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The Influence of Cultural Landscape Architecture of Chinese Gardens on Youth Tourists Intentions: Case of Four Gardens in China

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Abstract

Understanding how cultural landscape attributes of heritage sites influence young tourists' travel intentions is essential for the sustainable development of cultural tourism. However, existing studies have paid limited attention to the psychological mechanisms linking cultural landscape experience and behavioral intention, particularly among youth tourists in the context of classical Chinese gardens. This study examines the influence of cultural landscape experience on youth tourists' travel intentions, with cultural identity as a mediating variable.

Using four renowned Chinese gardens — the Summer Palace, the Chengde Mountain Resort, the Humble Administrator's Garden, and the Linger Garden— as the research context, data were collected through an online questionnaire survey of young tourists aged 18–35 (n = 200). Descriptive statistics, Pearson chi-square tests, independent-samples t-tests, and multiple regression analyses were employed to examine the relationships among cultural landscape experience, cultural identity, and travel intention.

The results indicate that cultural landscape experience has a significant positive effect on both cultural identity and travel intention. Cultural identity, in turn, significantly predicts youth tourists' willingness to revisit and recommend Chinese classical gardens, suggesting its mediating role in the relationship between cultural landscape experience and travel intention. In addition, young tourists show a strong preference for immersive and interactive cultural experiences. Gender differences are observed in experiential perception and behavioral intention, while no significant difference is found in the core dimension of cultural identity.

This study contributes to cultural landscape and tourism research by empirically validating a “cultural landscape experience–cultural identity–travel intention” framework from a youth tourism perspective. Practically, the findings provide implications for heritage garden management, highlighting the importance of immersive interpretation, digital engagement, and youth-oriented cultural experience design.

Keywords: *China's Four Great Gardens; cultural landscape; young tourist intentions; cultural Identity; cultural landscape theory*

1.Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Classical Chinese gardens, as a glittering treasure of Chinese civilization, possess rich cultural landscapes, embodying the philosophical concept of "harmony between man and nature" and the pinnacle of gardening. The "Four Great Gardens of China," represented by the Summer Palace, the Mountain Resort, the Humble Administrator's Garden, and the Linger Garden, are valuable not only for their historical significance, such as witnessing the Qing Dynasty's policy of ethnic integration, or for their artistic significance, such as the stone appreciation culture exemplified by the "Crown Cloud Peak" of the Linger Garden (Pan, Fan et al. 2020). Furthermore, through the organic integration of architecture, landscape, and plants, they create three-dimensional artistic spaces that are both livable and enjoyable, serving as living vessels for both tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Ma and Lin 2023).

Currently, these precious cultural heritage sites are at the intersection of preservation and development. On the one hand, these renowned gardens adhere to the principles of "minimal intervention" and "repairing the old as it was." They strive to maintain the authenticity of their historical features through methods such as restoring paintings using original techniques and materials and establishing a three-dimensional database of ancient and famous trees. On the other hand, to meet the needs of modern tourism, they are also beginning to introduce new exhibition methods and interactive experiences. However, the challenges of this transition remain significant. Overdevelopment can lead to landscape alienation and authenticity disputes, and ecological conservation faces ongoing pressure (Wang 2024). How to maintain cultural authenticity while innovating interpretation methods to meet the needs of modern tourists has become a core issue facing garden conservation and development.

The urgency of this issue is particularly evident in the increasingly youthful tourism market. By 2023, young tourists accounted for 32.5% of the total population nationwide, and they are gradually becoming the main force in garden tourism (Hu 2001). Young tourists' travel behavior exhibits distinct characteristics of their times: they are no longer satisfied with superficial tours and prefer in-depth, participatory experiences (Xia 2024).

The prevalence of "check-in" culture, which is carried out through social media, is driven by a strong motivation among young people to transform their travel experiences into social capital, with related topics frequently generating billions of views on social platforms (Zhou, Zhang et al. 2021). At the same time, while their curiosity about cultural connotations is growing, traditional information delivery methods, such as limited interpretation systems, often fail to capture their interest and may even hinder their visitor experience.

In the face of these new changes, in-depth research into the mechanisms by which garden cultural landscapes influence youth travel intentions is particularly important (Yin 2011). Can the current management model of gardens effectively meet the emerging needs of young tourists for immersive experiences, social sharing, and emotional resonance? (Vukic, Kuzmanovic et al. 2014) How can the profound cultural symbolism they carry (such as the Confucian ethics embodied in the "Danbo Jingcheng" Hall) (Du and Li 2013) be effectively perceived and identified by contemporary young people? These questions remain unanswered. Therefore, systematically analyzing the behavioral characteristics of young tourists and exploring more effective cultural communication channels will not only help enhance the visitor experience but also open up new paths for the innovative inheritance of traditional culture, this is also a positive exploration of the development model of integrated cultural and tourism development (Zhang and Zhu 2020).

1.2 Research Gap and Purpose

Although existing studies have explored cultural heritage tourism, landscape experience, and cultural identity from different perspectives, most of them focus on general tourist groups or examine these factors in isolation. Empirical research that systematically investigates the internal mechanism linking cultural landscape experience, cultural identity, and travel intention among youth tourists remains limited, particularly in the context of classical Chinese gardens. Moreover, while Chinese classical gardens are frequently discussed as important cultural heritage sites, few studies empirically examine how young tourists perceive their cultural landscape attributes and how such perceptions translate into identity formation and behavioral intention.

To address these gaps, this study focuses on youth tourists aged 18–35 and examines the influence of cultural landscape experience on travel intention, with cultural identity as a key mediating variable, using four renowned Chinese gardens as the research context. By constructing and empirically testing a “cultural landscape experience–cultural identity–travel intention” framework, this study aims to contribute to a more integrated understanding of youth cultural tourism behavior and provide evidence-based insights for the sustainable management of classical garden heritage.

1.3 Research Questions

RQ1: How do youth tourists perceive and experience the cultural landscape attributes of classical Chinese gardens?

RQ2: How does cultural landscape experience influence youth tourists' cultural identity toward Chinese classical gardens?

RQ3: How does cultural identity, shaped by cultural landscape experience, affect youth tourists' travel intentions toward classical Chinese gardens?

1.4 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine how cultural landscape experience in classical Chinese gardens influences youth tourists' travel intentions, with cultural identity serving as a key psychological mechanism. Taking four renowned Chinese gardens—the Summer Palace, the Chengde Mountain Resort, the Humble Administrator's Garden, and the Linger Garden—as the research context, this study aims to:

1. Explore youth tourists' perceptions of and experiences with cultural landscape attributes in classical Chinese gardens.
2. Examine the influence of cultural landscape experience on youth tourists' cultural identity toward Chinese classical gardens.
3. Investigate how cultural identity, shaped by cultural landscape experience, affects youth tourists' travel intentions, including their willingness to revisit and recommend garden destinations.

1.5 Research Significance

This study holds both theoretical and practical significance. From a theoretical perspective, it enriches the academic understanding of how cultural landscape construction influences youth tourists' travel intentions by integrating cultural landscape theory and cultural identity theory, and by constructing a mechanism model linking experience, identity, and intention. From a practical perspective, the findings provide insights for the management and development of the Four Famous Gardens, particularly in optimizing cultural landscape presentation, introducing interactive and digital experiences, and enhancing their attractiveness to youth tourists. From a broader social perspective, this research contributes to strengthening young people's cultural identity, fostering the inheritance and dissemination of traditional Chinese culture, and promoting the sustainable development of cultural tourism.

1.6 Research Limitations and Innovations

The limitations of this study primarily lie in three aspects. First, the selection of the Four Great Gardens as case studies may limit the generalizability of the findings due to regional specificity. Second, the definition of the youth group (ages 18–35) is relatively broad and may mask nuanced differences within this demographic. Third, data collection relied solely on self-reported questionnaire responses, which may introduce subjective bias and lacks triangulation with objective behavioral data.

The innovations of this study are reflected in the following aspects. Theoretically, it proposes and empirically tests an integrated framework of “Cultural Landscape Architecture – Cultural Identity – Tourists Intention,” providing a structured understanding of their interrelationships. Methodologically, it employs a multi-analytical approach combining descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, t-tests, and multiple regression on original survey data from young visitors, enhancing the robustness of the findings. Practically, the results offer actionable insights for designing digital and immersive experiences that strengthen youth cultural identity, supporting the youth-oriented sustainable development of garden heritage.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cultural Landscape Theory and Cultural Identity Theory

Cultural landscape theory views landscape as a comprehensive carrier of cultural values and natural elements, providing a theoretical framework for interpreting classical Chinese gardens. Gardens, through diverse cultural elements such as architecture, landscape, and literature, constitute a unique "three-dimensional cultural text system." (Keswick and Hardie 2003) However, the cultural symbols embedded in gardens (Zhang, Hu et al. 2024), which carry profound connotations such as Confucian ethics and the spirit of literati, face a contemporary interpretation dilemma, making it difficult for young tourists to effectively perceive and identify with their value. Successful cultural landscape architecture can activate the connotations of gardens, influencing youth travel intentions by creating an immersive atmosphere, enhancing emotional resonance, and leveraging technological innovations (Dionysopoulou and Mylonakis 2013) to impart knowledge.

Cultural identity theory offers a new perspective for understanding tourist behavior, arguing that individuals construct a sense of belonging through exposure to cultural symbols. Research shows that as many as 92.7% of young people view travel as an important way to broaden their horizons (Wang 2023). Contemporary youth's cultural identity model has shifted from the traditional "knowledge-based learning" to an "experiential participation" model focused on contextual immersion and a "social expression" model facilitated by social media. By introducing immersive situational experiences, digital narrative tools and diversified social communication mechanisms (Nicoli, Henriksen et al. 2022), we can better meet the interests and preferences of young tourists and promote the continued inheritance and innovative development of garden culture among the new generation (Zheng 2024).

2.2 Four gardens cultural landscape and cultural identity

2.2.1 The Summer Place

The Summer Palace in Beijing is China's largest and best-preserved royal garden, representing the pinnacle of Qing imperial landscaping. Its cultural landscape is characterized by the integration of Kunming Lake, Longevity Hill, and a large number of pavilions, palaces, and corridors, reflecting the Chinese philosophy of “harmony between heaven and humanity” (Chen and Wu 2009) The “Long Corridor”, decorated with over 14,000 colorful paintings, is a distinctive cultural symbol. Recent studies show that digitalized exhibitions of the corridor paintings increased youth visitors' understanding of royal garden culture by 35% (Wang 2023). For young tourists, such innovative interpretive

methods not only enhance cultural cognition but also foster a stronger sense of cultural identity through immersive engagement.

Figure 1 The Summer Palace



2.2.2 Chengde Mountain Resort

The Chengde Mountain Resort, built during the Qing Dynasty, combines vast natural scenery with architectural styles of Han, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Manchu cultures, forming a multicultural landscape that symbolizes ethnic integration (Wang, Hu et al. 2025). It embodies political unity and national harmony. According to visitor surveys, more than 70% of youth tourists reported that multi-ethnic cultural narratives increased their recognition of the “diversity of Chinese culture” (Hui 2020). By participating in thematic tours—such as exhibitions on imperial diplomacy and ethnic exchange—youth tourists not only acquire historical knowledge but also strengthen cultural pride, highlighting the role of cultural landscapes in building identity.

Figure 2 Chengde Mountain Resort



2.2.3 The Humble Administrator's Garden

Located in Suzhou, the Humble Administrator's Garden is one of the most famous Jiangnan gardens, noted for its water-centered design, poetic scenery, and literati aesthetics. It exemplifies the fusion of art, philosophy, and landscape in Chinese culture (Liu, Liao et al. 2019). A case study showed that youth tourists who participated in “garden poetry gatherings” and immersive activities such as “real-scene role-playing” reported a cultural identity score of 4.2 (out of 5), compared to 3.5 for non-participants (Huang 2025). These findings indicate that experiential programs significantly enhance youth tourists' emotional resonance and identification with traditional literati culture, shifting their role from passive spectators to active cultural participants.

Figure 3 The Humble Administrator's Garden

2.2.4 The Lingering Garden

The Lingering Garden, also in Suzhou, is renowned for its ingenious architecture, artistic rockeries, and sophisticated spatial design (Keswick and Hardie 2003). It epitomizes the refined lifestyle and aesthetic values of the Jiangnan region. Its cultural landscape not only represents philosophical ideals of elegance and balance but also provides a unique medium for cultural learning. Recent visitor data indicate that guided tours and digital storytelling increased youth tourists' satisfaction scores by 20% (Xu 2013). By combining aesthetic appreciation with historical interpretation, the Lingering Garden enables young visitors to connect emotionally with classical Chinese cultural ideals, reinforcing both cultural cognition and identity.

Figure 4 The Lingering Garden

2.3 Youth tourists' characteristics and preference

Youth tourists, usually aged 15–30, show distinct differences from traditional tourist groups. Their travel behaviors are more experience-oriented, preferring interactive and immersive activities over passive sightseeing. For instance, activities such as “garden-themed role-playing” in Suzhou extended average stay time by 40% and increased revisit rates by 25%, showing their strong demand for participatory tourism. At the same time, youth travelers place high value on digital engagement. Research shows that youth tourists often rely on mobile applications and social media for planning and sharing their travel experiences (Wu, Ma et al. 2022). In addition, digital interpretive tools such as multimedia exhibits or interactive displays at heritage sites like the Summer Palace

may enhance cultural understanding among youth visitors.

Moreover, youth tourists emphasize social expression and identity building. A survey by China Youth Daily (Wang 2023) revealed that 92.7% of young respondents regarded tourism as an important way to “know the country and broaden horizons,” highlighting their pursuit of both cultural recognition and self-expression.

In sum, youth tourists prefer interactive experiences, digital tools, and social sharing, which distinguishes them from traditional visitors and directly shapes their cultural tourism intentions.

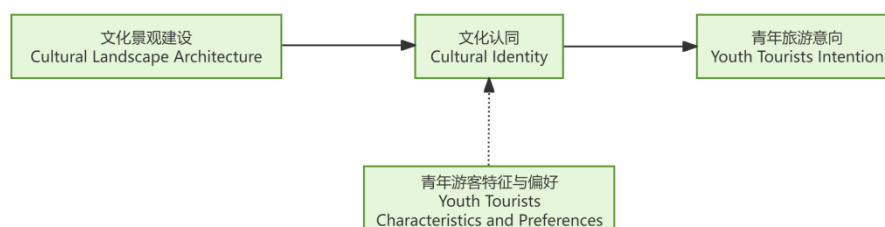
2.4 Youth tourists intentions

Young people's travel behavior exhibits a distinctly experience-oriented nature. The demand for cultural experience has surpassed price as the primary factor influencing their decision-making. This tendency manifests itself in a strong preference for immersive and interactive activities in classical garden tourism, as well as a pronounced tendency to manage their image through social media. Research has found that young tourists experience a gap between their ability to discern cultural symbols and their historical understanding. Consequently, they prefer to establish an emotional connection with traditional culture through scenario-based experiences and hands-on practice. Their knowledge acquisition also shows a shift from passive acceptance to active exploration. Notably, different generations (Cavagnaro, Staffieri et al. 2018) of young people express identity differently, forming a dynamic identity spectrum (Jani and Hussain 2011).

2.5 Theoretical framework

In summary, existing research often explores the impacts of cultural heritage or tourism experience from a singular perspective. However, there is a lack of a systematic framework that integrates all three. Therefore, this study constructs a theoretical model of 'Cultural Landscape Architecture - Cultural Identity - Tourists Intention' by drawing on social identity theory and planned behavior theory, in order to more comprehensively analyze the intrinsic relationships among the three.

Figure 5 Cultural Landscape Architecture - Cultural Identity – Youth Tourists Intention Framework



Cultural Landscape Architecture → Cultural Identity → Youth Travel Intentions

Cultural Landscape Architecture: The cultural elements provided by gardens, such as architecture and design.

Cultural Identity: The enhancement of tourists' pride in traditional culture and their sense of identity.

Youth Travel Intentions: The willingness of tourists to revisit or recommend.

The theoretical framework of this study aims to clarify how the cultural landscape of Chinese classical gardens can enhance the cultural identity of young tourists, thereby influencing their travel intentions.

2.6 Research Hypotheses

H1: Age and the frequency of trips per year have a significant relationship with youth tourists' travel intentions.

H2: Gender significantly influences the experience of Chinese garden cultural landscapes.

H3: Gender significantly influences cultural identity formation among youth tourists.

H4: Gender has a significant impact on youth tourists' characteristics and tourism preferences.

H5: Gender significantly affects youth tourists' travel intentions toward Chinese classical gardens.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

To explore the mechanisms by which Chinese garden cultural landscapes influence youth travel intentions, this study adopts a mixed research approach. Core data were collected through an online purposive survey, targeting young tourists aged 18–35 who had visited at least one of the Four Great Gardens in the past three years. The questionnaire link was distributed via social media platforms and travel forums frequented by this age group, ensuring that respondents met the study criteria.

The questionnaire consisted of five sections: basic personal information, experience of Chinese garden culture landscape, cultural identity, youth tourists' characteristics and preferences, and youth tourists' intentions, measured using a five-point Likert scale. The items were adapted from previous studies and reviewed by three experts in tourism and cultural studies to ensure content validity. Minor revisions were made to improve clarity and suitability for the target youth population.

The questionnaire was administered online using Qualtrics, allowing for efficient data collection and automatic recording of responses. All collected data were securely stored and retained for a period of two years in compliance with research data management guidelines.

3.2 Questionnaire Reliability Test

In this study, questionnaire quality is crucial for ensuring reliable research conclusions. To examine the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was calculated (Bujang, Omar et al., 2018). Cronbach's alpha is a widely used indicator for assessing internal consistency in multi-item measurement studies. In many social science studies, an alpha value of 0.70 or higher is generally considered acceptable (Taber, 2018).

Before the formal survey, an SPSS reliability analysis was conducted on 47 pre-test questionnaires. The results showed a high Cronbach's alpha of 0.963, far exceeding the generally accepted threshold. This indicates that the questionnaire items exhibit very high consistency and stability, reliably measuring the core variables of this study. Therefore, this questionnaire has good reliability and is suitable for subsequent large-scale data collection.

3.3 Data Analysis Methods

The collected data were processed and analyzed using SPSS software. First, descriptive statistics were performed to summarize the basic characteristics of the sample and core variables. Subsequently, correlation analysis and independent sample t-tests were conducted to explore inter-variable associations and group differences. Furthermore, multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the relationships and potential causal pathways among experience of Chinese garden cultural landscapes, cultural identity, and youth tourist behavioral intentions, in order to test the proposed theoretical model of "cultural landscape → cultural identity → behavioral intention."

All regression analyses were conducted using SPSS linear regression procedures. The results of these analyses are presented in Chapter 4 (Results).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Variables

The respondents' demographic variables are presented in Table 4-1 as shown below.

Table Basic information of respondents (n=200)

Variables	Details	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	77	38.5
	Female	123	61.5
Age group	18-22	46	23.0
	22-28	102	51.0
	28-35	52	26.0
Occupation	Student	56	28.0
	Employee	93	46.5
	Civil servant	10	5.0
	Other occupation	41	20.5
Monthly income (yuan)	Under 3500	74	37.0
	3500-5000	68	34.0
	5000-10000	43	21.5
	Over 10000	15	7.5

Table 1 shows that 61.5% of the respondents were female in this survey, more than males (38.5%). In terms of age, the 22-28 year old group accounted for the largest group, accounting for 51.0%, and the overall group was dominated by young people. In terms of occupations, the main components were general employees (46.5%) and students (28.0%). In terms of income, the proportion of monthly income is less than 5,000 yuan, and the overall income level is low. Overall, the sample characteristics were consistent with the youth group of the study subjects.

4.2 Consumer Behavior

Table 2 Consumer behavior statistics

Variables	Details	Frequency	Percent
Have ever visited the Chinese garden?	Yes	133	66.5
	No	67	33.5
Number of participants	Alone	25	12.5
	2-4 people	142	71.0
	5-8 people	29	14.5
	More than 8 people	4	2.0
Times of trips per year	Under 1	45	22.5
	1-2	88	44.0
	3-4	42	21.0
	Over 5	25	12.5

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents have visited Chinese gardens, accounting for 66.5%; 33.5% said they had not visited. In terms of the number of travelers, 2-4 people were the main travelers, accounting for 71.0%, indicating that most respondents preferred to travel together. In terms of travel frequency, 44.0% of the people visit 1-2 times a year, 21.0% visit 3-4 times, and only 12.5% visit more than 5 times, indicating that most young people visit less frequently and mainly occasionally have leisure.

4.3 Descriptive statistical analysis of core variables

Table 3 Descriptive statistical analysis of young tourists' experience of Chinese garden culture

variables	NO.		Mean	SD.
Experience of Chinese Garden Culture Landscape	Q1	The cultural landscape of the garden has a unique architectural style and strong traditional cultural characteristics.	4.40	0.88
	Q2	The landscape design of the garden (such as water features, rockery, and plant arrangements) is pleasing to the eye.	4.39	0.89
	Q3	The cultural displays in the gardens (such as couplets, plaques, and guided tours) can help me understand traditional culture.	4.40	0.76
	Q4	The interactive experience of the garden (such as guided tours, handicraft experiences, and immersive activities) makes me more willing to explore garden culture.	4.13	0.98
Total			4.33	0.74
Cultural Identity	Q5	Visiting Chinese gardens has made me more interested in traditional Chinese culture.	4.34	0.79
	Q6	The cultural atmosphere of the garden inspires my pride in traditional culture.	4.47	0.76
	Q7	The cultural experience of the garden has enhanced my identification with Chinese culture.	4.47	0.72
	Q8	My experience visiting the gardens has made me more willing to share traditional cultural knowledge with friends and family.	4.20	0.99
Total			4.37	0.69
Youth Tourists Characteristics and Preferences	Q9	When choosing a travel destination, I attach great importance to its historical and cultural value.	4.03	0.88
	Q10	I prefer to choose scenic spots that can provide immersive experiences.	4.30	0.88
	Q11	When traveling, I will actively participate in cultural interactive activities (such as garden tours and handicraft experiences).	3.71	1.11
	Q12	I tend to choose scenic spots with a strong cultural atmosphere rather than purely entertainment-oriented ones.	4.11	0.99
Total			4.03	0.79
Youth Tourists Intentions	Q13	I would like to visit or recommend the garden to friends or family in the future.	4.24	0.91
	Q14	The cultural experience of Chinese gardens will influence my choice of travel destination.	4.01	1.05
	Q15	Compared with other types of scenic spots, I prefer cultural garden scenic spots.	4.11	1.00
	Q16	If new cultural experience projects are launched, I would like to visit the garden again.	4.10	1.05
Total			4.11	0.85
ALL Total			4.21	0.68

Table 3 shows the overall mean score for all variables is 4.21, with a standard deviation of 0.68, indicating a generally positive response from the survey participants, specifically manifested as: (1)Experience of Chinese Garden Culture Landscape: This category received a total mean score of 4.33; (2) Cultural Identity: This construct scored the highest among the four categories, with a total mean of 4.37; (3)Youth Tourists Characteristics and Preferences: This section had a total mean of 4.03; (4)Youth Tourists Intentions: The total mean for tourist intentions was 4.11.

4.4 Pearson Chi-square

Table 4 Number and Chi-square of the Relationship between Age and Trip Times

Trip Times (per year)	Age						Pearson Chi-square P=.705
	18-22		23-28		28-35		
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Under 1	10	21.7	24	23.5	11	21.2	
1-2	23	50	43	42.2	22	42.3	
3-5	6	13	25	24.5	11	21.2	
Over 5	7	15.2	10	9.8	8	15.4	
Total	46	100	103	100	52	100	

* Significantly at the .05 level

Statistical assumptions

H0: $p = 0$ Times of trip is not dependent on age

H1: $p \neq 0$ Times of trip is dependent on age

P (probability) = 0.000, α (significance level) = .05

Therefore, the P-value is more than the value α , so rejected H1 and accepted H0.

In conclusion, the times of trip is not dependent on age at the significance level .05.

Table 4 results shows the Pearson chi-square value was $P=0.705$, which was greater than the significance level $\alpha=0.05$, so the null hypothesis (H0) was accepted. The conclusion showed that there was no significant difference in the distribution of trip frequency among tourists of different age groups, that is, travel frequency and age are independent factors and there is no statistical correlation.

4.5 Mean, S.D. and t-test

Table 5: Analysis of Differences in Measurement Items by Gender (M $\pm$ SD)

variables	NO		Male		Female		t	p
			Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.		
Experience of Chinese Garden Culture Landscape	Q1	The cultural landscape of the garden has a unique architectural style and strong traditional cultural characteristics.	4.17	0.992	4.54	0.771	-2.832	0.005
	Q2	The landscape design of the garden (such as water features, rockery, and plant arrangements) is pleasing to the eye.	4.23	1.037	4.49	0.772	-1.852	0.066
	Q3	The cultural displays in the gardens (such as couplets, plaques, and guided tours) can help me understand traditional culture.	4.30	0.796	4.46	0.739	-1.489	0.138

variables	NO		Male		Female		t	p
			Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.		
	Q4	The interactive experience of the garden (such as guided tours, handicraft experiences, and immersive activities) makes me more willing to explore garden culture.	3.73	1.072	4.38	0.825	-4.580	0.000
Total			4.1.7	0.765	4.47	0.685	-3.481	0.001
Cultural Identity	Q5	Visiting Chinese gardens has made me more interested in traditional Chinese culture.	4.22	0.821	4.41	0.766	-1.622	0.106
	Q6	The cultural atmosphere of the garden inspires my pride in traditional culture.	4.43	0.733	4.50	0.772	-0.612	0.541
	Q7	The cultural experience of the garden has enhanced my identification with Chinese culture.	4.49	0.681	4.45	0.749	0.441	0.660
	Q8	My experience visiting the gardens has made me more willing to share traditional cultural knowledge with friends and family.	4.03	1.100	4.31	0.907	-1.976	0.050
Total			4.29	0.634	4.41	0.714	-1.264	0.208
Youth Tourists Characteristics and Preferences	Q9	When choosing a travel destination, I attach great importance to its historical and cultural value.	4.09	1.002	3.98	1.101	0.693	0.489
	Q10	I prefer to choose scenic spots that can provide immersive experiences.	4.14	0.969	4.39	0.806	-1.951	0.052
	Q11	I prefer to choose scenic spots that can provide immersive experiences.	3.49	1.154	3.84	1.059	-2.159	0.032
	Q12	I tend to choose scenic spots with a strong cultural atmosphere rather than purely entertainment-oriented ones.	3.96	0.966	4.20	0.997	-1.635	0.104
Total			3.92	0.804	4.10	0.774	-1.572	0.117
Youth Tourists Intentions	Q13	I would like to visit or recommend the garden to friends or family in the future.	4.10	1.021	4.32	0.833	-1.613	0.108
	Q14	The cultural experience of Chinese gardens will influence my choice of travel destination.	3.90	0.981	4.09	1.086	-4.069	0.000

variables	NO		Male		Female		t	p
			Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.		
	Q15	Compared with other types of scenic spots, I prefer cultural garden scenic spots.	3.75	1.066	4.33	0.901	-1.270	0.205
	Q16	If new cultural experience projects are launched, I would like to visit the garden again.	3.81	1.159	4.28	0.926	-3.174	0.002
Total			3.89	0.889	4.25	0.801	-2.982	0.003
ALL Total			4.05	0.667	4.31	0.663	-2.658	0.009

* Significantly at the .05 level

The results of the independent-samples T-test in Table 4-5 revealed significant gender differences in young tourists' experience and intentions toward Chinese gardens. Overall, female tourists were significantly more positive than male tourists (overall mean: 4.31 for females vs. 4.05 for males, $p=0.009$). These differences were primarily reflected in their feeling of the experience and future behavior: women expressed a greater appreciation for the architectural style and cultural landscape of the gardens, and were significantly more interested in and willing to participate in interactive experiences like guided tours and crafts ($p<0.05$). Consequently, a positive garden experience was more influential in women's future travel decisions, and they were significantly more likely to revisit for new experiences.

However, it is noteworthy that despite differences in experience preferences and future intentions, there was no statistically significant difference between men and women on the core dimension of "cultural identity" ($p=0.208$). This suggests that Chinese gardens are universally effective in inspiring cultural pride and strengthening identification with Chinese culture among young tourists, with an equally positive impact on both men and women. Therefore, it can be considered that the cultural core of gardens has universal appeal to young people, but female tourists are more sensitive to the aesthetic and interactive elements therein, and are more likely to convert this favorability into future tourism consumption behavior.

4.6 Comments on the Four Gardens

Regarding Comments on the Four Gardens, we received 200 responses, with 85 valid comments, which can be grouped into seven broad categories of suggestions and feedback. Many comments covered multiple categories, so the total number exceeds 100.

Table 6 Comments on the Four Gardens

Item	Comment	frequency
1	Increase activity experience and interaction	24
2	Strengthen publicity and promotion	24
3	Develop IP and cultural and creative products	20
4	Improve services and facilities	19
5	Enhance the landscape and atmosphere	16
6	Enhance content and narrative	7
7	Protecting the environment and heritage	6

In summary, most visitors believe the area boasts beautiful scenery and a strong foundation (Item 5), but they urgently seek more engaging activities and interactive experiences (Item 1) and the development of attractive cultural and creative products (Item 3). Furthermore, publicity and promotion efforts are severely insufficient (Item 2), and basic service facilities (Item 4) need improvement. Finally, all development should be

based on the preservation of cultural heritage and the natural environment (Item 7) and the telling of compelling cultural stories (Item 6).

5. Conclusion and Future Research

5.1 Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to examine how the cultural landscape of classical Chinese gardens influences youth tourists' travel intentions, with cultural identity serving as a potential psychological mechanism. Based on empirical data collected from four renowned gardens—the Summer Palace, Chengde Mountain Resort, Humble Administrator's Garden, and Linger Garden—the following key findings can be drawn in relation to the research questions and objectives:

First, regarding RQ1 and the first objective, the study shows that young tourists highly value the unique cultural landscape attributes of classical Chinese gardens. Architectural elegance, poetic garden design, and rich cultural displays collectively create a strong experiential impact. The average score of cultural landscape experience (4.33) indicates that youth visitors recognize the core cultural value of the gardens.

Second, addressing RQ2, cultural landscape experience appears to enhance youth tourists' cultural identity toward Chinese gardens. Exposure to garden aesthetics, historical narratives, and cultural activities stimulates interest, pride, and appreciation for traditional culture. Both male and female tourists show high levels of identity, although some differences exist in experience preferences and future intentions. For instance, male tourists may prefer architectural or historical content, while female tourists may be more drawn to interactive or immersive activities. These differences highlight the need for garden managers to design experiences that appeal to diverse preferences while reinforcing the shared cultural identity.

Third, in relation to RQ3 and the third objective, the results suggest that cultural identity may serve as a psychological mechanism linking cultural landscape experience to travel intentions. Youth tourists with a stronger sense of cultural identity are more likely to express intentions to revisit, recommend, and prioritize garden attractions. Although the mediating role of cultural identity was not formally statistically tested, the observed patterns are consistent with theoretical expectations from cultural landscape and identity literature: cultural experiences can transform visitors from passive tourists into engaged cultural identifiers and communicators.

Finally, the study also highlights the evolving demands of young tourists. They seek more immersive and interactive experiences—guided tours, handicraft making, and cultural activities—beyond passive sightseeing. Social sharing and appreciation of historical and cultural value are important motivators. These insights provide practical guidance for garden managers, emphasizing the importance of innovation, engagement, and cultural education.

5.2 Future Research

This study provides preliminary insights into how cultural landscape experience influences youth travel intentions through cultural identity, yet several limitations suggest directions for future research. Future studies could broaden research subjects and methods, including gardens of different types or regions, to capture diverse cultural experiences. More precise segmentation of youth groups based on age, interests, or subcultures could clarify differences in preferences and engagement. Theoretical models could incorporate additional psychological or social variables to explore more complex mechanisms of influence. Finally, collaboration with garden management could allow for follow-up studies and evaluations of innovative practices to test their effectiveness in engaging young visitors.

6. References

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