



A Study on the Coopetition Mechanism of Tourism Destinations in the Perspective of Holistic Tourism: —— Take Suzhou and Wuxi as Examples

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Abstract. Healthy competition and cooperation among tourism destinations is a critical way to achieve sustainable development, and can promote to enhance the overall competitiveness of regional destinations. However, studies have focused on the impact of competition and cooperation on the development of tourism destinations, but there is a lack of exploration of the mechanisms behind competition and cooperation, which need to be improved. Competition and cooperation in tourism destinations require a unified destination image and reasonable integration of tourism resources with other resources. Therefore, the article takes Suzhou and Wuxi as the subject of analysis to explore the competition and cooperation across destinations under holistic tourism. The analysis process is divided into two steps. First, the relationship between the tourism images of Suzhou and Wuxi is explored through content analysis and social network analysis. On the basis, the feasibility of integrating the destination image elements with various resources is explored with the guidance of the concept of holistic tourism. The results show that the competition between Suzhou and Wuxi should balance the unity and differences between the two destinations. While building a destination cooperation mechanism through a unified destination image, infrastructure integration and joint regional management organisation, the cooperation between Suzhou and Wuxi should also respect the differentiated competition between destinations, to realise the complementarity of local characteristics and destination cooperation with the breakthrough of Suzhou's solidified garden image and upgrade of Wuxi's eco-quality products.

Keywords: Destination image, Competition and cooperation, Territorial tourism, Social network analysis.

1 Introduction

As a specific relationship between firms, the concept of coopetition and cooperation (later referred to as coopetition) refers to a non-zero-sum game in which members achieve a win-win situation in a cooperative-competitive relationship [1]. The concept has been widely used in tourism industry[2; 3]. Studies have found that destina-

tions cooperate with competitors not only to provide better customer service [4] and attract tourists [5], but also to achieve value co-creation and knowledge sharing among tourism destinations [6] to avoid excessive uncontrolled competition. Therefore, research about coopetition can positively guide the development of regional tourism. However, the existing problem is that, in the framework of destination competition, although the concept of coopetition has been applied to destination management and destination marketing [7], managers tend to pay more attention to shaping a unified destination image without the existence of multiple approaches to competition between destinations [4].

As destination association is based on the consistent perceived image, studies have analyzed coopetition mainly from the destination image. These studies found that coopetition permits member destinations to receive the benefits of cooperation without sacrificing their uniqueness and independence in decision-making [8]. However, these researches are limited to the DI and fail to provide a coopetitive approach that considers the various influencing factors such as destination image, administrative space and infrastructure. For a sustainable model of coopetition between tourism destinations, collaborative destinations should not only emphasize the balance and reasonability in the allocation of tourism resources, but also link tourism resources with resources in various areas, including culture, transport, science and technology, and education in the region [9], forming a cooperative model for mutual development [10]. This coopetition model is aptly in line with the development concept of holistic tourism, which emphasizes that management authorities, in tourism-dominated regions, unify and manage various social resources, to achieve coordinated regional economic and social development driven by tourism [11]. To further explore the concept, this study selected Suzhou and Wuxi as cases for analysis, using the concept of holistic tourism as a guiding framework for destination development, to explore the feasibility of establishing a competition and cooperation mechanism between the two cities, based on a systematic analysis in the destination image.

2 LiterATUre REVIEW

2.1 Destination Image

Kotler et al. classify destination image (DI) into projected and perceived images from a supply and demand perspective [12]. The projected image is the sum of all individual images communicated by destination marketing organisations (DMOs) and other stakeholders through marketing communication tools [13; 14], while the perceived DI is the impressions and perceptions that visitors generate about the destination [15]. As projected and perceived images together influence potential customers' choice, satisfaction and destination marketing management [16], destinations need to balance tourist demand and projection products if they are to be sustainable in a competitive market [17]. In addition, the research on destination perceived and projected images can also help to explore the relationship between the images of different destinations. In particular, with the development of regional integration, the relationship between destinations is gradually shifting from competition to cooperation [7] with a joint

regional image [8], while the perceived and projected images can reflect the similarities and differences between destinations and provide a reference for destination cooperation.

2.2 Coopetition in Tourism Destination

The concept of coopetition is original from business operations as a non-zero-sum game that can lead to a win-win situation [1]. In a study of tourism in Naples and Sorrento, Italy, Della Corte & Aria noted that this co-existence of coopetition also exists in the tourism industry as a successful strategy to improve the performance of tourism companies and DMOs [7], because in the coopetition framework, competitors cooperate mutually and can form a symbiotic relationship of value co-creation [6]. However, Chim-Miki & Batista-Cannino argued that competition still exists between participants despite their cooperation, due to a common goal [18]. In the tourism industry, when the collaborating parties are too homogeneous, the other party is regarded as a competitor [4], as the collaboration may pose a risk to the participants [19]. Therefore, unlike the umbrella brand approach to cooperation, coopetition between regional tourism destinations does not replace a unique local brand identity with a collaborative brand [8], but rather preserves per destination's unique competitiveness as it forms interdependent and complementary cooperation with competitors.

2.3 Holistic Tourism & Regional Development

In 2015, some scholars proposed the concept of holistic tourism at the China Tourism Work Conference [20]. The concept refers to, the government, in tourism-led regions integrating tourism, cultural, administrative and social resources to achieve coordinated regional economic and social development motivated by tourism [11]. This development model emphasises linking tourism with various areas in the region, such as culture, transportation, science and technology, to complement the shortcomings of the destination and form a tourism+ development model with all-element, all-resource in the destination [11; 21]. It not only promotes the construction of a unified DI, but also enhances the added value of tourism products [22]. Moreover, for integrated regional tourism development, local governments can interact with the outside world through the concept of holistic tourism to form a broader pattern of regional cooperation [23]. It not only shatters the spatial boundaries of destination management systems and tourism infrastructure, but breaks through the development dilemma of localities working in isolation. However, although holistic tourism emphasises the participation of the whole industries, sectors and population, it does not mean the holism of local characteristics. Maintaining per destination's features can enrich the DI as a whole. Thus, the holistic tourism model not only improves the tourism's value to related industries [22], but promotes regional economic restructuring and optimisation [24].

2.4 Research Review

In general, some current studies have focused on the positive impact of inter-destination coopetition on destination marketing [8; 25]. However, most of the current studies have focused on the coopetition in DI, while the coopetition between regional destinations in the competition framework is not only about the unification of DIs, but also about the need to explore the coopetition of tourism destinations from multiple perspectives and approaches. It requires the concept of holistic tourism to break through the boundaries of the tourism industry to form an all-encompassing and systematic framework for regional cooperation [9], to expand the research on destination coopetition. Additionally, these studies focus on the macro-level interpretation of tourism destination competition and cooperation without an analytical framework for different tourism destinations. Therefore, this article will analyse and compare the relationship between two cities, Suzhou and Wuxi in terms of image elements, and use the concept of holistic tourism to guide and assess the feasibility of establishing a coopetition relationship between the two destinations. In theory, this study will expand the application boundaries of coopetition theory in destinations, and is a tentative exploration of the concept of holistic tourism in destination coopetition; in practice, this study guides the integrated development and construction around Tai Lake, and the concept is also applicable to tourism destinations in other regions.

3 Research design

The article divides the case study into three parts. (1) First, the article will analyze the projected and perceived DIs through content analysis, to systematically find the similarities and differences between the image of Suzhou and Wuxi from multiple perspectives. (2) Then, the social network is constructed by the image elements, while the centrality of different image elements is used to discover the relationship between the two destination. (3) Finally, with the guide of holistic tourism, the article will explore constructing a practically feasible coopetition model for the Suzhou and Wuxi by integrating essential tourism resources in the region with administrative and social resources.

3.1 Case Introduction

Suzhou and Wuxi (Su-Xi) are located in the central Yangtze River Delta region of China, bordered by the Tai Lake, and are the birthplaces of Jiangnan culture. Both cities are historical cities with rich cultural heritage and distinctive DIs. Suzhou, with world heritage of classical gardens and ancient towns, has gained popularity with its image of "Paradise, the Water City" [26], while Wuxi, with core resources from the ancient canal and Tai Lake, has positioned as a leisure resort. For the integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta region, the Jiangsu provincial government (2019) proposes to build a worldwide ecological and cultural tourism zone along Tai Lake [27], which means that the cities around Tai Lake, need to re-evaluate their DIs and unify to build the DI around Tai Lake.

3.2 Methodology

This study uses content analysis to find the similarities and differences between the image of Su-Xi from 2 perspectives: the supply-side website promotional text and the tourists' online travel notes as data sources. However, the elements of DI do not directly reflect the relationship between destinations. To further explore the relationship between the two DIs, the study uses social network analysis to build a social network in the two destinations to determine the closeness of the s in different images. The closeness of the relations can reflect the relationship between Su-Xi and provide a direction for their cooperation.

(1) Content analysis is a research method applied to the objective analysis of explicit content [28], which can transform unsystematic and unqualified character content into systematic and quantitative data [29]. ROST CM 6, which is commonly used to analyse Chinese text data in DI studies [30], is a social computing software for content mining, text analysis and knowledge processing. Therefore, the article relies on the word frequency statistics and semantic network analysis in ROST CM 6 to conduct content analysis of the projected and perceived images in Su-Xi by their online text data to find their relationship in DIs and the possibility of regional cooperation.

(2) The social network is a collection of social actors as nodes and their relationships [31]. Ucinet network analysis software can visualize and analyze the data by constructing a social network. In the social network node diagram, each keyword is regarded as a node, while line segments connect the relationships between the nodes. The lines' thickness and the arrows' direction can reflect the closeness of the relationships between the nodes in the social network.

3.3 Data Sources

The article uses the Python software "Octopus" to capture the required research data online. The projected image data were obtained from local official articles on WeChat to enhance the accuracy and reliability of the data. After eliminating advertisements and irrelevant parts, 301 valid texts with 718,619 Chinese characters and 324 texts with 385,349 Chinese characters were obtained from Su-Xi, respectively. On the other hand, Ctrip was chosen as the primary source of travel notes based on its popularity and completeness. The researcher searched keywords "Suzhou" and "Wuxi" in the Ctrip, sampled by systematic sampling, with groups of ten, taking samples 1, 3 and 9 per group in Suzhou and samples 1, 2, 4, 5 and 8 in each group in Wuxi. Then, the data was filtered. (1) The number of words was higher than 1,000. (2) The content of the destination's description was more than 1,000 words. (3) Advertising content was excluded. (4) For multi-destination travel notes, irrelevant sections were excluded. (5) Texts with traces of plagiarism and copying were excluded. Finally, there are 493 Suzhou travel notes with 1,260,637 Chinese characters and 406 Wuxi travel notes with 892,487 Chinese characters.

4 Case study

4.1 Data analysis

4.1.1. High-frequency words comparison analysis.

To explore the perceived and projected images of Su-Xi, there are the top 100 high-frequency words after text collation through ROST CM6, with three items and 16 elements, in Table 1. The high-frequency words in these two cities were counted separately (Table 2 and Table 3). There are three attributes (core attributes, essential attributes and edge attributes) classified by the frequency ratio of each elemental attribute. The core attributes are those outstanding frequency ratios; the critical attributes are those higher than average; the edge attributes are those lower than average. The more the core component of each element attribute, the more influential the group's role is in the joint DI.

There are many similarities between Su-Xi 's perceived and projected images. The essential or core elements that unite the perceived and projected images of Suzhou (Table 2) include geographical location, architectural style, historical relics, and traditional culture, while that of Wuxi (Table 3) include water town, flora and fauna, geological landscape, historical relics, and infrastructure. (1) The element, historical relics, shows essential or core attributes in both DIs. (2) Although tourists do not strongly perceive the geographical location and traditional culture, they are essential or core elements in the projected images of both destinations. Significantly, the local governments attach importance to local traditional culture. (3) Water town and infrastructure also account for a higher proportion of the perceived image in the two cities, indicating that tourists have a good experience with these image elements. Therefore, the two DIs have commonalities in historical sites, geographical location, traditional literature and arts, water town, and infrastructure.

On the other hand, there are differences in the perceived and the projected DIs. (1) Both flora and fauna (core elements) and geological landscape (essential elements) are more critical in Wuxi's perceived and projected images, with a lower performance in Suzhou. (2) There is a difference between Su-Xi in the architectural style, which appears more frequently in Suzhou, while Wuxi is not sensitive to it. These elements with differences are unique and exclusive to their destination.

Table 1. Projected and perceived image vocabulary with high frequency

Item	DIs	Explanation of reference	Essential elements
Natural Resources	Water town	Beautiful lake scenery and a variety of marine products	Tai Lake, Canal, Hairy crab
	Flora and fauna	Local animals and plants	Cherry blossom, Plum blossom
	Countryside idyll	Rural tourism with distinctive themes	Ecology, Countryside, Idyll
	Geological landscapes	Special landforms formed by nature or man	Wetlands, Hot springs, Mountains
	Location	The south in the middle and lower reaches of Yangtze River	Jiangnan, Gusu, Jinkui

	Natural climate	The local climate and the natural environment	Sunshine, Weather, Seasons
Human Resources	Architectural style	Local architectural design features	Suzhou Style, Garden
	Historic relics	Tangible tourism resources with ages	Old towns, Old streets, History
	Gastronomy	A delicacy with local flavors or iconic restaurants	Gourmet, Ravioli and Local cuisine
	Featured Specialties	Unique or famous products that are unique in the place	Local, Redware, Green Tea
	Traditional Culture	Art and cultural places, forms and practices	Art, Intangible Cultural Heritage
	Religion	Local beliefs and places of a religious nature	Ling Mountain, and Buddhism
	City Reviews	Visitors' impressions of the city	Wonderful, Beautiful, and Exquisite
Travel Services	Infrastructure	Facilities created for visitors	Hotels, B&Bs, Airports
	Tourism Management	Regulation, and measures taken for the safety visitors	Prices, Tickets, Free
	Tourism Interactive	Tourism activities generated for tourists	Visitor, Feeling, Experience

4.1.2. Social network analysis.

The social network analysis can build a social network through these image elements and destinations, directly reflecting the relationship between the DIs. The data in Table 2 and Table 3 were taken into the Ucinet software to build a network of projected and perceived DIs. In the network, the projection data is directed from destinations to elements, while the visitor perception data is the opposite. Table 4 shows the degree of centrality in the projected and perceived Dis in the social network. The degree of centrality indicates the direct relationship between the participating points and other points and can reflect the relationship between the image elements and the regional destinations with a positive correlation. These image elements are divided into core, essential, and edge attributes. The indicators of core attributes are more significant than the mean. The essential attributes are those where the centrality indicator is more remarkable than three-quarters of its mean, while the edge are those where the centrality indicator is less than three-quarters of its mean.

The social network was visualised to reflect the relationship between Su-Xi more intuitively and clearly. As the image elements are too redundant, the data of the edge attributes in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4 were eliminated, and only the essential or core attributes in tables were retained. Then the filtered data were visualised and processed in Figure 1. In the visualised social network, the more connection points between a destination and an image element, the more influential the element is to that destination. Additionally, the more image elements are connected between destinations, the closer relationship.

Table 2. Comparison of projected and perceived image with high-frequency in Suzhou

Item	Image	Projected images in Wuxi			Perceived images in Wuxi		
		Frequency (N=17004)	Ratio	Attribute	Frequency (N=17004)	Ratio	Attribute
Natural Resources	Water town	1131	6.65%	Essential	2388	7.55%	Essential
	Flora and fauna	2126	12.50%	Core	3857	12.19%	Core
	Countryside idyll	593	3.49%	Edge	639	2.02%	Edge
	Geological landscapes	1520	8.94%	Essential	2585	8.17%	Essential
	Location	1072	6.30%	Essential	1874	5.92%	Edge
	Natural climate	280	1.65%	Edge	549	1.74%	Edge
Human Resources	Architectural style	218	1.28%	Edge	1254	3.96%	Edge
	Historic relics	2388	14.04%	Core	4897	15.48%	Core
	Gastronomy	238	1.40%	Edge	470	1.49%	Edge
	Featured Specialties	373	2.19%	Edge	1549	4.90%	Edge
	Traditional Culture	3937	23.15%	Core	1623	5.13%	Edge
	Religion	114	0.67%	Edge	2226	7.04%	Essential
	City Reviews	1337	7.86%	Essential	1182	3.74%	Edge
Travel Services	Infrastructure	1099	6.46%	Essential	4833	15.27%	Core
	Tourism Management	109	0.64%	Edge	932	2.95%	Edge
	Tourism Interactive	469	2.76%	Edge	782	2.47%	Edge
AVE:		1063	6.25%		1978	6.25%	

Table 3. Comparison of projected and perceived image with high-frequency in Wuxi

Item	Image	Projected images in Suzhou			Perceived images in Suzhou		
		Frequency (N=21198)	Ratio	Attribute	Frequency (N=38242)	Ratio	Attribute
Natural Resources	Water town	1324	6.25%	Edge	3449	9.02%	Essential
	Flora and fauna	643	3.03%	Edge	780	2.04%	Edge
	Countryside idyll	721	3.40%	Edge	359	0.94%	Edge
	Geological landscapes	1055	4.98%	Edge	1124	2.94%	Edge
	Location	1841	8.68%	Essential	3043	7.96%	Essential
	Natural climate	557	2.63%	Edge	1601	4.19%	Edge
Human Resources	Architectural style	1657	7.82%	Essential	3334	8.72%	Essential
	Historic relics	2504	11.81%	Essential	7531	19.69%	Core
	Gastronomy	1869	8.82%	Essential	1287	3.37%	Edge
	Featured Specialties	1230	5.80%	Edge	1241	3.25%	Edge
	Traditional Culture	3801	17.93%	Core	3867	10.11%	Essential
	Religion	-	-	-	-	-	-
	City Reviews	919	4.34%	Edge	2578	6.74%	Essential
Travel Services	Infrastructure	1076	5.08%	Edge	6083	15.91%	Core
	Tourism Management	664	3.13%	Edge	881	2.30%	Edge
	Tourism Interactive	1337	6.31%	Edge	1084	2.83%	Edge
AVE:		14133	6.67%		2549	6.67%	

In Table 4, (1) the degree of centrality of the homogeneous elements, water town (16.57), historical relics (35.17), traditional Culture (41.08) and infrastructure (31.18),

all far exceed the indicators as core attributes. Although water town, traditional culture and infrastructure are edge attributes in Table 2 or Table 3, their high degree of centrality attests to the status of these homogeneous elements in the relationship between the two destinations. (2) However, the geographical location is only an edge attribute in the social network analysis. Since this element has three essential attributes in the content text analysis and its degree of centrality is close to the essential attribute criterion, it has some value in the study, considered an essential attribute. (3) Moreover, although the flora and fauna, architectural style and geological landscape have differences among Su-Xi in the content analysis, their degree of centrality in the social network is still high with essential attributes, which indicates that these elements still have a strong influence on the relationship of Su-Xi. (4) Table 4 complements the city evaluation element despite these above image elements. Although city evaluation is an essential attribute in the social network, this element does not have commonality or variability in the two DIs without research value and should be considered the edge.

Overall, the two DIs are similar overall, with features. In Figure 1, the intersection of elements mirrors a high frequency of projection from local governments and intense tourist perception. It demonstrates the homogeneity between the images of Su-Xi, and reflects the closer connection between these two destinations. However, overly similar DIs intensify destinations' competition, so these destinations are actually in a state of opportunity and risk.

Table 4. Centrality of projected and perceived images of Suzhou and Wuxi in social network

DIs	Degree of Centrality	Attributes
Water Town	16.57	Core
Flora and fauna	15.53	Essential
Countryside idyll	6.89	Edge
Geological landscapes	13.92	Essential
Location	14.98	<i>Edge*(Considered as Essential)</i>
Natural climate	5.93	Edge
Architectural style	12.68	Essential
Historic relics	35.17	Core
Gastronomy	10.31	Edge
Featured Specialties	10.7	Edge
Traditional Culture	41.08	Core
Religion	7.04	Edge
City Reviews	14.6	<i>Essential*(Considered as Edge)</i>
Infrastructure	31.18	Core
Tourism Management	6.08	Edge
Tourism Interactive	9.07	Edge
Ave:	15.73	-

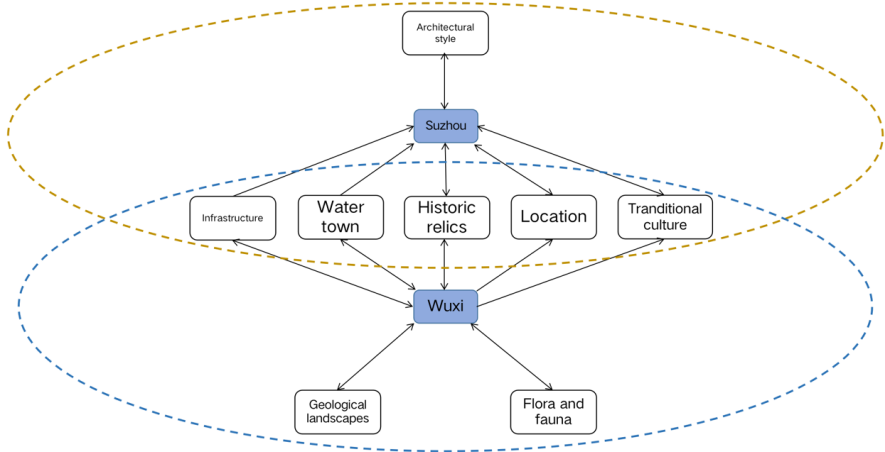


Fig. 1. Core and essential projected and perceived image of Suzhou and Wuxi in social network

4.2 Coepetition in the DIs around Tai Lake

The content and social network analysis show similarities and differences in the two cities' DIs. The two destinations can cooperate to jointly promote the development of the regional destination and avoid the risks associated with the overly homogeneous DI. However, Figure 1 illustrates that these essential image elements in the two competing destinations span spatial scales, ecological environments, public services, related industries and tourism resources, which adds to the complexity of building cooperation between Su-Xi. Holistic tourism can help destinations integrate these factors and promote the formation of a regional destination cooperation framework. (1) First, holistic tourism can guide the regional government, where tourism is the dominant industry, to optimise the resources systematically, to establish of the Tai Lake DI. (2) In addition, under the framework of holistic tourism, local governments can build an integrated infrastructure service network based on transport, safety and management of tourists' needs [32]. The network can effectively connect the various nodes between destinations[33], strengthening the closeness of cooperation and enabling cooperative destinations to form a whole [23]. (3) However, as tourism management is limited by administrative space in China, cross-regional cooperation between cities should break the limitation. Holistic tourism can guide the local government to interact with the outside [23] to break the boundaries between destinations and achieve integrated regional tourism development.

On the other hand, there are still differences in images of Su-Xi. While destinations can avoid some frictions through cooperation, the two unique DIs in Figure 1 reflects competition. Therefore, in the framework of holistic tourism, the image of regional cooperation based on the principle of coepetition should also reserve local characteristics [34]. Local governments should pay attention to their unique local DI, and try to integrate distinctive elements with holistic resources and industries for tourism product renewal and value enhancement.

4.2.1 Cooperation framework in Tai Lake: Cooperation between Suzhou and Wuxi with holistic tourism.

First, cooperation between Su-Xi requires a unified DI around Tai Lake because a unified positioning is crucial for successful tourism cooperation [8]. Overall, in Figure 1, the two DIs maintains a high degree of consistency. In particular, water town and geographical location elements in the intersection section (Figure 1) reflect that tourists have common perceptions in the two destinations, as the prerequisites for forming the DI of the Tai Lake. However, the current tourist perception of the Tai Lake region is dominated by Su-Xi, respectively, without a complete concept of the Tai Lake tourism area. Moreover, the DI is neither a simple aggregation of the member cities nor determined by a single well-known DI [35], but should be planned systematically. Therefore, Su-Xi should cooperate to integrate the tourism industry into a whole to form a regional DI.

From the intersection of Figure 1, the image of Tai Lake can be composed from four components: geographical location, water town, historical relics and traditional culture. Regarding geographical location and water town element, Su-Xi are the water towns with Jiangnan culture bordering Tai Lake. The two destinations can cooperate to create an image of a Jiangnan water town, by the original landscape of ancient weirs, wharves and ancient ferries in the Tai Lake. Regarding historical heritage elements, the resources (ancient towns) in Suzhou and Wuxi are similar. The local governments create a holistic environment for sharing resources to break through the framework limits and value restrictions of the resources. Therefore, the Tai Lake destination can have an image of the ancient lakeside town through the unified planning of the ancient town resources. Regarding cultural foundation, Suzhou and Wuxi belong to the Wuyue culture with rich non-heritage cultural resources. The joint destination can build up cultural display carriers, promote acceptable tourism routes and hold special events in festivals to link up elements for shaping the DI of cultural tourism along the Tai Lake.

Second, cooperation between Su-Xi requires a unified infrastructure system. In holistic tourism, improving public services is crucial to governing the destination [36]. In Figure 1, tourists' perceptions of Su-Xi in tourism facilities are positive, with a good impression. However, the independent public service system cannot meet the development demands of tourism around Tai Lake. For example, although the internal railway service in these two cities is improving, without territorial transport networks. There is a problem of spatial dispersion of destinations once the tourists enter the Tai Lake tourism area. Therefore, the government should speed up the co-creation and infrastructure integration of the metropolitan area. When the authority plans public transport in Su-Xi, they can link the resources, facilities, services and products scattered in the destination space by building an interconnected, mobile and efficient transport network system. Territorial transport networks can enable the reconfiguration and integration of unused resources in destinations to improve the efficiency of resource allocation.

Furthermore, cooperation between Su-Xi requires administrative space without border limitations, and a unified management organization. Currently, destinations are governed by administrative units for the tourism industry in China, with the actual

division of destinations by administrative space. However, administrative divisions deviate from tourism resources' distribution pattern and management logic [37], because, in the long run, tourists determine the tourism space [38]. The intersection of the DIs (Figure 1) shows many similarities in tourists' perceptions of the two DIs, which indicates that tourists' impressions of the DIs have broken through the boundaries of the destinations and formed a unified DI of the region. Therefore, the two destinations have the basis to break through the administrative spatial restrictions and establish a cooperative brand image. Moreover, holistic tourism is about breaking the old spatial pattern of tourism [22] and the traditional regional administrative framework. Therefore, these destinations can establish a cross-regional tourism operation and management organisation that transcends administrative boundaries, such as the Tourism Management Committee in Tai Lake, through holistic tourism integrated planning, in a multi-destination collaborative governance model.

4.2.2. Competition in cooperation: the unique DI of Suzhou and Wuxi.

Tai Lake destination based on the cooperation between Su-Xi does not imply a pure form of tourism cooperation, but rather competition within the cooperation, as destinations are often exclusive and competitive [8]. Especially when the two sides of a cooperative destination are too homogeneous, cooperation may create competitive risks for the participants [4; 19]. Therefore, instead of forming a single homogeneous image, holistic tourism should reflect the region's features, primarily focusing on exploring regional culture [34]. Based on the above, the cooperation of Su-Xi should respect the characteristic resources, and the projects should be arranged selectively in the regional time and space. In the cooperation, Su-Xi can form a development model that establishes the cooperation and coordination of the tourism destinations around Tai Lake and preserves the characteristics of the two cities, so that local special image and the regional image can reflect each other.

4.2.2.1. Suzhou: a breakthrough in solid garden image.

In Figure 1, although the historical relics element is in intersection, the architectural style element is only closely related to Suzhou, because the garden architecture in Suzhou, known as the 'City of Gardens', is a unique architectural style. The unique image is difficult to reconcile with the DI around Tai Lake. However, holistic tourism does not require the reallocation of all resources to the whole, nor does it require promoting the whole region at the expense of local quality [39]. Holistic tourism can be combined with a territorial pattern strategy [40]. In addition, the mature image, the garden in Suzhou, is faced the problem, the image solidification [26]. The image solidification in Suzhou shows that the good intentions accumulated in the current phase are difficult to attract tourists continuously. Therefore, Suzhou should combine the architectural art with other images around Tai Lake, such as the water town, local history and culture, to break the solidified single image. The destination can provide innovative cultural tourism products with the above elements, and realise the "hundred scenes of the ancient city" in Suzhou. It can intertwine city's unique image and the image of the ancient city of Tai Lake.

4.2.2.2. *Wuxi: Upgrading high-quality ecological and wellness products.*

Wuxi's DI highlights the ecological and natural beauty of its geological landscape, flora and fauna (Figure 1). However, the DI of ecology and nature are single and old-fashioned, and only a high-quality ecotourism product is more competitive. Holistic tourism should also focus on the quality [39; 41]. Therefore, Wuxi should create a high-quality tourism product from a multi-dimensional perspective by integrating with holistic resources and industries. First, under the holistic resource, Wuxi should amplify the ecological and natural image of the wetlands; develop experiential ecotourism projects; and expand the space in a multi-dimensional integration of mountain, water, forest, field, and lake. In addition, the natural and ecological elements in Wuxi can also enable a multi-dimensional combination of leisure and tourism, extending and improving the region-wide industry chain by offering new businesses such as hot spring recreation, nursing and health care, and forming an ecotourism image of integrated development of recreation and leisure.

5 Conclusions

To assess the possibility of developing destination co-competition, this study investigated the similarities and differences between the projected and perceived images of Su-Xi, through content analysis; then investigated the relationship between DIs through social network analysis; explored the co-competition mechanism between these two destinations under the guidance of the concept of holistic tourism.

First, from content and social network analysis, the DI of Su-Xi is homogeneous, with some differences. In particular, the homogeneity of the DI provides a direction for cooperation between Su-Xi in building a DI around Tai Lake. In contrast, the differences in some high-frequency image elements reflect the unique characteristics per DI. Meanwhile, these image elements with importance or core attributes in the degree of centrality also reflect the connections between the two destinations.

On the other hand, from the perspective of regional tourism, although Su-Xi can cooperate to establish a unified DI around Tai Lake to enhance the competitiveness of the regional destination, the two cities still have a relatively isolated administrative space and independent infrastructure system. In particular, the unified destination lacks a DMO across administrative boundaries due to the limitation of administrative space. The destination cooperation without unified management will affect the process and practical effects of the cooperation. Therefore, the DI cooperation should be extended to holistic space, industries and resources in co-competition framework. In addition, under the guidance of holistic tourism, the cooperation of Su-Xi, the promotion of holistic integration does not mean a united destination in all aspects, and they should still maintain a competitive and differentiated image.

6 Contributions and Limitation

First, on the basis of the existing research on the relationship between projection and perceived DIs, this article further explores the impact of homogeneous and heteroge-

neous images between destinations on the construction of a unified regional DI, which actually broadens the scope of research on tourism destination competition. In addition, the concept of holistic tourism is a relatively new concept at the stage of both theoretical and practical exploration, and this study adds a case study to the idea of holistic tourism, which is a tentative exploration.

The article, however, as an exploratory study, has the following shortcomings. (1) The article only mines projected image data from the Suzhou and Wuxi government, without travel agencies and other suppliers in the statistics, which affects the comprehensiveness of the projected data in a certain extent. (2) The data in the study are mined from the perspective of two destinations, rather than a whole destination, Tai Lake. It brings a degree of bias to the whole DI of Tai Lake in certain extent. In future research, the projected image data will be categorised and refined according to different projected information sources; and the relationship between DI of region and cities will be explored from the perspective of Tai Lake.

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