






Are they companions or intruders? The impact of advertising tourist images on consumers' purchase intentions for tour packages

Xiaoyi Li, Wei Xu & Yanchang Yang


To cite this article: Xiaoyi Li, Wei Xu & Yanchang Yang (09 Feb 2025): Are they companions or intruders? The impact of advertising tourist images on consumers' purchase intentions for tour packages, *Current Issues in Tourism*, DOI: [10.1080/13683500.2025.2458732](https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2025.2458732)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2025.2458732>

 View supplementary material 

 Published online: 09 Feb 2025.

 Submit your article to this journal 

 Article views: 20

 View related articles 

 View Crossmark data 



Are they companions or intruders? The impact of advertising tourist images on consumers' purchase intentions for tour packages

Xiaoyi Li^a, Wei Xu^a and Yanchang Yang^b

^aCollege of Tourism and Service Management, Nankai University, Tianjin, People's Republic of China; ^bSchool of Sociology and Political Science, Shanghai University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how advertising tourist images affect consumers' purchase intentions for group tour packages and self-guided tour packages. In this research, an exploratory content analysis was conducted first to examine the features of advertisements containing (vs. not containing) tourist images. Then, grounded in cognitive consistency theory, three experimental studies were implemented to explore the interaction effect between advertising tourist images and the types of tour packages. The results indicate that advertising tourist images significantly promote (vs. weaken) consumers' purchase intentions for group tour packages (vs. self-guided tour packages). Meanwhile, the influence is mediated by embodied mental simulation, with tourist images promoting (vs. hindering) individuals' mental simulation of the group tour (vs. self-guided tour) experiences and thus increasing (vs. decreasing) intentions. Moreover, this effect is significant only for individuals with extensive relevant travel experience. The present study provides novel insights for tourism visual marketing research and offers important implications for precise and long-term marketing strategies within the tourism industry.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 6 June 2024

Accepted 17 December 2024


KEYWORDS

Tourist image; tourism product; cognitive consistency theory; embodied mental simulation; travel experience; visual marketing

Originality and significance statement

The present research makes significant contributions. Firstly, despite the prevalence of tourist images in advertising, so far, no study has provided adequate answers on how they affect consumers' intentions for tour packages. Thus, based on the cognitive consistency theory, this study uncovers the potential interaction between advertising tourist images and the attributes of tour packages, significantly contributing to the knowledge gaps. Secondly, based on the link between individuals' cognition and embodied mental simulation, this work proposes a new boundary condition that tourist images to generate a positive effect through mental simulation, i.e. the presence of the images should not conflict with individual's cognition of the product attributes, providing an important supplement to the mental simulation theory. Additionally, based on the cumulative nature of experience, this study is the first to validate the influence of individuals' travel experience on their responses to tourism advertisements, offering a novel referable insight for future tourism marketing research. Finally, by analysing the mechanisms and boundary conditions of the positive and negative effects of tourist images in product advertising, the current research offers valuable implications for precise and long-term marketing strategies within the tourism industry.

CONTACT Wei Xu  xuwei_steven@163.com

 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2025.2458732>.

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

© 2025 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Introduction

As the world's second largest tourism market (Ferries, 2024), two main types of tour packages are provided in China, which accounts for 60% of total package consumption (Wang, 2023): the traditional group tour package (GTP) and the emerging self-guided tour package (STP). The former has long been popular due to its competitive pricing and the reduction of uncertainty in tourism environments with tour guide's assistance (Jin et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2013). The latter has recently gained popularity among young people, as it is customisable and allows consumers to add or remove components from the menu provided by merchants (Wen et al., 2021). Most importantly, these two tour packages cater to consumers with different social needs. GTP requires individuals to form groups with unfamiliar members for travel, thereby possessing a strong social attribute (Jin et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2013). In contrast, STP is characterised by its significant private nature, serving consumers who prefer to travel alone to the destinations (Jin et al., 2014; Lin & Kuo, 2018; Wen et al., 2021). These differences in tour package attributes shape consumers' differentiated cognitions of the two packages, which influence individuals' responses to tour package advertisements (Lin & Liao, 2010; Wang et al., 2009).

In tour package advertisements, tourist images are one of the most common visual elements (see Figure 1). However, how advertising tourist images affect consumers' responses to tour packages has not been thoroughly examined. Notably, previous findings regarding the influence of tourist images on individuals' responses are mixed. In hotel advertising, these images have been regarded as effective materials for creating a social climate and enhancing booking intentions (Joe et al., 2021; Park et al., 2021; Ye et al., 2020). Conversely, in the photographs of identity-relevant experiences, tourist images may compete for psychological ownership of the venue, thus weakening viewers' preference (Lu et al., 2024). The presented evidence suggests that our understanding of the role of tourist images in advertising remains insufficient.

Considering consumers' cognitive differences between GTP and STP, especially in packages' social versus private nature, the influence of tourist images in tour package advertising may be complex. Drawing on the concept of the gaze, if tourist images are perceived as objects of the 'cluster gaze,' they are 'companions,' symbolising group journeys and celebrations. Conversely, through the 'romantic gaze,' these images may be interpreted as 'intruders' disrupting private journeys (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Accordingly, the current research aims to verify the potential heterogeneous impact of advertising tourist images across different tour packages and explore the underlying psychological mechanisms.

Grounded in cognitive consistency theory (Akerlof & Dickens, 1982; Festinger, 1957), this research comprises an exploratory content analysis and three experimental studies. Through these studies, it is found that advertising tourist images enhance (vs. weaken) consumers' purchase intentions for

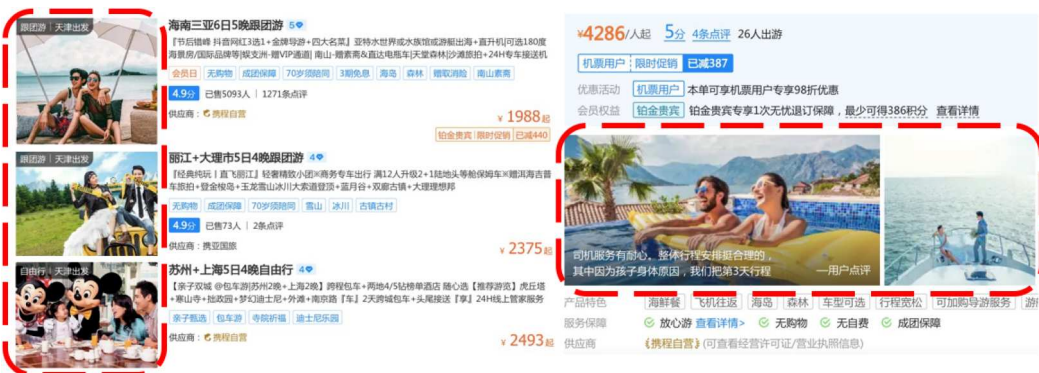


Figure 1. Examples of tour package advertisements.

GTP (vs. STP). Meanwhile, the process is mediated by embodied mental simulation, as researchers find that the cognitive consistency (vs. dissonance) induced by tourist images increases (vs. decreases) the simulation of group tour experiences (vs. self-guided tour experiences) and thus positively (vs. negatively) affects purchase intentions. In addition, researchers propose that relevant travel experience serves as a moderator, suggesting that the effect is significant only when consumers have accumulated sufficient travel experience.

The present research makes significant contributions. Firstly, despite the prevalence of tourist images in advertising (Nikjoo & Bakhshi, 2019), so far, no study has provided adequate answers on how they affect consumers' intentions for tour packages. Thus, based on the cognitive consistency theory, this study uncovers the potential interaction between advertising tourist images and the attributes of tour packages, significantly contributing to the knowledge gaps. Secondly, based on the link between individuals' cognition and embodied mental simulation, this work proposes a new boundary condition that tourist images to generate a positive effect through mental simulation (Li & Wan, 2025; Wang et al., 2024), i.e. the presence of the images should not conflict with individual's cognition of the product attributes, providing an important supplement to the mental simulation theory. Additionally, based on the cumulative nature of experience (Dodd et al., 2005), this study is the first to validate the influence of individuals' travel experience on their responses to tourism advertisements, offering a novel referable insight for future tourism marketing research. Finally, by analysing the mechanisms and boundary conditions of the positive and negative effects of tourist images in product advertising, the current research offers valuable implications for precise and long-term marketing strategies within the tourism industry.

Literature review and hypotheses

The differences in consumers' cognitions of tour packages

Due to the significant differences in forms and contents when conducting tourism activities, previous research has shown that people hold different cognitions for GTP and STP. To be specific, consumers consider GTP as having strong social attributes, and the companion from unfamiliar group members becoming an indispensable part when participating in group tours (Chiang & Chen, 2014; Lin & Liao, 2010; Wang et al., 2013; Wong & Wang, 2009). However, STP, on the other hand, is associated with autonomy and privacy, tourists on self-guided tours usually travel alone or with some acquaintances, typically individuals do not need to meet new group members (Lin & Kuo, 2018; Prayag et al., 2015; Wen et al., 2021). This difference in cognition influences consumers' choice of tour packages. For instance, GTP gains its popularity among seniors (Wang et al., 2013) and consumers with collectivist quality (Jin et al., 2014), who expect not to travel by themselves. Whereas for people who have a greater desire to find new experiences on their own at destinations, STP is a more suitable choice (Jin et al., 2014). Especially during the epidemic period, STP allows individuals to avoid the risks of virus infection within a group, making it a safer option (Wen et al., 2021).

A few studies have revealed that such cognitive differences can lead to consumers' differential responses to tour package advertising. For instance, researchers suggest that advertisements of GTP containing socialising information are more attractive to consumers (Wang et al., 2009). Additionally, the headline texts emphasising the tour package's attribute (i.e. telling its group or self-guided nature) is a significant element enhancing consumers' preference towards products (Lin & Liao, 2010). However, although prior studies cite that tourist images serve a crucial part in visual marketing (Deng & Liu, 2021; Nikjoo & Bakhshi, 2019), no research has examined whether they would affect consumers' intention for both tour packages. Targeting this gap, the current research aims to contribute to the literature by validating the potential impact of tourist images in tour package advertising.

The influence of tourist images on consumers

Tourist images has long been one of the most salient visual elements in advertising, with studies showing that nearly 40% of the pictures on social media containing tourist images (Nikjoo & Bakhshi, 2019), but it is worth noting that empirical evidence about the influence of these images on consumers' responses is complex. For example, many studies have validated that the presence of tourists can generate positive responses among viewers in various contexts, including user-generated photos (Bakhshi et al., 2014; Lu et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024), destination photos (Li & Wan, 2025; Zhang et al., 2023), and hotel advertising (Joe et al., 2021; Park et al., 2021; Ye et al., 2020). However, some researchers have concluded the tourist images can induce negative effects on audiences in similar scenarios (Li et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2024).

For these mixed results, researchers have provided diverse explanations. Among them, one of the representative findings is that tourist images can produce sociability and activate consumers' positive intention (Joe et al., 2021; Park et al., 2021; Ye et al., 2020). For instance, Joe et al. (2021) found that the images of other customers in hotel advertising can activate individuals' expectation of socialising with others and induce the need for belongingness, thus enhancing consumers booking intention. In addition, researchers reported similar results in the contexts of hotel booking websites (Park et al., 2021) and P2P accommodation booking platform (Ye et al., 2020). However, the positive impacts of the tourist images mentioned above are concentrated in the hospitality scenarios, which contain salient social attributes (Joe et al., 2021). In contrast, if the scenarios involve private attributes, the impact of the tourist images may become completely negative. Evidence is shown in Lu et al. (2024)'s study, where they found tourist images in the photos of identity-relevant experiences will weaken viewers' preference for the venue (e.g. the vacation destinations, hiking trails, and wedding venues). This is because the presence of tourists threatens viewers' feelings of personal ownership, leading them to believe the venue belongs to others, thus decreasing their liking or preference (Lu et al., 2024).

To sum up, it is obvious that whether the tourist images have a positive or negative effect needs to be considered within the advertising context. Considering the significant differences in consumers' cognition of GTP and STP attributes (i.e. sociability versus privacy), advertising tourist images may elicit consumers' diverse reactions. However, currently, no researchers have yet focused on this issue. To address the gaps, this research aims to use a mixed method to reveal the potential matching mechanisms between tourism package attributes and advertising tourist images.

The impact of advertising tourist images on tour package purchase intention

According to cognitive consistency theory, when faced with new information, consumers prefer the part that is consistent with their existing cognitive systems (Festinger, 1957), and this can activate the state of cognitive harmony, which is pleasurable to individuals and thus they show favourable attitudes and higher evaluations of the objects (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955; Tseng & Wang, 2023). Grounded in this theory, empirical evidence shows that advertising information that is in line with consumers' cognition can promote individuals' positive intentions for destinations and tourism products. For example, researchers found that in the celebrity endorsing context, individuals have differential cognitions of destinations' and celebrities' personalities; thus, celebrity–destination consistency in personality activates consumers' stronger intention to visit the destination (Pradhan et al., 2023). Other studies have validated the consistency between backstory and destination (Xu & Chen, 2024); between the video's background music and destination (Zhou & Jiao, 2024); between logo typeface and destination (Li & Ma, 2023) can also produce such positive effect. Similarly, in heritage souvenir selling contexts, when consumers realise the advertising inheritors' images are highly consistent with souvenirs, they are more likely to germinate purchase behaviours (Guo & Zhu, 2023).

However, the positive effects activated by consistency do not always exist. In contrast, if the information conflicts with consumers' knowledge, experience, or cultural beliefs, cognitive dissonance

may arise (Akerlof & Dickens, 1982). This dissonance can trigger a mental discomfort state, where individuals deploy psychological resources to rectify the incongruence, resulting in aversion and lower evaluations of the objects (Guo et al., 2018; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). In the visual marketing field, researchers have unearthed that cognitive dissonance significantly reduces consumers' intention for the products. For instance, Zhang et al. (2024) suggest that photos from merchants construct consumers' basic cognition of hotels, in this case, if the user-generated photos on the online platforms are inconsistent with the former (e.g. the colour and contents in photos), individuals' booking intention will be weakened. Additionally, consumers are not likely to purchase green resort products when noticing the reviews that conflict with green attributes (Tanford & Montgomery, 2015).

Based on the evidence above, the current research posits that advertising tourist images elicits divergent effects on consumers. Because tourist images symbolise sociability (Joe et al., 2021; Park et al., 2021; Ye et al., 2020), which is consistent with individuals' cognition of GTPs (i.e. containing strong social attributes), the images thus enhance consumers' purchase intentions for GTPs. In contrast, this sociability conflicts with the private attributes of STPs and generates cognitive dissonance in individuals, which in turn negatively affects consumers' purchase intention. Hence, the research proposes the following serial hypotheses.

H1a: Advertising tourist images positively affect consumers' purchase intention for GTPs.

H1b: Advertising tourist images negatively affect consumers' purchase intention for STPs.

The mediating effect of embodied mental simulation

Embodied mental simulation suggests that consumers activate their memory and cognitive systems in response to visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory information and utilise these cues to simulate specific situations of future product experiences (Bagatini et al., 2023; Elder & Krishna, 2011; Xie et al., 2016). The literature in the field of visual marketing has uncovered the positive effects that embodied mental simulation can generate. For instance, Elder and Krishna (2011) suggest that if a product image (e.g. the yogurt with a spoon in it) orienting toward participants' dominant hands, it will lead individuals to simulate interacting with the product and then increases their purchase intentions. Similarly, Bagatini et al. (2023) suggest that pictures of fashion products with human models can germinate greater purchase intentions as consumers will imagine wearing them. Additionally, researchers underscore that embodied mental simulation is related to individuals' cognition and previous experience, consumers are more likely to facilitate imagery if the information is consistent with their cognitive systems (Elder & Krishna, 2011; Xie et al., 2016).

Meanwhile, researchers have validated the simulation of travel experiences when consumers are viewing tourism advertisements (Li & Wan, 2025; Tercia et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2024). Among them, some studies recognise the positive effect that tourist images have on embodied mental simulation. Specifically, tourist images can prompt viewers to simulate scenarios of admiring the landscape or interacting with the scene (Li & Wan, 2025), triggering consumers' visual mental imagery related to tourism products (Wang et al., 2024), thereby enhancing perceived destination's attractiveness and individuals' visit interest. In the meantime, Li and Wan (2025) also point out the boundary condition of this positive effect-the images should have invisible faces. That is because the unfamiliar faces will make individuals believe the travel experiences belong to others rather than themselves (Li & Wan, 2025).

Integrating the existing literature, this study proposes that embodied mental simulation mediates the mechanism in Hypothesis 1. Tourist images, seen as others, may help individuals to simulate the experiences in group tours. These unfamiliar images could prompt consumers to imagine they are interacting with new group members during travel, then enhance their purchase intention for GTPs. Conversely, as seeking private experience in self-guided tours, individuals expect to interact with the destination's scenery on their own, the simulation process may be prohibited by tourist images when

viewing advertisements of STPs, thus hindering purchase intentions. Formally, this study posits the following hypothesis.

H2: The impact of advertising tourist images on consumers' purchase intention for tour packages is mediated by embodied mental simulation.

The moderating role of relevant travel experience

Relevant travel experience is defined as the sum of an individual's experience of participating in travel activities associated with a travel product (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Bettman & Park, 1980; Li et al., 2021). It can be measured both subjectively and objectively, where the former draws on consumers' subjective evaluations of their own experience (Dodd et al., 2005; Tassiello & Tillotson, 2020), and the latter is reflected in the frequency of actual consumption of the products over a certain period (Baloglu, 2001; Li et al., 2021). Prior research has found that rich travel experience negatively affects consumers' information searching intentions before a trip (Sharifpour et al., 2014; Teichmann, 2011) and increases impulse purchase intentions during a trip (Li et al., 2021). The mechanism behind this is that individuals' travel experience will cumulate as subjective knowledge and conduct their cognitive system, which germinates consumers' self-confidence and hence affect their intentions (Li et al., 2021; Tassiello & Tillotson, 2020). However, when individuals lack travel experience, the influence above will disappear or even reverse as their knowledge and cognition are insufficient (Li et al., 2021; Tassiello & Tillotson, 2020).

Based on the evidence, this research posits that relevant travel experience serves as a moderator in the influence of tourist images on tour package purchase intention. Specifically, consumers who lack relevant travel experience are initially still accumulating knowledge and may not realise the different attributes of two types of tour packages (Bettman & Park, 1980; Tassiello & Tillotson, 2020). Consequently, the effect of tourist images is not enough to be activated. However, as individuals will develop heuristic cognitive patterns as the amount of experience increases (Li et al., 2021), thus cognitive consistency (vs. dissonance) is generated when seeing tourist images in advertisements of GTP (vs. STP), hence affecting following intentions. Thus, this study proposes (Figure 2).

H3: The impact of advertising tourist images is significant for consumers with extensive relevant travel experience, while the impact is not significant for consumers who lack relevant travel experience.

Methodology

Before conducting experiments, two pilot studies were undertaken to design the stimulus materials. Prior research has indicated that the features of tourist images in advertisements may affect consumers'

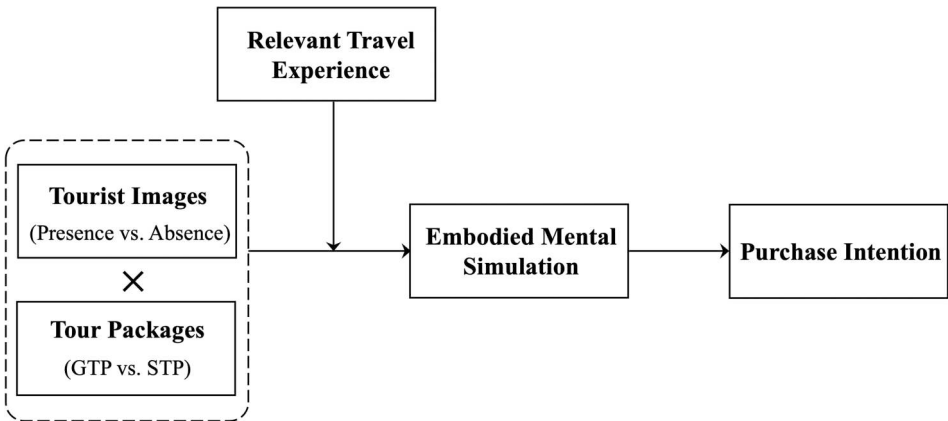


Figure 2. Theoretical framework.

Table 1. Research overview.

Study	Purpose	Sample	Analysis	Finding
Pilot Study 1	Analyse the features of tour package advertisements	804 photo advertisements	Exploratory content analysis	N/A
Pilot Study 2	Determine the stimulus materials and test their effectiveness in manipulating	180 participants ($M_{age} = 28.24$)	ANOVA analysis	N/A
Study 1	Examine the main effect between advertising tourist images and tour packages	160 participants (40.63% male, $M_{age} = 30.81$)	Independent samples <i>T</i> -test	Supported H1a and H1b
Study 2	Examine the mediating effect of embodied mental simulation	152 participants (42.76% male, $M_{age} = 31.12$)	Independent samples <i>T</i> -test, PROCESS Model 4	Supported H1a, H1b, and H2
Study 3	Examine the moderating effect of relevant travel experience	156 participants (41.03% male, $M_{age} = 29.22$)	Two-way ANOVA, floodlight analysis	Supported H3

responses, such as facial expressions (Li & Wan, 2025; Schoner-Schatz et al., 2021), gender and age (Deng & Liu, 2021). Therefore, to ensure the generalizability of the current research's findings, it is crucial to figure out what features of tour package advertisements are associated with the presence (vs. absence) of tourist images. Thus, Pilot Study 1 conducted an exploratory content analysis to analyse the features of advertisements containing (vs. not containing) tourist images. Then, based on the results above, Pilot Study 2 was implemented to determine the materials and test the effectiveness of the stimuli.

Three experimental studies were then conducted to test the hypotheses. Study 1 tested the main effect (H1a and H1b). Study 2 examined the mediating effect of embodied mental simulation (H2). Study 3 was designed to validate the moderating effect of relevant travel experience (H3). Credamo (<https://www.credamo.com/#/>), the Chinese leading and professional online survey platform, was employed to recruit participants in all studies by researchers. Before implementing experiments, researchers used G*Power to calculate the ideal sample size for each study (Faul et al., 2009), setting account factors such as two-tailed, 80% power, 5% false-positive, and medium effect size (i.e. 0.5). The overview of all studies can be found in Table 1.

Pilot Study 1

To analyse the features of tour package advertisements, an exploratory content analysis was done. This analysis leveraged manual coding to recognise the advertising visual elements in terms of absolute counts and percentages based on the presence or absence of tourist images.

Data collection

The current research chose Ctrip (<https://www.ctrip.com/>) as the data source platform to collect the advertisement samples. Ctrip is the third largest Online travel agency in the world in terms of market capitalisation, occupying 36.3% market share of China (Walker, 2024). By reviewing the report published by China Tourism Academy (CTA, 2023), researchers selected Sanya, Lijiang, and Suzhou as the case destinations, mainly based on the total number of tourists in 2022 and the range of landscape types among these destinations.

Then, researchers captured advertisements of tour packages from the platform. To ensure the diversity of samples, advertisements were collected on two of the peak tourist dates in China, i.e. the golden weeks of May Day (5/2023) and National Day (10/2023). Then, 450 advertisements were collected (150 for each destination) on each date. After eliminating duplicates, a saturation point had been reached in that there was little further variation in the style and content of the samples. The final dataset comprised 804 advertisements, with Sanya, Lijiang, and Suzhou contributing 262 (33%), 273 (34%), and 269 (33%) samples, respectively.

Data analysis

The research utilised manual coding to analyse the content of all advertisements. First, 100 samples were randomly selected from the dataset, and two researchers independently coded them to establish preliminary coding frames. Subsequently, the two researchers checked, negotiated, and consistently interpreted the coding frames under the supervision of the third researcher to determine the final coding frame used in this study. Then, the first two researchers fully coded the 804 samples based on this frame. Finally, a third researcher performed the calculation and assessment of coding consistency. The study employed Holsti's reliability (Holsti, 1969) and Cohen's kappa value (Cohen, 1960) as the indicators of consistency. The values were 0.967 and 0.908, respectively, indicating high consistency, and thus, there were no issues with the dataset.

Results

Features of destination landscape

Of the samples, 409 (51%) did not include tourist images and completely featuring destination scenery. As detailed in Table 2, the predominant element across these advertisements for the three cities was destination scenery, accounting for 72%. The scenery typically showed iconic characteristics of the destinations, such as the sandy shores and ocean vistas in Sanya, the snow-capped mountains and unique residential architecture in Lijiang, and the picturesque water town in Suzhou, highlighting the distinct appeal of each destination. Moreover, for Sanya and Lijiang, where the hotel and resort industries are relatively well developed, hospitality facilities frequently emerged as the thematic focus of the advertisements, a trend less observed in Suzhou. Other elements, including transportation and recreation facilities, plants, and animals, were less featured, appearing in less than 5% of all.

Features of tourist images

A total of 395 (49%) samples contained tourist images. Table 3 outlines the main features of these advertisements in terms of absolute counts and percentages. Among them, 54% contained two tourists, with a mean of 2.12 people ($SD = 1.30$) depicted. Most of the advertisements include both male and female images (59%), this gender-balanced presentation strategy has been widely used in advertising (Mohan et al., 2022). In addition, young and middle-aged people are predominantly featured (74%). 16% depicted a multiple age range, typically to evoke family travel. It is worth noting that most tourist images displayed visible faces with enjoyable facial expressions (64%), with some bodily interaction (90%), and facing towards the viewer (52%). In comparison, a minority of them were with invisible faces and showed their backs to the viewer (18%). Notably, considering issues such as endorsement costs and business revenue (Wang et al., 2019), only 6% of the advertisements used celebrity images.

Table 2. Features of advertisements without tourist images.

Overall counts	Sanya 108	Lijiang 130	Suzhou 171	Totals 409
<i>Main element</i>				
Destination scenery	63 (58%)	92 (71%)	140 (82%)	295 (72%)
Hospitality facilities	22 (21%)	24 (19%)	5 (3%)	51 (12%)
Transportation facilities	6 (5%)	3 (2%)	2 (1%)	11 (3%)
Recreation facilities	9 (8%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	10 (2%)
Plants	1 (1%)	3 (2%)	7 (4%)	11 (3%)
Animals	5 (5%)	3 (2%)	7 (4%)	15 (4%)
Others	2 (2%)	5 (4%)	9 (5%)	16 (4%)

Note: 'Others' included texts, cartoons, and paintings.

Table 3. Features of advertisements with tourist images.

	Sanya 154	Lijiang 143	Suzhou 98	Totals 395
Overall counts				
<i>Number of tourists</i>				
= 1	25 (16%)	43 (30%)	44 (45%)	112 (28%)
= 2	98 (64%)	77 (54%)	36 (37%)	211 (54%)
= 3	15 (10%)	7 (5%)	7 (7%)	29 (7%)
> 3	16 (10%)	16 (11%)	11 (11%)	43 (11%)
<i>Gender</i>				
Male only	5 (3%)	8 (6%)	15 (15%)	28 (7%)
Female only	30 (20%)	60 (42%)	45 (46%)	135 (34%)
Multiple genders	119 (77%)	75 (52%)	38 (39%)	232 (59%)
<i>Age</i>				
Child age	7 (5%)	2 (1%)	13 (13%)	22 (6%)
Young & middle-age	98 (63%)	134 (94%)	61 (62%)	293 (74%)
Older age	14 (9%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	16 (4%)
Multiple ages	35 (23%)	6 (4%)	23 (24%)	64 (16%)
<i>Body orientation</i>				
Facing forward	90 (58%)	65 (45%)	51 (52%)	206 (52%)
Facing back	27 (18%)	27 (19%)	18 (18%)	72 (18%)
Facing sideways	37 (24%)	51 (36%)	29 (30%)	117 (30%)
<i>Facial expression</i>				
Enjoyable	113 (73%)	85 (60%)	54 (55%)	252 (64%)
Neutral	8 (5%)	22 (15%)	22 (23%)	52 (13%)
Sad	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)	4 (1%)
No face shown	33 (22%)	32 (22%)	22 (22%)	87 (22%)
<i>Body posture</i>				
Interactive	149 (97%)	129 (90%)	77 (79%)	355 (90%)
Non-interactive	5 (3%)	14 (10%)	21 (21%)	40 (10%)
<i>Reputation</i>				
Non-celebrities	145 (94%)	132 (92%)	94 (96%)	371 (94%)
Celebrities	9 (6%)	11 (8%)	4 (4%)	24 (6%)
<i>Background elements</i>				
Destination scenery	83 (54%)	88 (61%)	51 (52%)	222 (56%)
Hospitality facilities	9 (6%)	12 (8%)	6 (6%)	27 (7%)
Transportation facilities	8 (5%)	11 (8%)	2 (2%)	21 (5%)
Recreation facilities	41 (27%)	11 (8%)	24 (25%)	76 (19%)
Plants	1 (0%)	7 (5%)	7 (7%)	15 (4%)
Animals	8 (5%)	11 (8%)	0 (0%)	19 (5%)
Others	4 (3%)	3 (2%)	8 (8%)	15 (4%)

Note: 'Others' included texts, cartoons, and paintings.

Pilot Study 2

Based on the results of Pilot Study 1, researchers conducted Pilot Study 2 to determine the stimulus materials for the following experimental studies. A survey was completed through Credamo with a total of 105 respondents ($M_{\text{age}} = 28.9$). In this survey, researchers selected nine representative groups of tourist images and destination landscapes for the three case destinations (i.e. Sanya, Lijiang, Suzhou). Then, respondents were invited to evaluate their attractiveness, and then three groups of images were finalised, as shown in Table 4.

To ensure the stimulus materials were effective in manipulating, the study recruited 75 ($M_{\text{age}} = 27.32$) participants to complete a pretest. After viewing each advertisement, participants were asked to report whether the advertisement was designed for GTP or STP and whether it contained tourist images or not. The measure items were referenced from Magnini and Kim (2016) and Wen et al. (2021). The results showed that participants were able to distinguish whether the advertisement is for a GTP ($M_{\text{GTP}} = 5.84$, $SD = 1.27$; $M_{\text{STP}} = 2.55$, $SD = 1.46$; $p < 0.001$) or for a STP ($M_{\text{GTP}} = 2.95$, $SD = 1.75$; $M_{\text{STP}} = 5.76$, $SD = 1.30$; $p < 0.001$). Similarly, the presence of advertising tourist images ($M_{\text{presence}} = 5.96$, $SD = 1.25$; $M_{\text{absence}} = 2.15$, $SD = 0.73$; $p < 0.001$) and their absence ($M_{\text{presence}} = 2.40$, $SD = 1.00$; $M_{\text{absence}} = 5.53$, $SD = 1.12$; $p < 0.001$) could also be recognised. Therefore, the materials were effective in manipulating.

Table 4. Evaluation of the attractiveness of the stimulus materials.

Group	Tourist images				Destination landscape images			
Study 1								
$M_{\text{attractiveness}}$	5.80	5.06	4.86	4.86	5.80	5.34		
$SD_{\text{attractiveness}}$	1.35	1.14	1.61	1.61	0.96	1.26		
Used in study	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No		
Study 2								
$M_{\text{attractiveness}}$	4.03	5.94	4.54	6.00	5.00	5.74		
$SD_{\text{attractiveness}}$	1.25	0.91	1.17	0.87	1.48	1.36		
Used in study	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No		
Study 3								
$M_{\text{attractiveness}}$	4.23	5.29	5.71	5.74	5.83	5.54		
$SD_{\text{attractiveness}}$	1.44	1.15	1.13	0.92	1.15	1.34		
Used in study	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		

Study 1

Design and participants

Study 1 utilised Sanya as a case destination and designed a 2 (tour packages: GTP vs. STP) \times 2 (tourist images: presence vs. absence) between-subjects experiment to test the main effect (H1a and H1b). Participants were randomly recruited through Credamo. The study designed two control items to exclude the interference of participants' past experience and interest, including 'I have been to Sanya' and 'I have no interest in traveling to Sanya,' and participants who responded affirmatively to either were excluded. Finally, 160 participants (40.63% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 30.81$) who passed the control check were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental groups.

Procedure

Participants first read a piece of text conveying a scenario where they are shopping for a GTP (vs. STP) to Sanya on an online platform based on the group they were assigned to. Then, they were shown an advertisement with or without tourist images. Next, participants reported their purchase intention through three items rated on a seven-point scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.905$), which were referenced from Yin et al. (2017). Finally, descriptive statistics and demographic information of the participants were recorded.

Results

An independent samples *T*-test was conducted to examine participants' purchase intentions. As expected, in the GTP groups, participants had stronger purchase intention when viewing advertisements with tourist images ($M_{\text{absence}} = 4.983$, $SD = 1.377$; $M_{\text{presence}} = 5.633$, $SD = 1.311$, $t = -2.162$, $p = 0.034$). Whereas in the STP groups, participants had stronger purchase intention when advertising tourist images is absent ($M_{\text{absence}} = 5.775$, $SD = 0.741$; $M_{\text{presence}} = 4.883$, $SD = 1.529$, $t = 3.318$, $p = 0.002$). Thus, study 1 supported H1a and H1b.

The study also used ANOVA analyses to exclude irrelevant factors that may interfere with the mechanism. The results showed that participants' gender, age, educational level, occupation type, and income level had no significant influence ($p > 0.05$).

Study 2

Design and participants

Study 2 used Lijiang as a case destination and designed a 2 (tour packages: GTP vs. STP) \times 2 (tourist images: presence vs. absence) between-subjects experiment to test the mediating effect of embodied mental simulation (H2). Then, 152 participants (42.76% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 31.12$) who passed the control check were randomly recruited through Credamo and were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental groups.

Procedure

Similar to study 1, participants were requested to imagine purchasing tour packages to Lijiang online, and then they were shown an advertisement with or without tourist images. Before reporting purchase intention, participants were asked to indicate the extent of mental simulation. The study used three items referred to Elder and Krishna (2011) on a seven-point scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.852$). Finally, participants reported their purchase intention, and the descriptive statistics and demographic information were recorded.

Results

As expected, the results of the independent sample *T*-test showed that participants in the GTP groups had a stronger purchase intention when seeing advertising tourist images presence ($M_{\text{absence}} = 4.702$, $SD = 1.382$; $M_{\text{presence}} = 5.781$, $SD = 0.901$, $t = -4.032$, $p < 0.001$), but in the STP groups they had a stronger purchase intention when viewing advertisements without tourist images ($M_{\text{absence}} = 5.798$, $SD = 0.603$; $M_{\text{presence}} = 4.816$, $SD = 1.258$, $t = 4.340$, $p < 0.001$), which again verified H1.

In addition, the embodied mental simulation showed the same trend as purchase intention. In the GTP groups, participants had a stronger mental simulation when tourist images were present ($M_{\text{absence}} = 4.772$, $SD = 1.425$; $M_{\text{presence}} = 5.702$, $SD = 1.028$, $t = -3.263$, $p = 0.002$). However, in STP groups, participants had a stronger mental simulation when seeing advertisements without tourist images ($M_{\text{absence}} = 5.763$, $SD = 0.639$; $M_{\text{presence}} = 5.026$, $SD = 1.325$, $t = 3.088$, $p = 0.003$).

To examine the mediating role played by embodied mental simulation, the study utilised PROCESS Model 4 with 5000 bootstrap samples (Hayes, 2017). The results showed that the mediating effect was significant in both the GTP groups (Effect = 0.580, $SE = 0.219$, 95% CI [0.460, 0.787]) and STP groups (Effect = -0.305, $SE = 0.140$, 95% CI [-0.612, -0.065]). Additionally, the direct effect of advertising tourist images on purchase intention was also significant ($\beta_{\text{GTP}} = 0.499$, $SE_{\text{GTP}} = 0.215$, 95% CI_{GTP} [0.069, 0.928]; $\beta_{\text{STP}} = -0.677$, $SE_{\text{STP}} = 0.218$, 95% CI_{STP} [-1.112, -0.243]). The results indicated that embodied mental simulation partially mediated the influence of advertising tourist images on purchase intention, which supported H2.

Study 3

Design and participants

Study 3 used Suzhou as a case destination and designed a 2 (tour packages: GTP vs. STP) \times 2 (tourist images: presence vs. absence) between-subjects experiment to examine the moderating effect of relevant travel experience (H3). A total of 156 participants (41.03% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 29.22$) who passed the control check were randomly recruited through Credamo and were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental groups.

Procedure

Similar to the previous studies, after viewing the text materials and advertisements, participants first reported embodied mental simulation. Then, they were asked to complete two items to measure relevant travel experience from both subjective and objective dimensions, which were adapted from Dodd et al. (2005) and Li et al. (2021). Finally, purchase intention was measured, and descriptive statistics and demographics of the participants were recorded.

Results

The study first conducted two-way ANOVA to test the interacting effects of advertising tourist images and relevant travel experiences on embodied mental simulation and purchase intention. In the GTP groups, the interacting effects were significant on both embodied mental simulation ($F(1, 74) = 7.896$, $p = 0.006$) and purchase intention ($F(1, 74) = 7.507$, $p = 0.008$). Similarly, in the STP groups, the effects were also significant on embodied mental simulation ($F(1, 74) = 7.161$, $p = 0.009$) and purchase intention ($F(1, 74) = 5.304$, $p = 0.024$). These results suggested that a moderating test was appropriate.

Then, the study utilised floodlight analysis to test the moderating role played by relevant travel experience, which allowed observing the significance at different experience levels (Carden et al., 2017; Spiller et al., 2013), and the results were shown in Table 5. The analysis was completed through RStudio 4.3.2, and the Johnson-Neyman plots were shown in Figures 3 and 4.

Table 5. Moderating effect in Study 3.

Group Outcome	Group tour package						Self-guided tour package							
	Moderator	Effect	SE	t	Sig.	95%CI		Moderator	Effect	SE	t	Sig.	95%CI	
						LICI	UICI						LICI	UICI
EMS	TIs * RTE	0.868	0.309	2.810	0.006	0.253	1.484	TIs * RTE	-0.528	0.197	-2.676	0.009	-0.920	-0.135
	$M_{RTE}-1SD$	0.014	0.459	0.031	0.975	-0.899	0.928	$M_{RTE}-1SD$	0.060	0.343	0.176	0.861	-0.623	0.743
	M_{RTE}	0.925	0.321	2.879	0.005	0.285	1.565	M_{RTE}	-0.592	0.240	-2.465	0.016	-1.070	-0.113
	$M_{RTE}+1SD$	1.835	0.454	4.044	< 0.001	0.931	2.740	$M_{RTE}+1SD$	-1.243	0.341	-3.645	< 0.001	-1.923	-0.564
PI	TIs * RTE	1.015	0.370	2.740	0.008	0.277	1.753	TIs * RTE	-0.519	0.225	-2.303	0.024	-0.968	-0.070
	$M_{RTE}-1SD$	-0.176	0.549	-0.321	0.749	-1.271	0.919	$M_{RTE}-1SD$	-0.209	0.392	-0.534	0.595	-0.989	0.571
	M_{RTE}	0.887	0.385	2.307	0.024	0.121	1.655	M_{RTE}	-0.850	0.274	-3.101	0.003	-1.396	-0.304
	$M_{RTE}+1SD$	1.952	0.544	3.588	< 0.001	0.868	3.035	$M_{RTE}+1SD$	-1.491	0.390	-3.826	< 0.001	-2.267	-0.714

Note: EMS = embodied mental simulation; TIs = tourist images; RTE = relevant travel experience; PI = purchase intention; GTP = group tour package; STP = self-guided tour package.

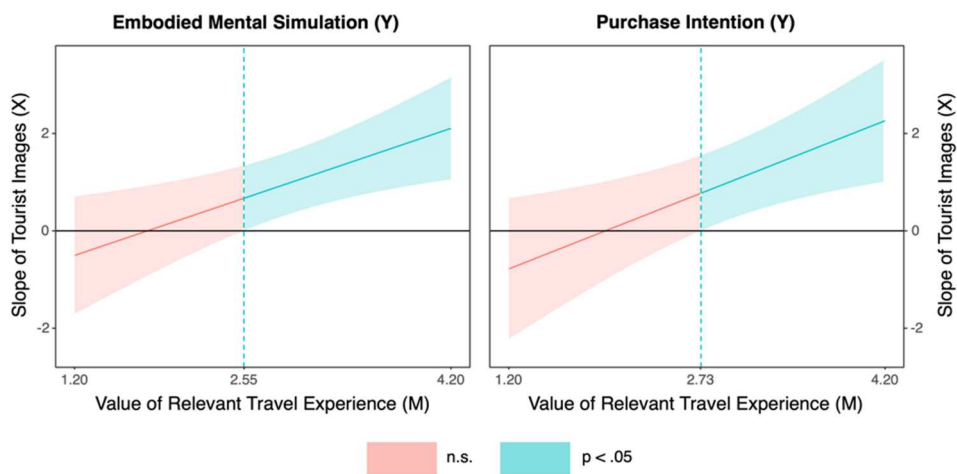


Figure 3. Results of floodlight analysis (GTP).

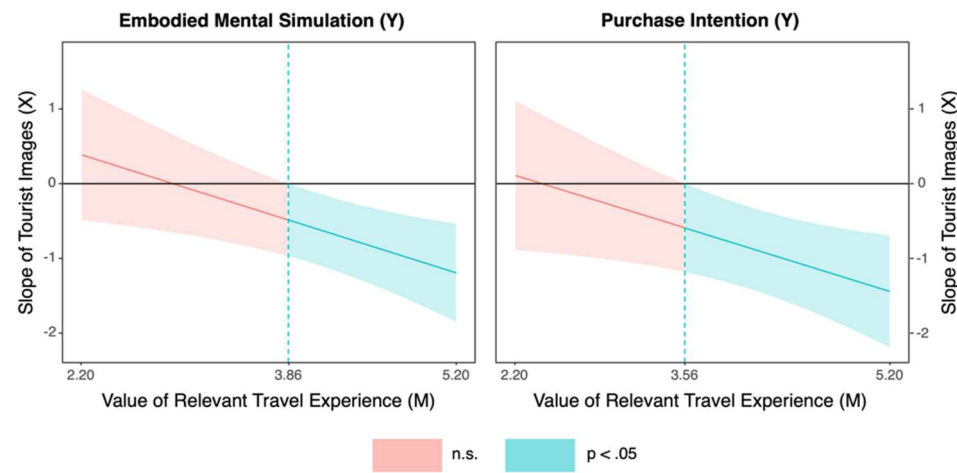


Figure 4. Results of floodlight analysis (STP).

In the GTP groups, for participants whose relevant travel experience was higher than 2.55 ($M=0.28SD$, $M=2.846$, $SD=1.048$; 51.28% of total), advertising tourist images had a significant positive effect on embodied mental simulation, and for whose experience was higher than 2.73 ($M=0.11SD$; 51.28% of total), tourist images positively affected purchase intention. For the rest of the participants who had less experience, the impact was not significant (See Figure 3).

In the STP groups, for participants whose experience was higher than 3.86 ($M=0.16SD$, $M=4.058$, $SD=1.235$; 64.10% of total), tourist images had a significantly negative effect on embodied mental simulation, and for whose experience was higher than 3.56 ($M=0.40SD$; 64.10% of total), tourist images negatively affect purchase intention. For the rest of the participants who had less experience, the influence was not significant (See Figure 4). Thus, the results supported H3.

Conclusion and discussion

Conclusion

The current research was to investigate the potential impact of tourist image in tour package advertising. Specifically, based on individuals' cognitive differences between GTP and STP, this research aimed to validate the diverse responses that tourist images could elicit on consumers' purchase intentions for GTPs and STPs. Further, researchers introduced and examined the mediating role played by embodied mental simulation while testing relevant travel experience as a moderator of the entire mechanism. The main findings could be concluded as follows.

First, this research validated that the interaction between individuals' cognitions of tour packages and advertising tourist images did affect consumers' purchase intention. It was found that tourist images positively influenced consumers' purchase intention for GTPs because tourist images symbolised sociability (Joe et al., 2021; Park et al., 2021; Ye et al., 2020) and matched with GTPs' group attributes, cognitive consistency was consequently engendered and promoted consumers' intention (Festinger, 1957; Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). In contrast, this sociability conflicted with STPs' private attributes and activated cognitive dissonance in consumers (Akerlof & Dickens, 1982), which in turn weakened purchase intention for STPs.

Second, the mediating effect of embodied mental simulation was determined. Echoing the prior findings that tourist images can promote individuals' mental simulation of travel experience and germinate positive intentions (Li & Wan, 2025; Wang et al., 2024), this research found a similar mechanism in GTP advertising contexts, since these images as others helped individuals to simulate the experiences in group tours, i.e. interacting with unfamiliar members during the trip. However, as consumers seek private experiences in self-guided tours, tourist images become intrusive visual elements that prevent individuals from imagining interacting with the destination's scenery on their own. Therefore, the simulation process was interrupted, and hence, purchase intention was weakened.

Third, this research revealed the moderating role that relevant travel experience played. Specifically, inexperienced consumers were still initially accumulating knowledge and lacked cognitions of the different attributes of two tour package types (Bettman & Park, 1980; Tassiello & Tillotson, 2020). Therefore, the impact of advertising tourist images was not significant among individuals with less relevant travel experience. Conversely, when individuals' experience met a certain threshold, cognitive consistency or dissonance would be activated by advertising tourist images, which affected consumers' mental simulation and purchase intention.

Theoretical contribution

This research has important contributions to the existing literature in several ways. Firstly, although previous studies have explored the impact of tourist images in advertising, most of them mainly focused on how tourist images influence consumers' preference and visit intentions to the destinations (Li & Wan, 2025; Lu et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023). Additionally, while researchers have documented the significant differences in tour packages' attributes (Jin et al., 2014; Lin & Kuo, 2018; Wang et al., 2013; Wen et al., 2021), currently no study has explored whether advertising tourist images would germinate diverse influences on consumers' decision when purchasing tour packages. By linking consumers' cognitive differences of tour packages to the sociability engendered by tourist images, this study uncovers the phenomenon of consumers' cognitive consistency and dissonance that exists in tourism product advertising contexts. Hence, the current study enriches consumer decision-making research and provides a new perspective to the field of tourism marketing.

Secondly, this study develops the theory of embodied mental simulation by revealing a new boundary condition of its positive effects in tourism advertising contexts. Prior research has

indicated the positive effect that tourist images can generate as they promote consumers' mental simulation of travel experiences (Li & Wan, 2025; Wang et al., 2024). However, the present research posits a condition that is necessary for tourist images to work positively through mental simulation, i.e. these images must be in line with consumers' cognitions of the destination or products. Thus, this study provides a more comprehensive perspective for understanding mental simulation.

In addition, this work is the first to introduce travel experience into tourism advertising contexts and validates its effects on consumers. Although previous studies have shown individuals' travel experience shaped their behaviours before and during trips (Li et al., 2021; Teichmann, 2011), no researcher has focused on the potential impact of travel experience on consumers' responses towards advertisements. The current study, based on the cumulative nature of experience, confirms the differentiated responses to advertisements in high and low experience consumers, consequently expanding the application of travel experience in the field of tourism marketing.

Finally, grounded in cognitive consistency theory (Akerlof & Dickens, 1982; Festinger, 1957), this research reveals the psychological mechanism that links the advertising tourist images to consumers' purchase intentions for tour packages, thereby providing a theoretical foundation for tourism marketers. Most importantly, based on the mechanism of cognition formation and its impact on individuals' psychology and behaviour, this work effectively integrates the concepts of embodied mental simulation and travel experience, providing a referable theoretical framework for future visual marketing research.

Practical implication

As important marketing tools, advertisements for tour packages should be differentiated by visual design. To be specific, in GTP advertising, tourist images should be utilised more, featuring enjoyable facial expressions, young male and female companions, and interactive body postures. However, in STP advertising, merchants should avoid using tourist images as they will interfere with consumers' mental simulations. Instead, advertisements that purely depict destination scenery should be utilised more for STP.

More importantly, tourism merchants should adopt differentiated advertising strategies for consumers with different levels of travel experience. Precisely, for consumers who regularly purchase GTP products, especially those with rich group tour experience, merchants should push more advertisements with tourist images to those consumers. Advertisements without tourist images should be pushed more for those who often purchase STP products, especially those who have rich self-guided tour experience.

Additionally, the present research provided important support for long-term marketing as the consistency between consumers' cognition and advertising information is a key factor that affects purchase decisions, which cannot be separated from the influence of individuals' travel experience. Thus, for newly created travel products, a long-term normalised marketing strategy should be adopted to promote consumers' cognition of these new products in subtle ways (e.g. push reports on product-related events to the consumers), which could be a useful way to improve the effectiveness of advertisements.

Limitations and future research

This research has some limitations. First, considering the main features of advertisements on the present online travel agency, all the stimulus materials used consisted of two companion tourists, including male and female, whereas images of single or group tourists (i.e. three or more people) were not considered, thus the materials design should be enriched in future research. Second, while there are many other types of advertising, such as videos and interactive advertisements, this study only considered photo advertisements, the advertising form should be included as a potential factor that may affect consumers' intentions in future studies. In addition, previous

studies have shown that individuals' cognitions may be influenced by culture (Cowan & Spielmann, 2020). Since all of the participants were recruited in China, who advocated collectivism (Hofstede, 1983), they might have a natural preference for companionable images. Thus, participants from a wider range of regions should be recruited in the future to increase the generalizability of the conclusions.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the National Social Science Fund of China under Grant [number 23BLJ124] awarded to the first author.

References

- Akerlof, G. A., & Dickens, W. T. (1982). The economic consequences of cognitive dissonance. *The American Economic Review*, 72(3), 307–319.
- Alba, J. W., & Hutchinson, J. W. (1987). Dimensions of consumer expertise. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13(4), 411–454. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209080>
- Bagatini, F. Z., Rech, E., Pacheco, N. A., & Nicolao, L. (2023). Can you imagine yourself wearing this product? Embodied mental simulation and attractiveness in e-commerce product pictures. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 17(3), 470–490. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-11-2021-0280>
- Bakhshi, S., Shamma, D. A., & Gilbert, E. (2014). Faces engage us: Photos with faces attract more likes and comments on instagram. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems*.
- Baloglu, S. (2001). Image variations of Turkey by familiarity index: Informational and experiential dimensions. *Tourism Management*, 22(2), 127–133. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(00\)00049-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(00)00049-2)
- Bettman, J. R., & Park, C. W. (1980). Effects of prior knowledge and experience and phase of the choice process on consumer decision processes: A protocol analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 7(3), 234–248. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208812>
- Carden, S. W., Holtzman, N. S., & Strube, M. J. (2017). CAHOST: An excel workbook for facilitating the Johnson-Neyman technique for two-way interactions in multiple regression. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 1293. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01293>
- Chiang, C.-Y., & Chen, W.-C. (2014). The impression management techniques of tour leaders in group package tour service encounters. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 31(6), 747–762. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2014.889641>
- Cohen, J. (1960). A coefficient of agreement for nominal scales. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 20(1), 37–46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316446002000104>
- Cowan, K., & Spielmann, N. (2020). Culture is in the “I” of the beholder: Identity confirmation in tourist advertisements. *Journal of Business Research*, 121, 378–388. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.05.015>
- CTA. (2023). 2023 Annual report of China domestic tourism development. Tourism Education Press. <https://www.ctaweb.org.cn/index.php?m=home&c=View&a=index&aid=9838>
- Deng, N., & Liu, J. (2021). Where did you take those photos? Tourists' preference clustering based on facial and background recognition. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 21, 100632. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2021.100632>
- Dodd, T. H., Laverie, D. A., Wilcox, J. F., & Duhan, D. F. (2005). Differential effects of experience, subjective knowledge, and objective knowledge on sources of information used in consumer wine purchasing. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 29(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348004267518>
- Elder, R. S., & Krishna, A. (2011). The “visual depiction effect” in advertising: Facilitating embodied mental simulation through product orientation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38(6), 988–1003. <https://doi.org/10.1086/661531>
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., & Lang, A.-G. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G* power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior Research Methods*, 41(4), 1149–1160. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BRM.41.4.1149>
- Ferries, C. (2024, November 10). Online travel booking statistics 2024. Brittany Ferries. <https://www.condorferries.co.uk/online-travel-booking-statistics>
- Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford University Press.
- Guo, W.-C., Lai, F.-C., & Suen, W. (2018). Downs meets d'Aspremont and company: Convergence versus differentiation in politics and the media. *International Journal of Industrial Organization*, 60, 96–125. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jindorg.2018.08.002>

- Guo, Y., & Zhu, Z. (2023). Intangible cultural heritage souvenirs: Image congruity and brand influence on tourists' purchase intention. *Tourism Review*, 78(4), 1203–1216. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-04-2022-0196>
- Hayes, A. F. (2017). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. Guilford publications.
- Hofstede, G. (1983). Dimensions of national cultures in fifty countries and three regions. In J. Deregowski, S. Dzuirawuec, & R. Annis (Eds.), *Expiscations in cross-cultural psychology* (pp. 335–355). Lisse: Swets and Zeitlinger.
- Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities*. Addison-Wesley (content analysis).
- Iyengar, S., & Hahn, K. S. (2009). Red media, blue media: Evidence of ideological selectivity in media use. *Journal of Communication*, 59(1), 19–39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.01402.x>
- Jin, T., Lin, V. S., & Hung, K. (2014). China's generation Y's expectation on outbound group package tour. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 19(6), 617–644. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2013.806939>
- Joe, S., Choi, C., & Busser, J. (2021). The impact of virtual presence on willingness to book: The moderating role of self-construal and gender. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 98, 103021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2021.103021>
- Li, F., & Ma, J. (2023). The effectiveness of the destination logo: Congruity effect between logo typeface and destination stereotypes. *Tourism Management*, 98, 104772. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104772>
- Li, Y., & Wan, L. C. (2025). Inspiring tourists' imagination: How and when human presence in photographs enhances travel mental simulation and destination attractiveness. *Tourism Management*, 106, 104969. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2024.104969>
- Li, C., Wang, Y., Lv, X., & Li, H. (2021). To buy or not to buy? The effect of time scarcity and travel experience on tourists' impulse buying. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 86, 103083. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.103083>
- Li, H., Zhang, L., Guo, R., Ji, H., & Yu, B. X. B. (2023). Information enhancement or hindrance? Unveiling the impacts of user-generated photos in online reviews. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 35(7), 2322–2351. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-03-2022-0291>
- Lin, C.-H., & Kuo, B. Z.-L. (2018). The moderating effects of travel arrangement types on tourists' formation of Taiwan's unique image. *Tourism Management*, 66, 233–243. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.12.001>
- Lin, C. F., & Liao, Y. H. (2010). Guiding the content of tourism web advertisements on a search engine results page. *Online Information Review*, 34(2), 263–281. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14684521011036981>
- Lu, Z. Y., Jung, S., & Peck, J. (2024). It looks like "theirs": When and why human presence in the photo lowers viewers' liking and preference for an experience venue. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 51(2), 321–341. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucad059>
- Magnini, V. P., & Kim, S. (2016). The influences of restaurant menu font style, background color, and physical weight on consumers' perceptions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 53, 42–48. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2015.11.001>
- Mohan, M., Ferguson, J. L., & Huhmann, B. A. (2022). Endorser gender and age effects in B2B advertising. *Journal of Business Research*, 148, 60–75. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.04.050>
- Nikjoo, A., & Bakhshi, H. (2019). The presence of tourists and residents in shared travel photos. *Tourism Management*, 70, 89–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.08.005>
- Osgood, C. E., & Tannenbaum, P. H. (1955). The principle of congruity in the prediction of attitude change. *Psychological Review*, 62(1), 42–55. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0048153>
- Park, J.-Y., Back, R. M., Bufoin, D., & Nutta, M. W. W. (2021). Attraction, social presence, sociability, and booking intentions: The moderating role of homophily. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 45(6), 1044–1068. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348020988898>
- Pradhan, D., Moharana, T. R., & Malik, G. (2023). Influence of celebrity, destination and tourist personality on destination attachment and revisit intention: Moderating roles of endorsement embeddedness, destination crowding and gender. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 27, 100754. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2022.100754>
- Prayag, G., Cohen, S. A., & Yan, H. (2015). Potential Chinese travellers to Western Europe: Segmenting motivations and service expectations. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 18(8), 725–743. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2013.868413>
- Schoner-Schatz, L., Hofmann, V., & Stokburger-Sauer, N. E. (2021). Destination's social media communication and emotions: An investigation of visit intentions, word-of-mouth and travelers' facially expressed emotions. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 22, 100661. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2021.100661>
- Sharifpour, M., Walters, G., Ritchie, B. W., & Winter, C. (2014). Investigating the role of prior knowledge in tourist decision making. *Journal of Travel Research*, 53(3), 307–322. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287513500390>
- Spiller, S. A., Fitzsimons, G. J., Lynch Jr, J. G., & McClelland, G. H. (2013). Spotlights, floodlights, and the magic number zero: Simple effects tests in moderated regression. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 50(2), 277–288. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.12.0420>
- Tanford, S., & Montgomery, R. (2015). The effects of social influence and cognitive dissonance on travel purchase decisions. *Journal of Travel Research*, 54(5), 596–610. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287514528287>
- Tassiello, V., & Tillotson, J. S. (2020). How subjective knowledge influences intention to travel. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 80, 102851. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2019.102851>

- Teichmann, K. (2011). Expertise, experience and self-confidence in consumers' travel information search. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 5(2), 184–194. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17506181111139591>
- Tercia, C., Teichert, T., Sirad, D., & Soehadi, A. (2020). Conveying pre-visit experiences through travel advertisements and their effects on destination decisions. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 16, 100331. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2018.12.005>
- Tseng, T. H., & Wang, H.-Y. (2023). Consumer attitudes and purchase intentions towards internet celebrity self-brands: An integrated view of congruence, brand authenticity and internet celebrity involvement. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 32(6), 863–877. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-03-2022-3892>
- Urry, J., & Larsen, J. (2011). *The tourist gaze 3.0*. Sage.
- Walker, B. (2024, October 15). *Online travel agencies market share across the world*. Mize. <https://mize.tech/blog/online-travel-agencies-market-share-across-the-world/>
- Wang, Y. (2023, August 25). *Travel consumption report for the first half of 2023*. CT News. http://www.ctnews.com.cn/baogao/content/2023-08/25/content_148548.html
- Wang, C., Chen, Y.-H., Nie, P.-Y., & Wang, X. H. (2019). Effects of celebrity endorsement on firms' competition: From industrial organisation perspective. *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 32(1), 3230–3252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2019.1661002>
- Wang, L., Guo, Z., Li, F., & Xu, X. A. (2024). Show me the destination or show me the tourist? Effect of image-based user-generated advertisement type on tourists' destination interest. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 27(23), 4354–4373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2024.2309165>
- Wang, K.-C., Jao, P.-C., Lin, Y.-S., & Guo, Y.-Z. (2009). Exploring attractive messages in group package tour newspaper advertisements. *International Journal of Advertising*, 28(5), 843–862. <https://doi.org/10.2501/S0265048709200928>
- Wang, K.-C., Ma, A.-P., Hsu, M.-T., Jao, P.-C., & Lin, C.-W. (2013). Seniors' perceptions of service features on outbound group package tours. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(8), 1021–1027. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.12.026>
- Wen, T., Leung, X. Y., Li, B., & Hu, L. (2021). Examining framing effect in travel package purchase: An application of double-entry mental accounting theory. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 90, 103265. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2021.103265>
- Wong, J.-Y., & Wang, C.-H. (2009). Emotional labor of the tour leaders: An exploratory study. *Tourism Management*, 30(2), 249–259. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2008.06.005>
- Xie, H., Minton, E. A., & Kahle, L. R. (2016). Cake or fruit? Influencing healthy food choice through the interaction of automatic and instructed mental simulation. *Marketing Letters*, 27(4), 627–644. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-016-9412-3>
- Xu, X. A., & Chen, F. (2024). Effective tourism destination stories: Matching effects between story type and destination type. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 60, 393–404. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2024.08.011>
- Ye, S., Lei, S. I., Shen, H., & Xiao, H. (2020). Social presence, telepresence and customers' intention to purchase online peer-to-peer accommodation: A mediating model. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 42, 119–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2019.11.008>
- Yin, C.-Y., Poon, P., & Su, J.-L. (2017). Yesterday once more? Autobiographical memory evocation effects on tourists' post-travel purchase intentions toward destination products. *Tourism Management*, 61, 263–274. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.02.014>
- Zhang, S., Liu, W., Zhang, T., Han, W., & Zhu, Y. (2024). Harms of inconsistency: The impact of user-generated and marketing-generated photos on hotel booking intentions. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 51, 101249. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2024.101249>
- Zhang, K., Zhang, J., & Yang, J. (2023). The influence of human elements in photographs on tourists' destination perceptions and intentions. *Tourism Management*, 95, 104684. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2022.104684>
- Zhou, Y., & Jiao, W. (2024). Investigating the effect of tourism short video background music congruence on viewers' travel intention. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2024.2343082>