

# Tourism Authenticity of Ancient City Based on Tourist Perception:

## A Case Study of Xunxian County\*

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**Abstract**—In the era of experience economy, people pay more attention to personalized travel experience. As an important part of tourism, authenticity has become the focus of attention in the current academic community. This paper uses questionnaire surveys and in-depth interview research methods to obtain tourists' perception of the authenticity of the ancient city of Xunxian, and uses SPSS22.0 to perform multiple regression analysis on the obtained data. The results show that: first, the remains of the ancient city, the folk culture of the ancient city, and the craftsmanship of the tourism products of the ancient city are the main factors affecting the authenticity perception of tourists; second, the remains of the ancient city have the greatest influence on tourists' perception of authenticity; third, the living conditions of residents have little effect on tourists' perception of authenticity. Based on the research results, the author proposes strategies for maximizing the perception of authenticity of tourism in the ancient city from aspects such as the protection of the authenticity of the tourist objects in the ancient city, the authenticity construction of the tourism subject, and the interaction between the subject and the guest, protection and development of ancient city tourism.

**Keywords:** *tourism authenticity, tourist perception, Xunxian County*

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the era of the experience economy, tourism in the West and China has developed rapidly, and both have become popular. The demand of tourists has increased dramatically, and tourism products have shown a trend of mass production and homogeneity. Today, tourism has gradually become an important activity in people's daily life, and the needs of tourists have gradually moved towards personalized travel experiences, pursuing an experience of being physically and mentally present together. Tourists are always seeking local characteristics [8], and they tend to prefer more authentic tourism products and services [9], rather than accepting uniform and fake products simply [10], tourists pay more attention to personalized, authentic travel

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experience.

"Authenticity" is derived from the Greek "authentēs". It was first used to describe museum art exhibits [1], and it is often used to refer to the authenticity of religious texts and relics [2]. It was introduced into tourism in the 1960s; after nearly 60 years of development, it has become an integral part of tourism [7]. "Authenticity" is a concept of cultural values in the field of heritage; after entering the field of tourism, it is constantly being given new connotations. It is generally considered as a real experience in tourism research and can be used as a local representation [8] [9] [10]. As the earliest scholar concerned about the authenticity of tourism, Boorstin introduced "authenticity" into tourism research for the first time in 1964. It is believed that tourists often pursue a staged attraction and pseudo-events, leading to the lack of authenticity [11]. MacCannell first applied authenticity to the field of tourism in 1973, mainly from the aspects of tourism motivation and experience. He believes that many tourists are disappointed in the process of seeking the authenticity of the stage [11] [12]. The tourists pursue the pattern of daily life in pursuit of authenticity. In order for travel consumers to have a sense of belonging and a real experience in the background, the mysterious background should be disclosed to consumers [8]. Cohen believes that, constructivist authenticity and naturally generated authenticity were proposed for the first time, thereby complementing MacCannell's stage authenticity [13]. After the 21st century, Chinese scholars began to pay attention to the authenticity of tourism. Wang Ning first proposed the existential authenticity, and the academic world summarized the theory of tourism authenticity as objective authenticity, constructivist authenticity, postmodernist authenticity, existential authenticity and interactive authenticity [14]. Xu Songling summarized the development of authenticity in the concepts of tourism science and heritage science, and analyzed the specific position of authenticity in cultural and heritage tourism [15]. In recent years, scholars have conducted a lot of in-depth research on the authenticity of tourism and formed a series of rich research results. The development of tourism authenticity has gone through a process from attaching importance to the authenticity of

tourism objects to the authenticity of tourism subjects to a combination of both. They are two dimensions of the same problem and should not be separated [9]. They should complement each other rather than replace each other. On this basis, Wang Ning and other scholars proposed the development direction of interactive authenticity according to the characteristics of tourism, which enriched the research perspective of tourism authenticity [24] [25].

In summary, scholars at home and abroad have done a lot of research on the authenticity of tourism. And important progress and results have been made, but there are still problems worth studying in the development of tourism authenticity. The main manifestations are as follows: First, there are few studies on the authenticity of tourism in ancient cities, and models have not yet been constructed. Second, most studies only use quantitative or qualitative analysis, and the research method is single. Third, the research on the authenticity of subject-guest interaction is still insufficient. As one of the cultural tourism heritages, the ancient city's recognition and evaluation of its tourism authenticity will help to fully understand the value and cultural connotation of the ancient city, so that tourists can obtain a better tourism experience and enjoy human precious cultural heritage. Conducive to the protection and development of ancient city tourism resources. In view of this, this research takes the ancient city of Xunxian County as the research object, and adopts a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Analyzing the influencing factors of the authenticity of tourism in the ancient city of Xunxian County, establishing the authenticity evaluation system and interview outline of the ancient city tourism, clarifying the main factors affecting the authenticity of tourism in the ancient city of Xunxian County, revealing the path of authentic development of the ancient city of Xunxian County, providing a scientific basis for maximizing the perception of authenticity of ancient cities. It has important theoretical significance and practical value ("Table I").

TABLE I. THE EVALUATION VARIABLES FOR TOURISM AUTHENTICITY PERCEPTION IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

First-level indicators	Secondary indicators
Remaining building	C1 historical
	C2 Large scale
	C3 Ancient style
	C4 Historical scene
	C5 Harmonious overall layout
Living condition	C6 Original lifestyle
	C7 Authentic dialect
	C8 Unique food
	C9 High resident rate
Folk Culture	C10 Spectacular temple fair
	C11 Wonderful social fire
	C12 true meaning of folk culture
	C13 Traditional culture
	C14 Back to the historical scene
Tourism Commodities	C15 Unique craft souvenirs
	C16 Great aesthetic value
	C17 Keep the original business type
	C18 Experienced traditional folk items

## II. RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

### A. Overview of the case area

Located in Hebi City, Henan Province, Xunxian County is the only county-level national historical and cultural city in Henan Province. The remaining buildings in the ancient city are large in scale and complete in structure. Dapi Mountain, Fuqiu Mountain, the city wall and the Grand Canal constitute the picture scroll of "two green mountains and one stream, and ten miles of city pool halfway into the mountain". In the ancient city, there are ancient buildings such as the ruins of the Ming Dynasty city walls, the city God temple, the bell and drum tower, and Liyangcang. The annual "Folk Culture Festival" and the first ancient temple fair in North China attract many overseas tourists. Local cuisine and cultural tourism products make tourists feel the charm of the ancient city. The colorful activities allow tourists to enter the background, participate in it, and get a good travel experience.

### B. Research methods

This study used questionnaires and in-depth interviews to obtain data. The questionnaire consists of two parts: the first part is the basic information of the tourists, and the second part is the authenticity perception scale. Filter and organize measurement items according to existing literature [17] [18], It is divided into four primary indicators: building scale, living conditions, folk culture, and tourism commodities. There are 18 secondary indicators. The Likert five-level scale was used to evaluate the authenticity of tourism. 1-5 represents "strongly disagree, disagree, general, agree, strongly agree", obtain tourist perception data in the survey, and through the reliability and validity test and regression analysis of the questionnaire. Multivariate regression analysis of the indicator system [27] was performed to screen out the main factors that affect tourists' perception of authenticity and further analyze the survey results. During the survey, the author lived in the ancient city of Xunxian and conducted in-depth exchanges with tourists to ensure that the content of the interview was true and effective. A purposeful sampling method was used to select 10 people for interviews, and the length of each interview was more than 30 minutes. The interview questions mainly focused on three aspects: architectural style, folk culture, and participation experience. Finally, 4 representative samples were selected for coding, and combined with the factors affecting the tourists' perception of authenticity, the corresponding conclusions were reached.

### C. Data sources

The survey was conducted in February and October 2019. Among them, February 2019 was a pre-survey, and a total of 70 complete questionnaires were collected. Deletion or modification of difficult-to-understand expressions and items that are not highly relevant to the research results will form a formal questionnaire. The formal survey was launched in October 2019. A total of 200 questionnaires were recovered, and a total of 198 valid questionnaires were obtained, with

an effective rate of 99%. The descriptive statistical analysis of the survey samples is shown in "Table II". The demographic characteristics of the valid samples are: In terms of gender, female tourists account for a relatively large proportion of 61.11%; In the age structure, the proportion of 16-35 is the highest, which is 85.35%; The professional background is the highest proportion of company employees, which is 25.38%; In terms of the distribution of tourist sources, short-distance tourists are the majority, and the education level of tourists is mostly concentrated at the undergraduate level or above, accounting for 57.07%; In the income structure, the proportion of monthly income below 3000 is the largest, which is 30.1%.

TABLE II. SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SURVEY (N=198)

Variable	Category	Quantity	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	77	38.89
	Female	121	61.11
Age	<=15	4	2.02
	16—25	88	44.44
	26—35	81	40.91
	36—45	15	7.58
	>=46	10	5.05
Position	Students	48	24.37
	Institution	31	15.74
	Free business	22	11.17
	Technical staff	46	23.35
	Staff	51	25.76
Education	Junior high school and below	29	14.65
	High school	26	13.13
	Specialist	30	15.15
	Bachelor and above	113	57.07
Monthly income	< =3,000	59	30.10
	3001-4000	38	19.39
	4001-5000	32	16.33
	5001-6000	23	11.73
	>=6001	44	22.45

III. RESULTS ANALYSIS

A. Regression model results

Testing the reliability and validity of the tourism originality perception dimension measurement index by SPSS22.0, the overall Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of the scale is 0.944, which is greater than 0.8, and the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of each dimension subscale is above 0.7, indicating that the questionnaire is credible high degree; through exploratory factor analysis, the KMO value is 0.929, which is greater than the standard of 0.7. The spherical Bartlett test shows that the scale is significant at the level of 0.01 ("Table III" and "Table IV").

TABLE III. THE RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY TEST OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Variable	Observed variable	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Remaining building	C1,C2,C3,C4,C5	0.899
Living condition	C6,C7,C8,C9	0.709
Folk Culture	C10,C11,C12,C13,C14	0.849
Tourism Commodities	C15,C16,C17,C18	0.868

TABLE IV. THE TEST OF KMO AND BARTLETT

KMO	0.929	
Bartlett's Sphericity Test	F	2551.127
	df	171
	Sig.	0.00

Multiple regression analysis was performed on the mean of the variables, and the results are shown in "Table V". The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of the final model is 0.619, and R<sup>2</sup> is an index for judging the effect of model fitting, that is, the reason for model interpretation accounts for 61.1% of the total variation. The F value was 78.477, P=0.00, P<0.05, and the significance test showed that the results were statistically significant ("Table V").

The results of the model are shown in "Table VI". The standardized coefficients of the factors of heritage buildings, folk culture, and tourism commodities are greater than the factors of living conditions, and the significant P values of the partial regression coefficients are all less than 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that the index differences are statistically significant, that is, It is considered that the partial regression coefficient is significantly not equal to 0, and the remaining buildings, folk culture, and tourism commodities are the main influencing factors; from the test of the significant results, it is known that, except for the factor of life status that deviates from the P value range, the rest are less than 0.01, indicating that the regression The equation holds and can be analyzed statistically. The standard deviation of each factor calculated by SPSS is small, so the average value of each factor is representative. In order to ensure the integrity of the model, this study keeps X2 in the original model.

Y means authenticity perception, X1 means remaining buildings, X2 means Living Conditions, X3 means Folk Culture, and X4 means Tourism Commodities.

Regression equation:  $Y = -0.374 + 0.431X1 + 0.059X2 + 0.256X3 + 0.313X4$ .

TABLE V. THE SUMMARY OF MODEL

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard Error	F	P
0.787a	0.619	0.611	0.52	78.477	0.000

Wherein, a represents predictors, including (constant), commodity, culture, architecture, and life.

**TABLE VI. THE REGRESSION MODEL**

	Mean	Non-standardized coefficient		Normalization coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
		<i>B</i>	Standard deviation	$\beta$		
<b>(constant)</b>		<b>-0.374</b>	<b>0.288</b>		<b>-1.299</b>	<b>0.196</b>
Remaining building	3.88	0.431	0.075	0.393	5.763	0.000
Living condition	3.94	0.059	0.097	0.044	0.609	0.543
Folk Culture	4.34	0.256	0.095	0.177	2.687	0.008
Travel goods	3.82	0.313	0.081	0.277	3.849	0.000

### B. Influence of various factors on tourism authenticity perception

1) *Remaining buildings have a significant impact on authenticity perception:* The regression model can only evaluate and analyze the factors that affect the tourists' perception of the authenticity of the ancient city of Xunxian County as a whole. Perceived degree comprehensively analyzes the authenticity of tourism.

The research results show that the average value of the remaining buildings is 3.88, the standardization coefficient  $\beta=0.393$ , and  $P=0.00<0.05$ . The significance test shows that the history, scale, style, and conformity of the historical buildings and the overall layout of the remaining buildings in the ancient city of Xunxian County are harmonious. , To a large extent affect the authenticity perception of ancient city tourism. Tourists are eager to visit the authentic ancient city for an authentic experience.

In response to question 1, the tourist WG said: Xunxian County is not small, and there are a lot of ancient buildings, but many of them were rebuilt on the original site. We don't know if it looks like this anyway. Neatness can also highlight the sense of history. I usually like to go to the street and I am willing to invite relatives and friends to come home. After all, I can go to the scenic spots. After walking on the street, I have a feeling of crossing. Too much focus on the West Street, the development speed of other streets is a bit slow, as soon as West Street is out, there is no such feeling of returning to history.

The authenticity of tourism objects such as ancient buildings and surroundings is the main component of the authenticity of the ancient city, and it is also the basis for the development of the authenticity of tourism in the ancient city. The most important thing in ancient city tourism is the scale, style, and integrity of the remaining buildings. The protection and development of the ancient city is not inherited and protected intact, but by changing the use function of the building, it is restored as it is [29]. However, large-scale rectification, demolition, and individual or overall protection and renovation of the building are prone to erasure of historical memories, such as the destruction of the original appearance. At the same time, it may lead to the authenticity of the object during the development of the ancient city. Remaining buildings were simply demolished and refurbished, with tourism as a gimmick. Large-scale manufacturing of illusions and simulation buildings could

not fully get the consent of tourists and local residents. Blind reconstruction of the remaining buildings may weaken the authenticity of tourist destinations.

2) *Folk culture has a significant impact on perception of authenticity:* The research results show that the average value of the folk culture dimension is 4.34, the standardization coefficient  $\beta=0.177$ ,  $P=0.008<0.05$ , and the significance test shows that tourists' understanding of folk culture also greatly affects the perception of authenticity of tourism. Most tourists believe that they saw spectacular temple fairs and wonderful social fire performances in the ancient city of Xunxian County, and believed that a series of folk cultural activities were the inheritance of traditional culture, showing their true meaning. The pursuit of authenticity of tourists reflects the nostalgia of tourists, and the object is only to help tourists recall their past experiences. When tourists come into contact with tourist objects at tourist destinations, it is easy to compare the expected imagination with reality [30]. Most tourists said that the temple fair and social fire experience is better and beyond imagination.

In response to question 3, tourist LXH said: The Xunxian Temple Fair has continued for nearly 1700 years, and there is a grand scene every month. Photojournalists and reporters from various regions of the country come to see each other, although the things they see every year However, I still want to go to see it every year in the ancient city. Sometimes I will go to the mountain to go around with someone's family. I just go down to the mountain to eat a seed soup. I think life is very good. Xunxian temple fair is well-known, with many people and shoulder-to-shoulders. No matter the time, the scene, or the richness of the performance content, it is indeed the largest temple fair in North China. I can't find it. In fact, these are the reappearances of memories, which allow us to experience the previous state of life again. This opportunity is very rare in modern society. I hope to continue to carry forward.

Folk culture is a major feature of the ancient city of Xunxian. It continues the large-scale social fire show and temple fair that lasts for one month each year. It inherits the emotions of generations and generations, and also highlights the role of cultural soft power in tourism development. Authenticity is expressed in various forms in culture. Local residents are the inheritors of local culture. Their knowledge of local culture and history and their participation in tourism

development greatly affect their perception of tourism authenticity and culture.

3) *Folk culture has a significant impact on perception of authenticity*: The survey results show that the mean value of the dimensions of living conditions is 3.94, the standardization coefficients  $\beta=0.044$ , and  $P=0.543>0.05$ , which failed the significance test, indicating that this factor is not the main factor affecting the perception of authenticity. The language and the retention rate of indigenous residents will not affect the tourists' perception and experience of authenticity too much. Most tourists think that the life status of the tourist destination is not important. During the tourist process, it is mainly to obtain the authenticity of the tourist object, and the tourist authenticity is mainly an authentic experience that the tourists have to discover themselves. Therefore, the existential principle Authenticity is considered to have nothing to do with the authenticity of the object, emphasizing the subject's own feelings, and focusing on seeking opportunities for self-authenticity.

In response to question 2, the tourist GLP said: Actually, no matter what the development of tourism, there will be some impact. For example, when the New Year is celebrated, people are everywhere in the city, and they don't know where they come from. They are all tourists. The most obvious is that the ancient city has been planned in recent years, and more people have come. In fact, regardless of the dialects of the ancient city of Xunxian, we can understand them. Their daily life will not affect our visits. The times are advancing. The people in Xunxian must also keep pace with the times. And the lifestyle will not lower the expectations of tourists in the ancient city, there are old and new, so it is not bad.

4) *Remaining buildings have a significant impact on authenticity perception*: The survey results showed that the mean value of tourism product dimensions was 3.82, the standardized coefficient  $\beta=0.277$ , and  $P=0.00<0.05$ , which passed the significance test. It shows that the authenticity of tourism commodities greatly affects the perception of tourism authenticity. There are few and single cultural and artistic activities in the ancient city of Xunxian County. They scored low in the sample survey of "Experiencing Traditional Folk Custom Projects". Tourists are highly enthusiastic about participating in tourism activities, but they have not been effectively satisfied here. Tourists stated that they did not personally participate in the local folk cultural activities, and did not really participate in the process of destination authenticity construction. In response to question 3, tourists LGF said, but at present, this kind of participatory activities is still a little bit, there is no other than to do mud coo yourself. Most tourists can only visit and buy some souvenirs with less prominent features, and then go to the ancient city by themselves. There are often tourists who rent Hanfu and flower umbrellas. Although there are not many styles, take pictures and send them to friends. It may also be because there are too many people in

the ancient city of Xunxian during the holidays. It's crowded when watching the show. It's enough to follow the crowd at the temple fair. Sometimes you don't have to look at the road. Everyone wants to go to the actors to interact. Sometimes it's hard to see it in close proximity, let alone to experience it for yourself.

Tourists have high expectations for the tourism products of the ancient city of Xunxian, but they are often not met due to excessive concentration of passenger traffic. Uniform tourist souvenirs will also weaken the authenticity perception of ancient cities.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the existing literature, this study divides the factors that affect tourists' perception of the authenticity of the ancient city of Xunxian into four dimensions, and adopts research methods such as questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews. The results show that there are three factors: heritage buildings, folk culture, and tourism commodities. Remaining buildings have the greatest influence on authenticity perception, tourism products take second place, and folk culture has the smallest impact. Living conditions have no significant effect on authenticity perception. It has enriched the research content of the authenticity of the ancient city tourism, deepened the influence mechanism of the authenticity of the ancient city tourism, and provided countermeasures and suggestions for the development of the ancient city.

Based on this, the following suggestions are proposed: the first is strengthening the protection of ancient buildings: relevant departments should be reasonable planning and development, cultural relics protection of local history, on the basis of the protection of repair, to stay in the old as before, to avoid excessive commercialization, controls the degree between the original true and entertaining, safeguarding the local tourism image, strengthen the tourism attraction, enable tourists and residents to see the original ancient city landscape. The second is activating intangible cultural heritage: the local government should attach importance to supporting the development of folk culture, and strengthen the protection of intangible cultural heritage, keep the original characteristics, inherit and innovate, and enhance the experience of folk culture activities. The third is developing characteristic tourist commodities: in order to avoid the similarity of tourism commodities, Xunxian ancient city should develop new commodities based on its special characteristics and create opportunities for tourists to participate in creation. For example, the experience of clay sculpture and historical sitcoms enables tourists to step into the background from the front, so as to better construct authentic tourism scenes and protect and inherit intangible cultural heritage. The fourth is increasing the participation of tourists. The authenticity of interaction can more effectively convey the charm of participatory tourism [24]. Most tourists expect to experience traditional characteristic activities in tourist destinations, and they also believe that the experience of returning to historical scenes is conducive to improving the perception of authenticity, and attention should be paid to

the communication and interaction between the host country and tourists, as well as the two-way role between tourism objects and subjects. The fifth is fully coordinating the relationship between stakeholders, constructing the object authenticity environment, and organizing related activities according to tourists' expectation, imagination, preference and belief combined with modern science and technology, so as to change the traditional authenticity of tourism, so as to improve the perception of authenticity of tourism. This research perspective changes the analysis perspective of judging truth and falsehood only based on tourism objects or subjects, and will promote the construction of authenticity environment of tourism destinations, so as to enable tourists to obtain a good authenticity experience and maximize their authenticity perception [31].

There are still some deficiencies in this paper. The research time is focused on holidays and holidays, so the data can be obtained in a single way. In the era of experience economy, the tourist is to pursue more of a tourist experience and local characteristics, the influx of tourists to a certain extent, also affect people's life, may lead to role conflict, how to enhance the local residents of local pride, make it produce the original true value recognition, balance of the original true destination tourism development and the relationship between the residents' life, will be the focus of further research.

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