Research on Visual Image Analysis of Fuzhou Tourism Destination Based on the Perspective of Cultural and Tourism Integration

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Abstract. Fuzhou boasts a wealth of tourism resources and a diverse array of products, such as Shoushan Stone, the Banyan Tree, and Jasmine Tea, which distinctly highlight the unique appeal of Fuzhou as a tourism destination. Currently, tourists' perceptions of Fuzhou's visual identity are confined to its traditional reputations as a "National Historical and Cultural City," a "Coastal City," and a "Hot Spring City." These conventional visual identities, while deeply ingrained, are not unique to Fuzhou and are common across various other regions in the country. In an era that values personalization across all industries, such "tourism business cards" appear rather insufficient. Against this backdrop, this paper adopts the contemporary perspective of integrating culture and tourism. It conducts an in-depth analysis and research on the present state of Fuzhou's tourist destination visual identity, aiming to significantly enhance Fuzhou's visual image as a tourism destination.

Keywords: Culture and tourism integration; Tourist destination; Visual image.

1   Introduction

Fuzhou, in response to evolving social tourism trends, has actively refreshed its tourism destination image since the early 2000s, emphasizing its identity as "the city of mountains and seas, adorned with banyan trees," and later as "the ancient capital of Minyue and the blessed state." [1]Despite these efforts, tourist perceptions remain anchored to generalized images such as Fuzhou being a "National Historical and Cultural City," "Coastal City," and "Hot Spring City" - images common across many Chinese cities. This highlights the challenge of distinguishing Fuzhou's unique local characteristics within its visual tourism imagery. There's a notable gap in leveraging Fuzhou's distinct cultural and tourism resources effectively to refine its competitive edge and tourist appeal.

The visual identity of a tourism destination crucially influences tourist perceptions, formed by diverse visual experiences. Enhancing this visual identity involves not just amplifying recognition and differentiation but also overcoming stereotypical views to boost tourism desire. Despite Fuzhou's considerable efforts, the integration of visual image design in tourism resource planning has been insufficient, indicating a significant opportunity for improvement. The "image power" is essential in the contemporary tourism market, underlining the need for a strategic approach to visual design that incorporates Fuzhou's rich geographical context.[2]

This context includes both natural elements like mountains, rivers, and cultural aspects such as the shipbuilding culture and Fuzhou dialect. An in-depth analysis reveals that while natural elements like banyan trees and jasmine flowers are commonly used, there's a deeper layer of human geographical features that can further enrich Fuzhou's tourism visual identity, making it vital to blend these elements strategically (Figure 1). Such an approach is aimed at not only preserving but elevating Fuzhou's distinctiveness amidst the competitive landscape of tourism destinations.
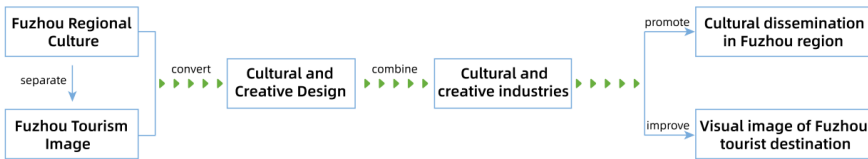

Fig. 1. Research and Analysis of Regional Culture and Tourism Image in Fuzhou City

2   Challenges in the Visual Identity of Fuzhou as a Tourism Destination

From a comprehensive viewpoint, the factors contributing to the relatively subdued competitiveness of Fuzhou's tourism industry, compared to other leading tourist cities in China, include a nebulous destination image, a homogenous tourism product structure, an unfavorable geographic location, and an irrational human resource composition. [3]This paper delves into the specific issues surrounding the visual identity and design of Fuzhou's tourism destination, aiming to identify and propose optimal design solutions.

Fuzhou's tourism visual identity faces significant challenges across three key areas.

Firstly, the design relies heavily on natural environmental visuals like mountains, rivers, and seas, common to many Chinese regions, which dilutes its cultural uniqueness. For instance, Fuzhou's claim as a "hot spring capital" is shared with other cities, and its cultural geographical features, crucial for differentiation, are underexploited in its tourism visual identity due to their niche nature.

Secondly, there's a lack of systematic integration and continuity in the visual design across Fuzhou's tourist destinations. Design practices focus on individual scenic areas without a unified city-wide visual identity, leading to disparities and a lack of coherence

in the visual imagery of attractions and local transport systems. This disjointed approach prevents the formation of a cohesive and memorable image of Fuzhou's tourism offerings.

Lastly, the rapid pace of iterative updates to the visual identity, driven by the fast-evolving tourism industry and trends, has resulted in a loss of distinctiveness and sustainability in the visual designs. Many cities, including Fuzhou, find their visual identities in flux, compromising the long-term impact and recognizability of their tourism brands.

Addressing these issues requires a balanced incorporation of Fuzhou's unique natural and cultural elements into its tourism visual identity, fostering a systematic, integrated design approach that enhances continuity and distinction, and ensuring the sustainability of design updates to maintain a strong, recognizable tourism image.[4]

3   Analysis of Factors Affecting the Visual Image of Tourist Destinations

As discussed earlier, in the planning and design of the visual image for tourist destinations in Fuzhou, the consideration of visual aspects plays a crucial role within the image recognition system, which includes both conceptual and behavioral images. The design of the visual aspect serves as the initial touchpoint in the image recognition of tourist destinations, creating the first impression for tourists. Therefore, a detailed analysis of the visual image design of tourist destinations is of utmost importance.

3.1   Feature Analysis

The design of a tourist destination's image is comprehensive and systematic, covering a wide range of aspects from behavioral to visual image design. This systematic approach includes the design of logo systems, transportation systems, visual landscape, product packaging, and promotional posters, forming a cohesive visual image design system that caters to the diverse and innovative representation of the local tourist destination. However, a lack of systematic design can lead to cognitive dissonance among tourists. A more systematic visual image design enhances the interaction between tourists and the destination, enriching the tourist experience and the destination's visual image.

Stability and realism are essential; the visual image must be closely aligned with the destination's reality and embody its unique culture and essence to gain stable recognition. Incorporating tangible tourism elements into the design supports the long-term stable development of tourism.

Plasticity and diversity allow for innovation within the originally stable image of a tourist destination. Enhancing and scientifically shaping the visual image can promote local tourism development without compromising the destination's "original image." Innovative design adjustments are necessary to align with contemporary social contexts, balancing original and enhanced visual images to revitalize the tourism industry continuously.

3.2　Functional Analysis of Visual Image Design

(1) Identification Function: The foundational role of visual image design in tourism destinations is to facilitate tourists' rapid recognition and foster positive perceptions. By transforming complex visual elements into simple, recognizable symbols, tourists can easily distinguish the unique characteristics of different regions, enhancing the destination's appeal in a competitive market.

(2) Marketing Function: Improving the visual image design attracts more tourists, stimulating local consumption and showcasing the destination's cultural values and heritage. This not only enhances the region's attractiveness but also contributes significantly to the local and broader social economy by making the destination's image unique and memorable.

(3) Cohesion Function: Visual image design, rooted in regional cultural context, promotes community cohesion and emotional communication between locals and tourists. Incorporating visual elements related to human geography and natural resources evokes emotional resonance, fostering local cohesion and conveying the spiritual essence of the destination to foreign visitors, thus facilitating cultural exchanges.

4　Analysis of Visual Image Design Elements (Element Extraction)

Building on the aforementioned research, this paper aims to enhance the design of the visual image of Fuzhou's tourism destination through the application of information processing theory (Figure 2). [5]It proposes the extraction of specific visual image design elements from Fuzhou's cultural and tourism context to contribute to the improvement of the visual image of Fuzhou's tourism destination. Furthermore, extracting visual image design elements not only bolsters tourists' emotional connection with Fuzhou's local culture but also enriches their tourism experience.
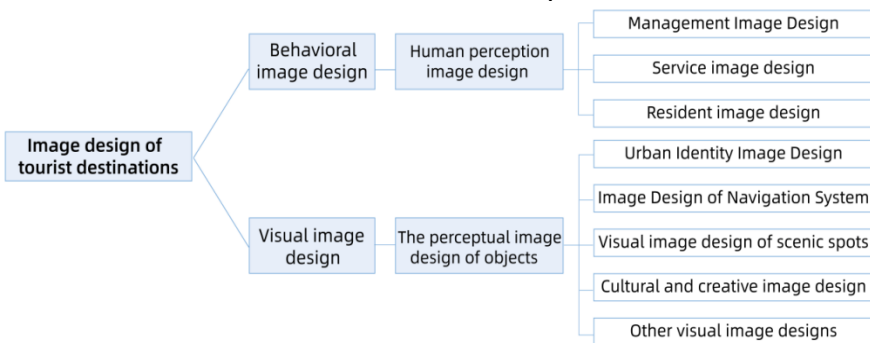

Fig. 2. Theoretical Model of Information Processing

4.1   Regional Analysis of the Geographical Context of Tourist Destinations in Fuzhou

The geographical context of tourist destinations in Fuzhou encompasses five main aspects:

(1) Mountains and River: Fuzhou is traditionally known as the "City of Three Mountains and One River." Historical records indicate that in the second year of the Kaiping era during the Liang Dynasty, the King of Min expanded the city to include Yu Mountain, Wu Mountain, and Ping Mountain within its boundaries, with the Min River flowing through. This unique topographical arrangement, where the city is nestled among mountains with a river coursing through, has become a defining characteristic of Fuzhou. However, this geographical setting, surrounded by mountains on three sides, has also fostered unique cultural and geographical features in Fuzhou, such as local dialects, Min opera, and song performances in these dialects. These elements have been extensively incorporated into the visual image design of Fuzhou's tourist destinations.

(2) Sea: Located at the estuary of the Min River and flanked by mountains on three sides, Fuzhou has historically been a bustling, open port. Its high-quality coastal resources have cultivated a distinctive coastal and maritime culture, shaping the city's identity as a "Coastal City." This attribute is one of the most significant and frequently utilized elements in the visual design of Fuzhou's tourist destinations.

(3) Hot Springs: Fuzhou ranks among the three major hot spring areas in China and stands as the country's most emblematic hot spring city. The abundance of hot spring resources within the urban core has given rise to a local hot spring culture, with the hot springs often referred to as "tang" in the Fuzhou dialect. "Tang culture" has become a major attraction, solidifying Fuzhou's image as a premier hot spring destination. This aspect is commonly featured in the visual image design of Fuzhou's tourism destinations.

(4) Stone: Beyond mountains, rivers, seas, and springs, "stone" is another key natural tourism resource of Fuzhou. The city is renowned for its Shoushan stone, which, over five millennia, has developed into a folk craft culture uniquely characteristic of Fuzhou. With the advancement of Shoushan stone mining and processing techniques and growing interest in stone appreciation and collection, literary works, seal carvings, paintings, and photography themed around Shoushan stone have flourished, becoming an integral part of the visual image design of Fuzhou's tourist destinations.

(5) Banyan and Jasmine: The banyan tree and jasmine flower are the city tree and flower of Fuzhou, respectively, with the most notable being the thousand-year-old Banyan King in the North Suburb Forest Park and jasmine tea originating from Fuzhou. Known as the "City of Banyan Trees" and the "Hometown of Jasmine," these elements are among the most important landscape features in the visual image of Fuzhou's tourist destinations.

4.2   Extracting Geographical Elements for Tourism Destinations in Fuzhou

Based on the above research, this article aims to further promote the visual image design of tourist destinations in Fuzhou. By using information processing theory (Figure

3), it proposes to extract corresponding visual image design elements from the cultural tourism of Fuzhou City, in order to make a certain contribution to the improvement of the visual image of tourist destinations in Fuzhou City. On the other hand, the means of extracting visual image design elements can not only enhance tourists' emotional cognition of Fuzhou City, but also to some extent enhance their tourism experience.[6]

In the current design of Fuzhou's tourism destination visual identity, a significant emphasis is placed on cultural and creative design, which extensively utilizes visual elements reflecting the geographical backdrop and cultural features of Fuzhou. These elements span natural geographical aspects such as mountains, rivers, seas, springs, stones, and banyan trees, and extend to historical and folk culture elements including coastal culture, shipbuilding culture, drama, and music. To infuse the graphical representation of the Fuzhou dialect with both strong regional characteristics and engaging interest, a comprehensive consideration of these original visual elements is crucial.
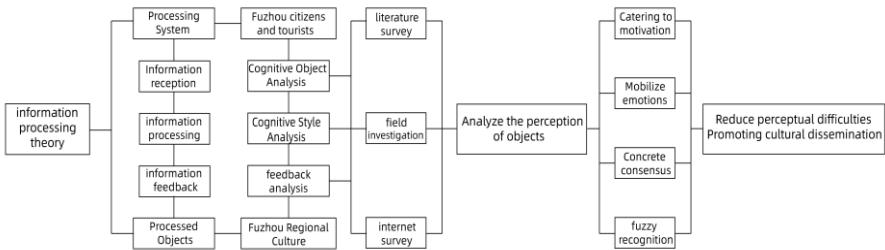

Fig. 3. Classification of Tourism Image Design

To achieve a fresher perspective in design elements, especially in the graphical design related to the Fuzhou dialect, it is essential not only to retain the visual elements previously utilized in Fuzhou's original tourism visual imagery but also to incorporate a wide array of additional visual elements that encapsulate local regional characteristics, such as folk customs, history, and culture. Fundamental visual elements like mountains, sea, stones, banyan trees, and certain urban landmarks constitute the core imagery of Fuzhou City and are indispensable. However, as previously mentioned, elements such as "mountains, sea, and stones" overly resemble the design elements employed in the visual imagery of tourist destinations in other regions. Their extensive use could lead to a lack of distinctiveness in the visual imagery of tourist destinations in Fuzhou City. Consequently, the author has also considered the incorporation of distinctly unique Fuzhou elements, such as:

(1) Fuzhou Seafood and Snacks: Fuzhou's unique seafood and snack varieties serve as visually striking elements, attributed to the city's special geography, surrounded by mountains on three sides and the sea on one. This unique positioning fosters a rich marine culture, with local seafood and snacks being typical and common representatives. Integrating local specialties like Fuzhou fish balls, "Buddha Jumps Over the Wall," and oyster cakes into the graphical design not only adds interest but also embodies the distinct flavors of Fuzhou.

(2) Fuzhou Tea Culture: Fujian province, known as the cradle of tea, boasts a millennium-long history of tea culture, with Fuzhou being a significant contributor. Notable local teas include Fuzhou jasmine tea, Yongtai green tea, Banyan tea, among which Fuzhou jasmine tea, the city's floral emblem, stands out for its uniqueness. Merging jasmine tea elements with graphical design can highlight the area's unique regional features.

(3) Traditional Residential Architecture of Fuzhou: "San Fang Qi Xiang," Fuzhou's most renowned scenic spot, exemplifies traditional residential architecture and acts as a living fossil of China's urban neighborhood system. The well-preserved ancient neighborhood and alleyway styles are rare in Fuzhou and across China. Thus, integrating visual elements of Fuzhou's traditional residential architecture into cultural and creative designs offers a unique expression.

5   Conclusion

This study has conducted an in-depth analysis of the current status of the visual imagery of tourist destinations in Fuzhou, investigated existing issues, and discussed the design elements necessary for enhancing a multitude of visual images. This research has established a preliminary positioning for the visual imagery of Fuzhou's tourist destinations. It has contributed to varying degrees of advancement in the dissemination and development of the visual image of Fuzhou's tourist destinations within a certain scope. Furthermore, this study has achieved a significant enhancement in the design of the visual imagery of Fuzhou's tourist destinations and has provided valuable insights and methodologies for the application of visual imagery in the cultural tourism sector nationwide.

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