; in the second stage, we compared the differences in the perceptions of the audiences with different degrees of participation on the image of Henan destinations. To ensure the rigor of quantitative analysis, one-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis H non-parametric test were used based on the normality test and chi-square test, according to the different conditions.

## **4. Analysis of results**

### **4.1 Reliability and validity analysis**

Before conducting the analysis of differences between the cognitive image and affective image of the destination, reliability and validity tests were conducted by SPSS25. The overall reliability Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.940, and the Cronbach's alpha values for cognitive image and affective image were 0.920 and 0.856 respectively, indicating that the overall reliability of the scale was ideal. Next, exploratory factor analysis was conducted, using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's spherical test, and the overall KMO value of the scale was 0.946. After eliminating invalid question items, the KMO value of cognitive image was 0.933, the KMO value of affective image was 0.810, and the Bartlett's spherical test values were 0.000, indicating that the structural validity of the study scale was high.

### **4.2 Factor analysis of cognitive image**

The destination cognitive image dimensions were classified by factor analysis. Using the maximum variance method, based on the assumption criterion that the eigenvalue is greater than 1, the destination image was rotated to extract the common factors, and the destination attributes with loadings less than 0.5 were excluded, and a total of 2 cognitive image dimensions were extracted, named general image and characteristic image, whose cumulative explained variance contribution rate was 59.432%, indicating that these two dimensions could account for 59.432% of the original information (Table 1). On this basis, the mean values of each cognitive image dimension were calculated separately for the analysis of differences in cognitive images of destinations at different stages.

Table1 Factor analysis matrix of destination perception image

Cognitive image dimension	Cognitive to image factor	Ingredients		Cumulative variance contribution (%)
		1	2	
General image	Diversified entertainment facilities .....	0.798		31.466
	Henan people are very kind and friendly	0.538		
Characteristic image	Rich historical and cultural relics .....		0.830	27.966
	Attractive local specialties		0.664	

#### 4.3 Phase 1: The impact of participation or non-participation on the image of the destination

In the first stage, compare the differences in perceptions between the program participant group and the non-participant group in terms of the cognitive and affective image dimension of the destination. Since there were only two sample groups and the sample size was small, through the normality test, two groups were found not to follow a normal distribution, so the independent sample nonparametric test was used (Table 2). The results showed significant differences between the participating and non-participating groups on dimensions of the cognitive and affective image of the destination ( $p < 0.05$ ), and according to the quartile statistics, the evaluation of two dimensions of Henan's destination image was higher and more concentrated among the program participants than among the non-participants.

Table2 Non-parametric tests for differences in destination image perception among different groups

Destination Image	Non-participating group	Participant group	Z	p
Cognitive image	3.58(3.10~4.06)	4.00(3.67~4.42)	-3.460	0.001
Affective image	3.50(3.00~4.00)	4.00(3.75~4.50)	-4.414	0.000

Based on the results of the overall difference analysis of cognitive and affective images, an in-depth analysis of specific categories under different dimensions was conducted. Since both the cognitive image consisting of general image and characteristic image and the affective image of excitement, pleasure, relaxation and novelty do not obey normal distribution, a nonparametric test is used (Table 3 & 4). It can be found that in the cognitive image, the evaluations of the participating groups were higher and more concentrated than the non-participating groups, and the perceived evaluation of the characteristic image was also higher than the general image in the same group. In the affective images, the participating groups rated higher on different

emotional dimensions than the non-participating, and the distribution of different emotions was more similar in the same group.

Table3 Non-parametric tests of cognitive image

Cognitive image dimension	Non-participating groups	Participating Groups	Z	p
General image	3.50(3.03~4.13)	4.00(3.50~4.25)	-3.030	0.002
Characteristic image	4.00(3.00~4.50)	4.25(3.75~4.75)	-3.074	0.002

Table4 Non-parametric test of affective image

Affective image dimension	Non-participating groups	Participating Groups	Z	p
Excitement	3.00(3.00~4.00)	4.00(4.00~5.00)	-4.371	0.000
Pleasant	4.00(3.00~4.00)	4.00(4.00~5.00)	-4.645	0.000
Relaxation	4.00(3.00~4.00)	4.00(4.00~5.00)	-3.359	0.001
Novelty	4.00(3.00~4.00)	4.00(4.00~5.00)	-2.959	0.003

#### 4.4 Phase 2: Impact of different levels of engagement on destination image

Based on the first stage, the differences in the perception of cognitive image and affective image of the destination among audiences with different levels of participation in the participant group were further investigated. Based on the normality test and chi-square test, it was found that the cognitive image dimension satisfied the chi-square and obeyed normal distribution, while the affective image did not obey a normal distribution. Therefore, one-way ANOVA was used to test the cognitive image among three groups, and the Kruskal-Wallis H method was used to test the affective image (Table 5). It can be found that cognitive and affective images were significantly different in groups with different levels of involvement ( $p < 0.05$ ). Further analysis of the differences in the refined dimensions of cognitive and affective images (Table 6 & 7) revealed that significant differences existed between groups in both general and characteristic images in the cognitive image dimension, while in the affective image dimension only two emotions, pleasant and novelty, differed significantly among groups with different levels of participation.

Table5 Results of the variance analysis of destination image

Group	Cognitive image	Affective image
	One-way ANOVA (M±SD)	Kruskal-Wallis H (M (p25~p75))
Low	3.92±0.53	4.00(4.00~5.00)
Medium	4.06±0.53	4.00(4.00~5.00)
High	4.23±0.50	5.00(4.00~5.00)
<i>p</i>	0.010*	0.042*

Table6 Results of the analysis of differences in cognitive images

Group	General image	Characteristic image
	One-way ANOVA (M±SD)	Kruskal-Wallis H (M (p25~p75))
Low	3.83±0.56	4.00(4.00~5.00)
Medium	3.97±0.54	4.00(4.00~5.00)
High	4.15±0.54	5.00(4.00~5.00)
<i>p</i>	0.011*	0.040*

Table7 Results of the variance analysis of affective images

Group	Excitement	Pleasant	Relaxation	Novelty
Low	4(4~5)	4(4~4)	4(4~5)	4(4~5)
Medium	4(4~5)	4(4~5)	4(4~5)	4(4~5)
High	4(4~5)	4(4~5)	4(4~5)	5(4~5)
<i>p</i>	0.126	0.005*	0.451	0.019*

Based on the comparison of the overall results, multiple post hoc comparisons were conducted and found that all of the dimensions with significant differences were significantly different between the low and high participation groups. In addition, although there was a difference between low and high participation groups for the characteristic image dimension but the results were not significant. The results of the multiple comparison analysis reveal that the high participation group is rated significantly higher than the low participation group.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestions

### 5.1 Research findings

By linking audience feedback on traditional cultural programs to the construction of destination images, this paper compares the differences in destination images between different participant groups, leading to the following conclusions.

First, the participation of excellent traditional cultural programs can positively influence the audience's destination image perception. There are significant differences between the non-participating and participating groups in terms of cognitive image, affective image and their segmentation dimensions, indicating that the dissemination and viewing of cultural programs will affect the audience's destination image perception. This is similar to Liu Li's research on film and television tourism, where he argued that film and television program is an important factor in destination image perception<sup>[21]</sup>. At the same time, from the comparison of the values and dispersion degree, the ratings of dimensions of destination image by the participant group are higher and more concentrated than non-participant group, indicating that the participant group have formed a relatively unified and more positive image of tourism destinations through the program. It is evident that the program can contribute to a positive destination image by guiding more audiences to participate through active marketing and wide dissemination on multiple platforms. It also validates Xiong Yuanbin's conclusion in his investigation of the impact of public marketing subject behavior on destination image<sup>[19]</sup>.

Second, different levels of involvement also have an impact on the construction of destination images, and only audiences with higher levels of involvement are able to construct significantly different destination images. With the deepening of participation, the cognitive image and part of the affective image are further strengthened, and the audience with high participation level can build a more positive image of Henan destinations. With the rapid development of new media, audiences participate in more diverse ways. In Wang Yukun et al.'s study, it is clearly pointed out that audience participation in cultural programs can better achieve the program effect<sup>[17]</sup>. In this study, the program *Tang Palace Night Banquet* is presented to the audience in the form of video, and makes full use of the network channel to establish relevant topics to further stimulate discussion, and the audience participates in the dissemination process of the program by commenting, retweeting and many other interactive forms while watching the program. In the interactive participation, the audience not only deepened their understanding of the program itself, but also gradually built up a positive image of Henan destination under the subtle influence of the program. In addition, it has confirmed in many previous studies that cognitive image has a significant impact on affective image<sup>[21,26,27]</sup>. In this study, compared to the abstract affective image, there are significant differences between low and high participation groups in the general and characteristic images in the cognitive image, indicating that cognitive-based tangible displays can make the destination image more differentiated and visible. Therefore, the cognitive image of a destination is the basis for building a destination image.

## 5.2 Management suggestions

Combining the results and conclusions of the above quantitative analysis with marketing theories, this paper puts forward the following suggestions for the better realization of the construction of tourism destination image.

First, in terms of marketing content, cultural programs with local characteristics can provide new ideas for tourism destination marketing. Compared with the traditional destination marketing methods (such as advertising, tourism promotional films, etc.), marketing based on cultural programs has the characteristics of subtlety and wide influence. In the process of creating the program, it is necessary to highlight the regional cultural features and reduce the cognitive difficulty of abstract things<sup>[10]</sup>. In the communications process of the program, it is important to enable the audience to easily identify and perceive the relevant information about the destination, extend from the cognitive image to the affective image, and build up a complete image of the tourism destination.

Second, in terms of target market, guide audience to participate and achieve the deepening of the tourism destination image in interactive participation. According to the results of quantitative analysis, in the cognitive image and part of the affective image, the evaluation of the high participation group is significantly higher than the low. Based on the high-quality cultural programs, as the audience participation deepens, they have further understanding of the local culture, the Middle Kingdom culture and the excellent Chinese traditional culture conveyed by the programs, and the empathy leads the audience to form a positive impression of the culture originator and transmitter. In addition, in the process of audience participation, user-generated content is also conveying the audience's cognitive, emotional and other relevant information. The DMO captures and strengthens the positive information in the audience's destination im-



age perception, and makes good use of it to create key tourism products and narrow the distance between the projected image and the perceived image<sup>[28]</sup>.

Third, in terms of marketing channels, breaking the communication information barriers need to establish multi-platform linkage. In the era of new media, integrated marketing is the general trend. The key to integrated marketing of tourism destination image lies in scientific and effective integration of communication content and media, accurate identification of different media features, and targeted communication of destination-related information in appropriate forms to achieve diversified and multi-channel establishment of tourism destination image<sup>[29]</sup>.

### 5.3 Shortcomings and Prospects

This study has certain limitations and shortcomings in the following two aspects: first, Since the research event occurred a long time after the questionnaire survey, there may be some respondents' feelings and impressions of the program have faded due to the long time since they watched it, which may bring subjective errors in measurement. Second, the sample size of the data is relatively small. Although the corresponding analysis method has been used in this paper based on the sample characteristics, a larger sample size combined with the corresponding research method can obtain more accurate results.

In the future, on the one hand, we can discuss the measurement scale of audience engagement in detail, and consider it from various perspectives, such as the width, the depth and the way of engagement. On the other hand, the influence mechanism of cultural programs on the affective image of destinations can be further explored in conjunction with the relevant theories in the field of psychology to provide relevant suggestions for tourism destination marketing.

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