

Impact of Traditional Village Tourism Perception on Tourists' Positive Behavioral Intentions

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Abstract With the rapid development of rural tourism and increasing awareness of cultural preservation, traditional villages have become key destinations for modern individuals seeking cultural identity and nostalgic experiences. Their unique cultural atmosphere, historical relics, and humanistic environments provide tourists with immersive experiences distinct from urban life. This study takes Qian'gang Ancient Village as a case to explore how cultural atmosphere and nostalgia influence tourists' well-being and further drive environmentally responsible behavior. The findings reveal that the cultural atmosphere and nostalgia in traditional villages significantly enhance tourists' hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Both forms of well-being are closely linked to environmentally responsible behavior, and nostalgia also directly influence such behavior. This research offers theoretical and practical insights for sustainable rural tourism management.

Key words Traditional villages, Cultural atmosphere, Nostalgia, Well-being, Tourists' environmentally responsible behavior

0 Introduction

In recent years, driven by policies such as Beautiful Countryside, Targeted Poverty Alleviation, and Rural Revitalization, rural tourism has flourished alongside growing efforts to preserve traditional culture. Traditional villages, with their unique cultural atmosphere, historical landscapes, and humanistic environments, have emerged as vital destinations for cultural exploration and nostalgic experiences. These villages offer immersive experiences that contrast sharply with urban life, evoking nostalgic sentiments and emotional resonance. How to enhance the cultural perception and nostalgic perceptions of traditional village tourism, bring a deeper well-being experience to tourists, and stimulate their environmentally responsible behavior to the destinations has become a critical focus for rural tourism management and academic research.

One of the missions of tourism and the directions of industrial development is to enhance people's well-being^[1], and well-being experience, as the psychological satisfaction and pleasure of tourists in the process of tourism, is influenced by multiple factors such as tourism environment, cultural characteristics and emotional experience. Studies suggest that traditional villages' cultural atmosphere and nostalgia not only fulfill emotional needs, but also foster positive well-being, strengthening tourists' attachment and identification with destinations. In view of the fragility and sensitivity of traditional village heritage^[2], tourists' environmentally responsible behavior is particularly crucial. Studies have revealed that tourists' perception of well-being experience in traditional villages is related to their positive behavioral intentions, and strong emotional resonance and well-being experience often prompt tourists to show positive environmental protection behavioral intentions.

Therefore, it is essential to deeply explore the driving factors of tourists' well-being experience and the influencing effects of their positive behavioral intentions.

However, the current research on how traditional village tourism perception affects tourists' well-being experience and environmentally responsible behavior is still limited, especially lacking systematic empirical analysis. Therefore, taking typical traditional villages as examples, this study aims to explore how tourists' perception of cultural atmosphere and nostalgia affects their well-being experience through empirical analysis, and further explore how this well-being experience guides their environmentally responsible behavioral intentions. This study will start from four dimensions (cultural atmosphere, nostalgia, well-being experience and environmentally responsible behavior) to construct corresponding research models and verify the relationship among various variables. This paper hopes to provide theoretical support and practical reference for the shaping of well-being experience and environmentally responsible behavior management of traditional village tourists, and promote the sustainable development of traditional village tourism.

1 Literature review and hypotheses

1.1 Cultural atmosphere As the key element of traditional village tourism perception, cultural atmosphere covers many dimensions such as historical sites, traditional architectural features and local customs in the village. The quiet, leisurely and relaxed atmosphere created by it helps tourists to temporarily get rid of the pressure of modern life, obtain emotional satisfaction and pleasant experience, and then enhance their well-being. Xu Yan *et al.*^[3] confirmed that the uniqueness of rural cultural experience has a significant positive impact on tourists' well-being. Jiang Haixu *et al.*^[4] pointed out based on the survey data that the cultural attributes of the destination, natural resources and basic services together have become the key factors to promote the well-being of rural tourists in Northeast China. Chen Ruixia and Zhou Zhimin^[5]

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took cultural tourists as the research object, and discussed the influence of two types of cultural tourism authenticity perception-object-related authenticity and existential authenticity on hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being, and found that they had a significant positive impact on tourists' well-being. This implies that during cultural tourism experiences, through activities such as visiting local cultural architecture and arts, participating in traditional customs, engaging in heritage activities, and learning traditional crafts, visitors deeply immerse themselves in regional characteristics and satisfy cultural exploration needs. These experiences not only provide pleasurable enjoyment that enhances hedonic well-being, but also facilitate knowledge acquisition, skill development, cultural enlightenment, and personal growth, thereby strengthening eudaimonic well-being.

Qian'gang Ancient Village attracts a diverse range of visitors, encompassing cultural heritage enthusiasts, hiking aficionados, family groups with children, and organized tourist groups from government agencies, enterprises, and institutions. During their exploration of this traditional village, tourists not only immerse themselves in nature, experience rustic lifestyles, and relax physically and mentally, but also delve deeply into the historical depth, local customs, and cultural significance embodied by ancient post roads and the ancient village. Through this process, key well-being indicators such as visitors' physical health, learning and personal growth, quality of life, and social connections are significantly enhanced.

Based on this, this paper puts forward the following hypotheses:

H_{1a}: The cultural atmosphere of traditional villages has a positive impact on tourists' hedonic well-being

H_{1b}: The cultural atmosphere of traditional villages has a positive impact on tourists' eudaimonic well-being

Traditional villages, with their distinctive cultural atmosphere and profound historical heritage, have successfully captured the attention of a large number of tourists.

These cultural environments not only significantly enrich visitors' travel experiences but may also positively influence their environmentally responsible behaviors. Research by Li *et al.* [6] reveals that when tourists are attracted by the cultural elements of a destination, they tend to prioritize environmental concerns and adopt protective behaviors to safeguard both precious cultural heritage and the natural environment. Through empirical research on tourists in Huangyao Ancient Town, Xu Wenjie [7] further confirmed the causal relationship between rurality perception and tourists' pro-environmental behaviors. Specifically, rural cultural perception—a key dimension of rurality perception—demonstrates that the perceived cultural atmosphere of heritage tourism destinations often inspires visitors' respect and affection for local traditions, thereby strengthening their environmental consciousness. However, the findings of Kong Yidan *et al.* [8] differ slightly. Their study indicates that cultural perception in rural tourism destinations directly influences compliance-oriented environmentally

responsible behaviors but only indirectly affects proactive environmentally responsible behaviors.

Based on the above literature review, the following hypotheses are put forward in this research context:

H₂: The cultural atmosphere of traditional villages has a positive impact on tourists' environmentally responsible behavior

1.2 Nostalgia Nostalgia, derived etymologically from the Greek words *nostos* (returning home) and *algia* (a state of pain), has traditionally been conceptualized as a form of "homesickness" [9]. However, in contemporary contexts, nostalgia is more commonly interpreted as an individual's predominantly positive emotional response to past experiences, blending bittersweet sentiments [2].

Amid China's rapid urbanization, traditional villages—serving as vital repositories of cultural heritage and historical memory—have become popular destinations for urban residents seeking to alleviate nostalgia and escape urban chaos, significantly enhancing tourists' well-being. Yet, few scholars have explored the relationship between nostalgia experienced by visitors in traditional village settings and their well-being [10]. In reality, rural tourism destinations not only fulfill nostalgic desires but also evoke positive emotional experiences, thereby elevating subjective well-being. Employing fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis, Yu Runzhe *et al.* [11] found that nostalgia-driven experiences are pivotal in shaping subjective well-being during rural tourism. Li Mingyue's [12] empirical study further confirmed that nostalgia in rural tourism prompts visitors to reflect on past eras and personal memories, often amplifying their perception of subjective well-being. Building on this literature, this study proposes the hypothesis that nostalgia generated during traditional village tourism positively impacts all dimensions of tourists' well-being.

Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{3a}: Tourist nostalgia has a significant positive impact on hedonic well-being

H_{3b}: Tourist nostalgia has a significant positive impact on eudaimonic well-being

In recent years, nostalgia has garnered academic attention as a key driver of tourists' environmentally responsible behaviors [13]. Zhang Yuangang *et al.* [2], through an in-depth case study of Xidi and Hongcun villages in Anhui Province, revealed a positive correlation between tourists' nostalgic sentiment toward these sites and their environmental responsibility. Specifically, tourists' desire to preserve the historical and nostalgic value of these destinations motivates proactive efforts to protect local natural resources, sustaining their attachment to historical memories. Jiang Jinbo and Sun Shaoxiong [13], analyzing questionnaire data from Guangzhou's Liwan District historic block, found that while nostalgia did not directly influence environmentally responsible behaviors, it exerted an indirect effect through the mediating roles of perceived value and place attachment. Similarly, Chen Yan [9], focusing on urban residents' rural tourism behavior in the post-pandemic period, demonstrated that nostalgic emotions positively drive environmentally responsible behaviors in rural tourism destinations via the me-

diating mechanisms of place identity and psychological closeness. Zhang Dan and Guo Ling^[14] further observed that historical nostalgia significantly enhances environmentally responsible behaviors, whereas personal nostalgia does not. These studies highlight the ambiguity in the direct relationship between nostalgia and environmentally responsible behaviors.

Against this backdrop, this study aims to examine whether a causal link exists between the two, proposing the following hypothesis:

H₄: Tourist nostalgia has a significant positive impact on environmentally responsible behaviors

1.3 Well-being The concept of "well-being," an enduring and timeless subject, traces its origins to ancient Greek philosophy. In the 1960s, research on well-being gradually gained momentum, with Diener formally proposing the notion of subjective well-being in 1984^[15]. Since then, tourism scholars have conducted extensive studies on tourists' well-being.

As tourism activities have become increasingly prevalent, travel not only serves as a means of physical and mental rejuvenation but also significantly enhances tourists' hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. Furthermore, heightened well-being generates positive spillover effects on tourists' social behaviors, as individuals with greater well-being are more likely to exhibit prosocial actions. Through a meta-analysis of 44 empirical studies, Gao Yang *et al.*^[16] found that in tourism contexts, well-being-related factors such as satisfaction and positive emotions exert a more pronounced influence on environmentally responsible behaviors compared to rational models. Focusing on camping tourism, Yang Yun *et al.*^[17] empirically demonstrated that hedonic well-being has no significant positive effect on environmentally responsible behaviors, whereas eudaimonic well-being directly and significantly enhances such behaviors. In the context of traditional villages examined in this study, whether a clear positive correlation exists between well-being and environmentally responsible behaviors remains to be verified.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{5a}: Tourists' hedonic well-being has a positive impact on their environmentally responsible behaviors

H_{5b}: Tourists' eudaimonic well-being has a positive impact on their environmentally responsible behaviors

1.4 TERB In recent years, tourists' environmentally responsible behavior (TERB), as a crucial behavioral manifestation of core stakeholders in tourism destinations, has become a prominent research focus in tourism academia. This behavior specifically refers to a distinct form of environmental responsibility exhibited by tourists during travel experiences, differing from their daily environmentally responsible practices^[6]. Despite substantial advancements in TERB research over the past decade—particularly in exploring its driving factors—studies on contextual perceptual factors within tourism destinations remain limited. Consequently, this study aims to comprehensively examine the impact mechanisms of cultural atmosphere and nostalgia perception in tourism destinations on TERB, thereby offering new research perspectives for

academia.

Based on the above literature review, this paper constructs a conceptual model as shown in Fig. 1.

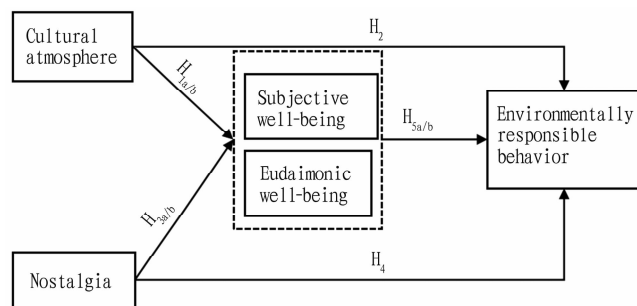


Fig. 1 Conceptual model diagram

2 Method

2.1 Research context In this study, Qian'gang Ancient Village, Conghua District, Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province, China was selected as the data collection site. Qian'gang Ancient Village, established during the Song Dynasty, has weathered over 800 years while preserving relatively intact architectural features of Guangfu vernacular dwellings, standing as an outstanding representative of Guangfu culture. With a total construction area of 44 000 m², the village maintains the unique layout of a Ming Dynasty walled settlement, containing approximately 900 freely and organically arranged houses. Designated as a historical and cultural conservation area in Guangzhou, Qian'gang Ancient Village was listed in China's third batch of traditional villages in 2014, perfectly aligning with the contextual requirements of this study on traditional villages. Its distinctive cultural heritage and natural environment create an ideal setting for investigating how tourism perceptions in traditional villages influence visitors' emotional responses and behavioral intentions.

2.2 Measurements and questionnaire The conceptual framework of this study encompasses five key variables, which are quantitatively assessed through 21 measurement items adapted from existing studies to ensure their reliability and validity. The questionnaire is structured into two sections: Part I contains 21 measurement items, while Part II collects visitors' basic demographic information. All variables are measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) to ensure data precision and consistency.

2.3 Data collection and sample profile This study employed snowball convenience sampling to conduct an online questionnaire survey among visitors to Qian'gang Ancient Village from August to October 2024. Initially, the questionnaire link was distributed through social media platforms and travel enthusiast communities, specifically targeting visitors who had recently toured the village. Participants were encouraged to share the questionnaire with friends or groups having similar experiences, generating a snowball effect to progressively expand the sample scope. Through this approach, 372 responses were collected, with 308 valid questionnaires retained after eliminating invalid entries, yielding an 82.79% validity rate.

Among the 308 respondents, in terms of gender, women accounted for 65.3% ; in terms of age distribution, 68.8% of the respondents are in the young and middle-aged stage (aged 18 to 45 years) ; in terms of educational background, 75% of the respondents have college degree or above; in terms of income, 63.3% of tourists earn between 5 000 and 20 000 yuan a month. Notably, 85.1% were first-time visitors, indicating Qian'gang Ancient Village's strong appeal to educated young and middle-aged visitors, yet the relatively low rates of re-travel suggest room for improvement in visitor retention.

3 Data analysis

Given the exploratory nature of the study and sample size, SmartPLS 4 software was utilized to analyze the valid data and empirically test the research model.

3.1 Measurement model The analytical process commenced with measurement model testing, encompassing assessments of reliability, validity, and collinearity^[18]. Table 1 details factor loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) for all dimensions, comprehensively reflecting their reliability and convergent validity. Results demonstrate that all factor loadings and Cronbach's Alpha values exceeded the 0.7 threshold, and CR values consistently surpassed 0.7, strictly adhering to the criteria developed by Hair *et al.* ^[18], thereby confirming high reliability.

In terms of validity analysis, convergent validity was measured by AVE (average variance extracted) values. The data showed that the AVE values of each variable were significantly higher than the threshold of 0.5, further verifying that the measurement model has excellent convergence validity.

The second step of validity analysis focused on the evaluation of the discriminant validity of variables, using the Fornell – Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio as the evaluation basis. According to the table data, the square roots of AVE

(bold diagonal values) of each variable significantly exceeded the absolute values of the correlation coefficients between variables, and the HTMT values (in parentheses) remained below the 0.85 critical threshold, robustly confirming good discriminant validity among variables (Table 2).

Table 1 Reliability and convergent validity analysis

Construct	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
CA		0.843	0.844	0.681
CA1	0.821			
CA2	0.853			
CA3	0.860			
CA4	0.762			
NOS		0.911	0.912	0.738
NOS1	0.875			
NOS2	0.884			
NOS3	0.798			
NOS4	0.893			
NOS5	0.840			
SWB		0.840	0.841	0.757
SWB1	0.880			
SWB2	0.892			
SWB3	0.838			
EWB		0.897	0.900	0.829
EWB1	0.897			
EWB2	0.908			
EWB3	0.926			
TERB		0.854	0.859	0.577
TERB1	0.737			
TERB2	0.791			
TERB3	0.761			
TERB4	0.765			
TERB5	0.747			
TERB6	0.754			

Table 2 Discriminant validity analysis

	CA	EWB	NOS	SWB	TERB
CA	0.825				
EWB	0.532 (0.609)	0.910			
NOS	0.390 (0.444)	0.334 (0.367)	0.859		
SWB	0.537 (0.637)	0.459 (0.527)	0.320 (0.360)	0.870	
TERB	0.343 (0.397)	0.449 (0.505)	0.466 (0.529)	0.433 (0.497)	0.759

NOTE The square root of AVE is on the diagonal; the values in parentheses are HTMT values.

Finally, the measurement model analysis needs collinearity test, and the key lies in the evaluation of VIF value. In this study, for internal or external models, all VIF values remained below 3.394, below the threshold of 5, which strongly proves that the multicollinearity problem does not exist in the study model.

3.2 Structural model The second phase of data analysis involves evaluating the structural model, specifically assessing the coefficient of determination (R^2) and the significance/correlation of path coefficients^[18].

In this study, R^2 was employed to evaluate the explanatory power of the structural model, reflecting the extent to which exoge-

nous latent variables explain endogenous latent variables. The R^2 values for the endogenous variables (SWB: 0.303; ERB: 0.302; TERB: 0.353) all exceeded the critical threshold of 0.25 (as shown in Fig. 2), indicating robust explanatory capacity across all three variables and validating the model's predictive relevance.

Subsequently, bootstrapping (samples taken 5 000 times) was conducted to assess the significance of path relationships between variables. It can be seen from the table that cultural atmosphere significantly influenced tourists' hedonic well-being ($\beta = 0.486$, $P = 0.000$) and eudaimonic well-being ($\beta = 0.474$, $P = 0.000$), supporting H_{1a} and H_{1b} ; nostalgia positively and significantly affected hedonic well-being ($\beta = 0.131$, $P = 0.012$), eu-

daimonic well-being ($\beta = 0.149, P = 0.005$), and tourists' environmentally responsible behavior ($\beta = 0.323, P = 0.000$), confirming H_{3a} , H_{3b} , and H_4 ; both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being exerted significant positive effects on environmentally responsible behavior ($\beta = 0.237, P = 0.000$; $\beta = 0.258, P = 0.000$), supporting H_{5a} and H_{5b} . Notably, cultural atmosphere in the traditional village did not exhibit a direct significant impact on environmentally responsible behavior ($\beta = -0.047, P = 0.466$), leading to the rejection of H_2 (Table 3).

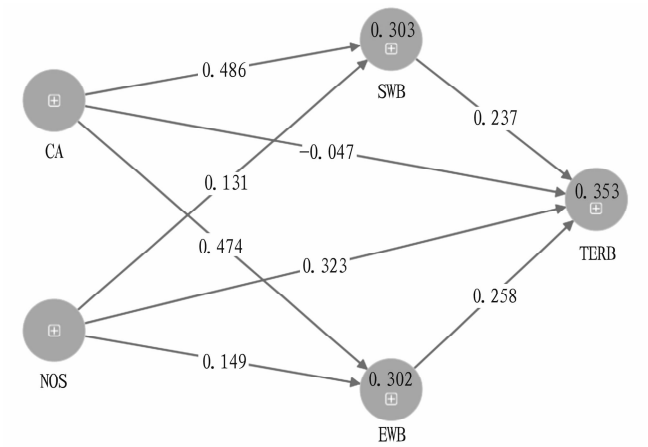


Fig.2 PLS analysis results of the model

Table 3 Hypotheses tests

Path	Original sample	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Result
CA - >EWB	0.474	0.062	7.622	0.000	Yes
CA - >SWB	0.486	0.052	9.383	0.000	Yes
CA - >TERB	-0.047	0.065	0.729	0.466	No
EWB - >TERB	0.258	0.062	4.139	0.000	Yes
NOS - > EWB	0.149	0.053	2.828	0.005	Yes
NOS - > SWB	0.131	0.052	2.501	0.012	Yes
NOS - > TERB	0.323	0.052	6.215	0.000	Yes
SWB - > TERB	0.237	0.067	3.507	0.000	Yes

4 Theoretical and practical implications

4.1 Theoretical implications This study advances beyond the previous literature's narrow focus on unidimensional well-being by exploring tourists' well-being experiences through dual dimensions—hedonic well-being (pleasure-oriented) and eudaimonic well-being (meaning-oriented)—thereby enriching the conceptualization of tourists' well-being. Findings reveal that cultural ambience and nostalgic sentiment collectively shape tourists' holistic well-being by differentially influencing these two dimensions. This dual-path mechanism validates hedonic and eudaimonic well-being as distinct yet interrelated factors driving tourists' well-being, advancing theoretical depth in tourism well-being research. This study is helpful for future scholars to better understand the complexity of tourists' well-being, and provides a theoretical basis for exploring the multi-dimensional expression of well-being in different tourism situations.

The research constructs a novel theoretical framework positio-

ning cultural atmosphere and nostalgic sentiment as antecedents, well-being as a mediator, and environmentally responsible behavior (ERB) as an outcome. This model extends the understanding of well-being's antecedents and consequences while pioneering its application in cultural tourism contexts. Crucially, the study demonstrates that cultural atmosphere and nostalgia not only directly enhance well-being but also indirectly foster ERB through well-being's mediating role. These insights address gaps in dual-dimensional well-being—environmental behavior research and underscore well-being's pivotal role in activating pro-environmental actions. The research in this paper provides a new perspective for academic circles, and also provides theoretical enlightenment for future research.

4.2 Practical implications For managers of traditional village tourism, this study provides actionable strategies to leverage cultural atmosphere and nostalgia for enhancing tourists' well-being and promoting environmentally responsible behaviors.

The research shows that cultural atmosphere is a key factor affecting tourists' well-being. In order to enhance tourists' education and aesthetics in tourism experience, traditional villages should take the following measures: (i) Preserve historical heritage: Protect ancient architecture, trees, and bridges while excavating their cultural connotation to establish an authentic cultural foundation. (ii) Curate cultural events: organize festivals, folk performances, and craft demonstrations to engage visitors and locals, strengthening cultural identity and well-being. (iii) Harness digital outreach: promote the village's cultural uniqueness via social media and short videos to amplify visibility.

In addition, unique historical and cultural resources can stimulate tourists' nostalgia and enhance their well-being experience. To this end, traditional villages can take the following measures: (i) Restore historical sites; integrate modern displays (e.g., museums, AR/VR technologies) to evoke historical immersion. (ii) Narrate heritage stories; invite elders or experts to share folklore and family histories, triggering nostalgic resonance. (iii) Infuse traditional elements; incorporate traditional elements into the village environment and accommodation facilities, such as the use of ancient furniture, antique buildings, traditional decorations, to maintain a quiet living atmosphere and allow tourists to experience a strong nostalgic atmosphere.

Moreover, tourists' well-being experience is positively correlated with environmentally responsible behavior. Based on this finding, traditional village managers should take the following measures to enhance tourists' well-being perception and environmentally responsible behavior:

(i) Encourage visitors to participate in nature activities; offer hiking, orienteering, crafts, farm experiences, and farm experiences to connect tourists with nature and local cuisine. (ii) Facilitate eco-awareness; provide environmental education and participatory mechanisms (e.g., recycling initiatives, eco-tours) to channel well-being into tangible ERB.

To sum up, strategic cultivation of cultural atmosphere and nostalgia can create meaningful tourist experiences while fostering sustainable development in traditional villages. Managers must adopt integrated strategies that synergize cultural preservation,

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