

A Research Model of The Effect of Flow Experience on Perceived Symbolic Meaning of Destination Brand

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Abstract

In the marketing field, more attention is paid to brand attitudes such as flow experience, brand experience and brand loyalty, while less research is paid to more detailed symbolic meanings of brands. However, previous studies in the tourism field mostly focused on the relationship between flow experience and tourists' satisfaction and post-trip behavior, and there were few studies on the relationship between flow experience and perceived symbolic meaning of destination brands. In this context, this paper puts forward the above research questions.

Keywords

Flow Experience; Perceived Symbolic Meaning of Destination Brand.

1. Introduction

In the context of the development of experience economy, tourism experience, as an important form of experience economy, is an important indicator to measure the quality of tourism activities. Flow experience is a psychological process that tourists can generally feel in tourism consumption, and it is an important tourism experience. In the era of fierce competition in tourism development, various tourism purposes obtain differentiated competitive advantages through branding, catering to the characteristics of people's increasingly pursuit of brand consumption in the post-tourism development era.

2. Literature review

2.1. Flow experience

Flow experience, also known as immersive experience, was first proposed by Csikszentmihalyi, an American psychologist. This theory explains how people can engage in some daily activities and filter out irrelevant perceptions to achieve a state of immersion [1]. Flow experience has been applied to psychology, marketing, information systems and educational management, travel experience and other fields. In the field of brand marketing, immersion theory is mainly applied to the impact of brand immersive marketing on brand experience, purchase and other consumer behaviors. Teng Lefa identified the inverted U-shaped influence of immersion experience on brand experience [2]. Song Mengmeng found that different immersion and participation in the fan page of the brand virtual community would lead to different levels of purchase behavior. Zhuoshi discussed the characteristics and communication strategies of brand design under immersive marketing [3]. In the field of tourism research, Kang Zheng translated "flow" into "changshuang" in his book *Leisure in Your Life*, and believed that "changshuang" is the best experience that people often produce in leisure or work activities [4]. Xie Yanjun further elaborated that the standard mode of experience is "Chang Shuang" in his comments on the research on tourism, tourism experience and symbols, and believed that this state is "so challenging that a person can be deeply immersed in it that he forgets the passage of time and is unaware of his own existence" [5]. Chen Yichen and Bai Zhiyong adopted the flow experience theory and tried to explore the influence of flow experience in forest recreation on

people's subjective well-being [6]. Qu Shaobo studied the preconditions, influencing factors, changing trends of flow experience, and the specific performance of individuals when flow occurs [7]. Based on the above studies, it can be found that Chinese scholars study flow experience mainly from the measurement, influencing factors, performance characteristics and follow-up behaviors of flow experience, and there are few studies on the correlation with the symbolic meaning perception of specific destination brands.

2.2. The iconic significance of tourist destination brands

Since the 1950 s, symbolic consumption this topic in the field of marketing has been widely discussed, scholars have insight into the human consumption is not only by the function of the goods to meet their basic needs, and from the products and brands for self-expression personality and image, reflect social status, and achieve social identity associated with the construction of self concept of symbolic significance is also an important motive people to carry out the consumer behavior [8-10]

The symbolic meaning of a brand refers to the characteristics of a brand in consumers' perception to meet their needs for self-image or personality shaping, social relations building, reputation and status marking, etc. In today's increasingly fierce competition in the tourism market, it is undoubtedly a theoretical research direction to help the destination as the main body of competition discover and create potential differentiation advantages. At present, the academic circle has realized the importance of destination brand personality, and has done research on the composition dimension of destination brand personality, its significance to destination and brand personality cognition. Wang Jingqiang identified the cognitive mechanism of tourism destination brands [11]. Gao Jing studied the brand differentiation positioning of destination from the perspective of brand individuation. Academics have discussed the symbolic significance of tourism destination brands from different perspectives [12]. The initial research on the symbolic meaning of destination brand mainly focuses on the relationship between destination image and tourists' self-image. For example, Chonks discussed the consistency between destination and self-image [13]. Beerli further explored the influence of self-consistency on destination selection [14]. The symbolic significance of destination brand image by early domestic scholars was also relatively scattered.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Hypothesis

The relationship between consumers and the brand is inseparable from the experience brought by the brand. If the brand gives consumers a unique experience, these consumers will form a stronger emotional connection with the brand [15].

In the brand experience, the acquisition of flow experience will enable consumers to establish a more positive emotional and cognitive connection with the brand, so that consumers have a better attitude towards the brand organizer of the activity. Existing research on the relationship between flow experience and brand mainly focuses on the quality of brand experience, brand cognition, brand loyalty and so on. For example, flow experience has a mediating effect on brand community integration, and flow experience has a significant impact on online brand loyalty.

The symbolic meaning of a brand is actually a projection of consumers' self-concept on the brand, so it is crucial to understand the connotation of self-concept in order to clarify the symbolic meaning of a brand. The multi-level self-concept has also become an important theoretical basis for marketing scholars to understand and reveal the internal structure of brand symbolic meaning. For example, the association of consumers to the ability of the brand to help them realize self-strengthening and identification, personality expression, gain respect, role positioning, group belonging and recognition is regarded as the symbolic content of the

brand. In this paper, Shen Xuerui et al. came up with four dimensions [16] that are more suitable for the symbolic meaning of destination brands after referring to existing researches on the symbolic meaning of brands, namely, individual self-expression, relationship self-consolidation, group belonging, and social reputation and status display. Based on this, this paper puts forward the following hypotheses:

H1: Flow experience has a significant positive influence on tourists' perception of individual self-expression

H2: Flow experience has a significant positive influence on tourists' self-consolidation perception of relationship

H3: Flow experience has a significant positive influence on tourists' perception of belonging

H4: Flow experience has a positive impact on tourists' perception of social reputation and status

3.2. Measurement Indicators

The research on the measurement scale of flow experience is relatively mature. Based on the changes of the measurement scale of flow experience in foreign languages, the following measurement indexes of flow experience scale are obtained.

Table 1. Flow experience measurement scale

Flow Experienc e	Have high travel expectations for the destination and believe you will have the best possible experience
	Play casually and you'll have a great experience
	Have a clear idea of what experience you want to have
	I was in good shape during the tour
	I was so focused on the experience that I completely forgot about the troubles of life
	During the trip, I have complete control over what I do
	I don't care what people think of me when I travel
	As the level of travel experience deepens, I feel that time passes quickly or slowly
	I enjoyed the experience very much
	The experience was good enough to meet my expectations

In this paper, Shen Xuerui and others drew a specific measurement index more suitable for the symbolic meaning of destination brands by referring to the existing research on the symbolic meaning of brands.

Table 2. Measurement scale of destination brand symbolic meaning perception

Individual self-expression	The destination has a distinct personality
	You can express your personality through this trip
	The image of the destination is consistent with my own personality
	A trip to that destination fits in with my view of myself
Relationship self-consolidation	A trip to the destination fits in with my friends' idea of me
	The trip to the destination was in line with the way my loved ones thought of me
	Traveling to this destination will make me feel better in the eyes of the people around me
	Traveling to this destination helps me build relationships with people around me
Group identity	The destination reflects the type of person I am
	I think the people who travel to that destination have similar characteristics
	Visiting the destination made me feel like a member of a group
	Travel to that destination reflects the common interests of a group of people
Prominent social reputation and status	Traveling to that destination can show social status
	Traveling to that destination will give me greater social prestige
	A trip to the destination is something to be envied

3.3. Research Subjects

In order to make the study representative and extensive, the following tourist destinations with good tourism development and strong brand marketing awareness are selected in this paper: Huangshan, Nanjing, Xiamen, Beijing, Changsha, Chongqing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Hangzhou and Xi'an, a total of 10 city-type tourist destinations.

3.4. Questionnaire collection and data analysis

The questionnaire mainly includes three parts: one is the measurement question with the experience of care flow; Second, the measurement questions about the perception of symbolic meaning of destination brand; The third question is about the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Flow experience, perception of symbolic meaning of destination brand and visiting intention were all measured in the form of 7-point Likert scale. Respondents were asked how much they agreed with each question statement, with 1 point indicating "strongly disagree" and 7 points indicating "strongly agree". Questionnaires were distributed and forwarded to relatives and friends through the platform to collect data.

After data collection, SPSS20.0 was used to analyze and process the data. Test the reliability and validity of the scale and test the path relationship in the research hypothesis successively.

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