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Factors Cultivating Destination-Country Image via YouTube

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Abstract

The perception of a country as a travel destination is influenced by various factors, and destination-country image is a crucial element in attracting international tourists. Strengthening the destination image is vital for the growth of the tourism industry and can have a broader impact on shaping the overall impression of the country itself. In today's digital era, with the increasing popularity of social media platforms, leveraging YouTube videos as a promotional tool has gained significant importance in destination marketing. This study took French YouTube users as the sampling unit. Structural equation model is applied to explore the relationship between architecture identity portrayed on YouTube, perceived cognitive and affective destination image of Beijing, and China's destination-country image together to contribute via researching YouTube's coverage of China's tourism and its implications for China's destination-country image management. The structural equation model indicated that exposure to YouTube plays a crucial role in shaping various aspects related to destination image, including architecture identity, perceived cognitive destination image, the overall impression of China as a travel destination, and the perception of China as a country. This study holds significance in offering recommendations and guidance for enhancing the destination image of a country with YouTube via iconic architecture in famous destination city as video object. It provides insights for China's destination-country image building.

Keywords: *YouTube, cultivation effect, architecture identity, destination image, destination-country image.*

1. Introduction

Challenged by Covid-19 pandemic during the past three years, tourism, one of the most important economy sector worldwide is now recovering (UNWTO, 2023a, 2023c). China's re-opening in the early 2023 after travel restriction during longtime is seen as a significant step (UNWTO, 2023b). The perception of a destination's image remains a crucial issue for countries, considering its significant impact on how tourists subjectively perceive and subsequently behave (Marinao-Artigas & Barajas-Portas, 2021). Nevertheless, in recent times, the national image of China has suffered negative consequences due to the emergence of COVID-19 since 2020. Despite China's endeavors to encourage global collaboration in combating the pandemic, the extensive spread of misleading information related to COVID-19 has seriously damaged China's reputation

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and presented challenges in reestablishing itself as an appealing tourist destination (Shi & Liu, 2021). What's more, investigation on China's destination-image remain still a gap during long period (J. P. Li, G. M. Weng, & Y. Pan, 2021).

In studies on the basis of place branding practices, the application of term "place" involved various geographic entities, such as country, city, destination and so on (Hanna & Rowley, 2008). The concept destination involves different geographic level. At the country level, the destination-country image concept was initiative by H. Zhang, Xu, Leung, and Cai (2016), which consider a country as a destination. In addition, previous literatures scholars such as Soonsan (2018), J. Zhang, Wu, Morrison, Tseng, and Chen (2018), Hahm, Tasci, and Terry (2018) investigate interaction between destination image and country image and how they jointly promote the local tourism. Therefore, the destinations of different geographic level in a country are also interchangeably impact each other. The primary area of inquiry in research regarding the factors that shape the image of a destination country predominantly centers around the notion of destination image (J. Li & Weng, 2022).

The development of destination image involves ongoing cognitive processes in which various information sources converge (H. Kim & Chen, 2016). For instance, external factors such as network communication and word-of-mouth significantly influence the perception of a destination (Cham, Lim, Sia, Cheah, & Ting, 2021). Nowadays, social media become emerging in generating the destination image (Garay Tamajón & Cànoves Valiente, 2017). Social media platforms have gained popularity as tools that consumers utilize to seek information, engage in collaborative planning, and memorialize their travel experiences through posting, messaging, and sharing different types of media (Dolan, Seo, & Kemper, 2019). With the advent of social media, travelers now have the ability to produce and distribute their own travel experiences on various online platforms. As a result, the image of tourism destinations is continuously co-created through a combination of content generated by individual travelers and material developed by National Tourism Organizations and Destination Marketing Organizations specifically for social media (Sun, Tang, & Liu, 2021). This emergence of social media has given rise to a fresh realm of influence, offering a global platform for tourists to collect valuable information that assists them in making decisions about their destination choices.

Media plays a remarkable role as one of the primary channels through which people overseas acquire knowledge about China, the proportion of oversea people understanding China through local new media channels is increasing (Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies, 2020). Video content, among the diverse range of media options available, has demonstrated a notably compelling impact on the potential demand of tourists. YouTube videos have proven to be a successful means of promoting destinations and enticing travelers (Tiago, Moreira, & Borges-Tiago, 2019). However, current literature focusing on the impact of media on the image of a destination country rarely includes dynamic visual materials such as videos as subjects of research (J. Li & Weng, 2022). Furthermore, YouTube, as one of the largest global video platforms (Tripathi et al., 2020), reaches an extensive audience of 2,562 million people worldwide (Statista, 2022). It is also the most popular social media platform in France, serving as a vital source of information for individuals in the country (Mediametrie, 2020).

The unique cultural differences and distinctive qualities of China have captivated the attention of the French population, resulting in a notable influx of tourists (L. Li, 2020). Among the French market, China holds the second-largest portion of packaged travel in Asia, primarily owing to its appeal to French tourists with attractions like Chinese culture, customs, traditions, heritage, and picturesque landscapes (Abergel, 2019). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the image of China, especially regarding environmental concerns such as pollution, can be a subject of controversy, particularly in Beijing. This has hindered an increased number of French visitors to China (Abergel, 2019) despite Beijing remain the top one Chinese destination for oversea people

(Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies, 2020). However, a lack of empirical evidence concerning how French perceive China via YouTube exists. Numerous practical inquiries about France's perspective on China's image remain unresolved. Consequently, there is a need for reassessment and improvement of China's destination image from the French point of view.

To address the aforementioned gaps and advance research on the destination-country image of China, this study focuses on YouTube as the chosen media platform, Beijing as an iconic destination within China, China as the target country, and French YouTube users as the target group. This research has 3 objectives: (1) To review research on destination-country image and present an overview of relevant current literatures, for identifying factors impacting destination-country image. (2) To develop a causal-effect model based on the relationship among exposure to YouTube, architectural identity, destination image, destination-country image, and the overall impression of China as a tourism destination. (3) To statistically validate the model and illustrate the mechanism of cultivating China's destination-country.

This research is helpful for examining how YouTube presents China's tourism and the resulting impact on managing the country's image, while also enhancing the overall impression of China within the French population.

2. Theoretical basis and hypothesis development

2.1 Cultivation theory and exposure to social media

The cultivation theory proposes that individuals who have frequent and prolonged exposure to media develop a perception of social realities influenced by the portrayal of those realities in media, ultimately influencing their attitudes and behaviors (Z. Shah, Chu, Ghani, Qaisar, & Hassan, 2020). According to this theory, the more time individuals spend consuming various forms of media (e.g., television, magazines), the higher the probability that their perceptions of the actual world will be in line with the depictions and messages conveyed by the media they consume (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). The application of cultivation theory to virtual communities has become more prevalent, such as Facebook (Hermann, Eisend, & Bayón, 2020), Twitter (Wei, McIntyre, & Straub, 2020), Instagram (Stein, Krause, & Ohler, 2021), YouTube (Chae, 2021). Social media can cultivate perceptions and attitudes of reality, as it provide a collective symbolic environment that conveys stories and value to large groups of people and social media contexts (Tang, Miller, Zhou, & Warkentin, 2021).

Exposure to social media pertains to individuals' utilization and involvement with various social media platforms, and be measured by information volume received (Zeballos Rivas et al., 2021), frequency of media use (Gao et al., 2020), media source, and the duration (C. Liu & Liu, 2020). Exposure to social media is vital to the image of a destination since it could affect intention of word-of-mouth and travel (Gunter, Önder, & Gindl, 2018). Exposure to social media provides insight into the coherence between consumers and brands or products, as well as between spokespersons and prospective visitors. This is evident through the use of indicators such as likes, comments, and sharing, which serve as crucial determinants of a consumer's selection of destinations (Xu & Pratt, 2018). Meanwhile, the use of social media has a positive influence on destination brand equity. Researches on Chinese social media platforms have shown that exposure to social media content influences the perception of tourism destination images (Wang, Yang, Huang, Huang, & Sun, 2021). Exposure to social media platforms can enhance the destination image and promote tourism loyalty (Kanwel et al., 2019). The quality of exposure to social media content plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' perception of the target destination image.

2.2 From perceived destination image to destination-country image

Since 1970s, destination image concept has been highly influential in destination development and marketing (Oliveira & Huertas, 2019), since it plays a predominant role in understanding decision-making and behavioral intentions of tourist (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020; Karl, Muskat, & Ritchie, 2020). Hunt (1975) introduced the idea of destination image, which refers to the perception or impression that potential visitors hold about a particular area. This concept emphasized the significance of image in influencing travel behavior. Crompton (1979) expanded upon this concept, defining destination image as a set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that individuals have about a place. This definition is widely accepted and adopted. The measurement of destination image incorporates both cognitive and affective components (Tan & Wu, 2016). Affective image evaluation pertains to the emotional responses and feelings associated with a destination, while cognitive image evaluation is based on beliefs and knowledge about its features (Llodrà-Riera et al., 2015), hence, "cognitive-affective" model of tourism destination image perception is applied (Huete-Alcocer, Martinez-Ruiz, López-Ruiz, & Izquiedo-Yusta, 2019). Tourist destination image perception involves an overall assessment of various characteristics (e.g., tourist attractions, service facilities) of a destination, taking into account subjective judgments (personal factors) and external information from a variety of sources (stimulating factors) (Jeong & Kim, 2019b). It is evident that information sources and personal factors play significant roles in shaping the perceived destination image, which, in turn, influences behaviors such as choice and satisfaction (Tavitiyaman, Qu, Tsang, & Lam, 2021). Due to Covid-19 during the past three years, China’s travel restriction policy impeded tourist to travel freely, especially for oversea people to travel in China. As a result, tourists may rely more heavily on media coverage, both mass media and social media, to form their perceptions of a destination. The presentation of such destination images can have an influence on individuals who have never visited that particular destination. (Rasoolimanesh, Seyfi, Rastegar, & Hall, 2021). Therefore, this research proposes the Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2:

H1: Exposure to social media (ESM) impacts the perceived cognitive destination image (PCDI).

H2: Exposure to social media (ESM) impacts the perceived affective destination image

In such circumstances, the perceived cognitive component of a destination of tourist is especially significance in view of it is related to people’s belief or knowledge about destination’s feature. Architecture is a dominant destination symbol (Specht, 2013), which effective present the uniqueness of a place (Salman, 2018). Iconic architecture plays a significant role in identifying a city, place, or specific area. It contributes to enhancing the physical assets of a destination (Scerri, Edwards, & Foley, 2016). It conveys the message, concept, and traits associated with the place where it was created (Torabi & Brahman, 2013). Hallmann, Zehrer, and Müller (2013) confirmed that architecture is critical in establishing a positive destination image and ensuring a positive tourist perception. The presence of distinctive architecture is essential for defining the unique characteristics and competitive edge of a destination, helping it stand apart from others (Vinyals-Mirabent, 2019). However, unique architecture has been seen an idea attribute measuring the cognitive image (Seehyung Kim & Yoon, 2003), and branding a country (Anholt, 2016), whose value is not highlighted enough. Tourists often develop their perception of a destination by associating it with specific symbols, especially those that have been prominently featured in the media. For example, well-known architectural landmarks frequently appear in promotional videos of countries (Jakopović, 2015).

Architecture goes beyond being a visual metaphor or a formal interpretation. It holds the essence of identity, which distinguishes it from others. This concept of identity applies not only to architecture itself but also to individuals, societies, and nations. The architectural identity reflects a blend of natural and human factors such as the location,

the people, and the culture, which are manifested through architectural design (Salman, 2018).

Therefore, this study provides Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4

H3: Exposure to social media (ESM) impacts people's perception on architecture identity (AI).

H4: Architecture identity (AI) impacts the perceived cognitive destination image (PCDI).

The spatial scale divides destinations into different levels, such as country, city, scenic spot etc. (H. Zhang et al., 2016). However, in early stage research, destination image and country image were separated (J. Li, G. Weng, & Y. Pan, 2021). Buhmann (2016) defines a country image as a collection of impressions, attitudes, and beliefs that people hold about a country, particularly among foreign individuals. The country's image consists of cognitive and affective components (Dedeoğlu, 2019), as the destination image has.

Investigation on the interaction between destination image and country image exist always and generally involves two views. One the one hand, it is believed that there is interaction between destination image and the country image, such as Soonsan (2018), Zeineddine and Nicolescu (2018), Hahm et al. (2018). On the other hand, the destination-country concept is initiated. Tourism is an essential component of a country's overall image. The integration of destination image and country image gives rise to the concept of destination-country image, which represents the collective result of tourism and international marketing efforts (H. Zhang et al., 2016). Previous research on destination-country image has investigated various dimensions (J. Li et al., 2021). However, it can be primarily categorized into two main dimensions: the macro dimension, which focuses on the overall country image itself, and the micro dimension, which emphasizes the image of specific destinations within the country (Aydin, Erdogan, & Baloglu, 2021). The macro dimension is linked to the country's environment, encompassing factors such as the country and its people, while the micro dimension is related to the image of specific destinations, including their attractions and amenities. (J. Li et al., 2021). In addition, various media including social media's cultivation effect on destination-country image has been proved by Motahar, Tavakoli, and Mura (2021), Williams (2022), Tsay-Vogel, Shanahan, and Signorielli (2016), Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021) and Song, Li, and Wareewanich (2023).

Therefore, this study proposes following hypothesis:

H5: Perceived affective destination image (PADI) impacts the destination-country image (DCI).

H6: Perceived cognitive destination image (PCDI) impacts the destination-country image (DCI).

H7: Exposure to social media (ESM) impacts destination-country image (DCI).

2.3 Overall impression perceived as destination

The perception of a destination or country is made up of both cognitive and emotional aspects (D. Li, Lu Wang, Jiang, R. Barnes, & Zhang, 2014; Tan & Wu, 2016). These cognitive and emotional evaluations of a place contribute to the overall impression that people form about it (Jeong & Kim, 2019a). A positive overall impression can stem from positive evaluations and a pleasant destination image (Soyeon. Kim, Lehto, & Kandampully, 2019). It is found that the intention to recommend or travel to a country is highly related to the country's overall evaluation as a destination (Nadeau, Heslop, O'Reilly, & Luk, 2008).

The perceived image of a destination significantly impacts the overall tourism image of a nation. The perception of the destination's image differs between local residents and visiting tourists, leading to varying interpretations of the impression of the destination

country across different contexts (Zulvianti, Aimon, & Abror, 2022). Furthermore, research on attitudes and tourism intentions has found a positive relationship between perceived destination image and the overall impression of the country (Y. Liu, 2019). Moreover, findings from a social media survey highlight the pivotal role of the perceived destination image in shaping the overall impression of a country (Girma & Singh, 2019).

The way tourists perceive a country as a whole has become a key factor that influences their decision-making when choosing a tourism destination (Mim, Hasan, Hossain, & Khan, 2022). According to image theory, the image of a destination plays a significant role in creating lasting psychological impressions (Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to focus on developing a positive and strong country image in order to shape the overall perception of the country (X. Li et al., 2022). Therefore, the study proposes the Hypothesis 8 and Hypothesis 9:

H8: Destination-country image (DCI) has impacts overall impression perceived as destination (OIPD).

Based on previous direct effect hypothesis, this study assumes also the existence of indirect relationship among factors above. Therefore, this study proposes addition three hypothesis about indirect effects, that is, Hypothesis 9, Hypothesis 10, Hypothesis 11 and Hypothesis 12:

H9: Exposure to social media (ESM) affect the destination-country image (DCI) then Overall impression perceived as destination (OIPD).

H10: Exposure to social media (ESM) affects the perceived affective destination image(PADI), then the destination-country image (DCI), and finally the overall impression of the destination (OIPD).

H11: Exposure to social media (ESM) affect the perceived cognitive destination image (PCDI), then affect the destination-country image (DCI) and finally affect the overall impression perceived as destination (OIPD)

H12: Exposure to social media (ESM) affect the architecture identity (AI), then successively affect the perceived cognitive destination image (PCDI), destination country image (DCI) and overall impression perceived as destination (OIPD)

3. Method and data analysis

3.1 Research design and data collection

An online survey is conducted for investigating the overall impression that French has of on China as destination. A Likerlt-5-points scale is used in questionnaire, and a score of one to five indicates the degree from lowest to highest. Finally, 416 questionnaires valid are collected for research. The table 1 reveals a nearly equal distribution between males (51.0%) and females (49.0%). The majority of respondents fall within the age groups of 25-34 (38.9%) and 35-44 (26.2%). The largest proportion holds a Bachelor's degree (37.7%), while those with a Master's degree or higher make up 22.1% of the sample.

Table 1 Participants' basic demographic situation

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	212	51.0
	Female	204	49.0
	18-24	55	13.2

Age	25-34	162	38.9
	35-44	109	26.2
	45-54	66	15.9
	55-64	2	.5
	65+	22	5.3
Education level	Primary school or below	22	5.3
	Middle school	59	14.2
	High school	86	20.7
	Bachelor	157	37.7
	Master or above	92	22.1

3.2 Data analysis

The SEM (structural equation model) is applied for data analysis. This approach to data analysis follows established theories and seeks to assess predetermined hypotheses regarding causal relationships among observed and/or underlying variables (Mueller & Hancock, 2018).

3.2.1 Reliability and validity test

The validity and reachability test are conducted. First, according to the findings presented in Table 2, the KMO statistic value exceeds 0.5, indicating a moderate level of correlation among the variables and indicating that the data is well-suited for factor analysis(Goni et al., 2020). Additionally, the result of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is below 0.05, refuting the hypothesis of sphericity and confirming the presence of correlations among the original variables, thus further supporting the appropriateness of conducting factor analysis (S. M. A. Shah, Mohammad, Qureshi, Abbas, & Aleem, 2021).

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.968
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	7195.858
	df	465
	Sig.	.000

Then, the reliability test is conducted. Cronbach's Alpha, denoted as α, serves as an indicator of the reliability of a scale or test. Cronbach's Alpha, denoted as α, serves as an indicator of the reliability of a scale or test. When the value of α is 0.6 or higher, the reliability is considered acceptable. Additionally, the closer Cronbach's alpha is to 1.0, the greater the internal consistency of a scale (Nawi, Tambi, Samat, & Mustapha, 2020). This method is well-suited for analyzing the reliability of attitude and opinion questionnaires (or scales). As demonstrated in Table 3, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for this questionnaire was 0.950, indicating a strong level of reliability.

Table 3. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.950	31

3.2.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is employed to evaluate the validity and reliability of a measurement model, and in this case, it yielded a satisfactory model fit (Rao, Qiu, Morrison, Wei, & Zhang, 2022). To evaluate the convergent validity in confirmatory factor analysis, the combined reliability (CR) and average variance extraction (AVE) were utilized as assessment criteria. Convergent validity is considered good when each factor's CR value exceeds 0.7 and the AVE value surpasses 0.50 (Al-Okaily, Alqudah, Matar, Lutfi, & Taamneh, 2020). Additionally, a valid criterion to differentiate validity is that the square root value of each factor's AVE should be greater than the correlation coefficient between the factor and other factors. The result is satisfied as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Convergence Validity

Latent variables	Observation indicators	Factor loading	CR	AVE
ESM	ESM1	0.762	0.867	0.621
	ESM2	0.785		
	ESM3	0.809		
	ESM4	0.795		
AI	AI1	0.780	0.877	0.587
	AI2	0.753		
	AI3	0.777		
	AI4	0.747		
	AI5	0.774		
PCDI	PCDI1	0.784	0.897	0.591
	PCDI2	0.746		
	PCDI3	0.774		
	PCDI4	0.765		
	PCDI5	0.753		
	PCDI6	0.790		
PADI	PADI1	0.796	0.810	0.588
	PADI2	0.737		
	PADI3	0.766		
DCI	DCI1	0.745	0.923	0.601
	DCI2	0.763		
	DCI3	0.774		
	DCI4	0.777		
	DCI5	0.778		
	DCI6	0.788		
	DCI7	0.766		
	DCI8	0.809		

OIPD	OIPD1	0.814	0.750	0.601
	OIPD2	0.734		

Based on the results of the convergent validity presented in Table 4, the AVE values obtained from the average variance of each variable for convergent validity range from 0.587 to 0.621, all surpassing the threshold of 0.5. Moreover, the CR values range from 0.750 to 0.923, exceeding the minimum requirement of 0.7, indicating reliable convergent validity. The table demonstrating discriminant validity shown in Table 5 reveals that the absolute value of the correlation coefficient between any two factors is smaller than the square root of the respective factor's AVE. This indicates a sufficient level of differentiation between the three factors examined, thus ensuring reliable discriminant validity.

Table 5. Discriminant between validity tests

Latent variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
ESM	0.788					
AI	0.665	0.766				
PCDI	0.735	0.694	0.769			
PADI	0.692	0.685	0.721	0.767		
DCI	0.720	0.763	0.724	0.736	0.775	
OIPD	0.664	0.686	0.706	0.701	0.711	0.775

Note: The diagonal is the square root of the corresponding dimension AVE

Finally, the fitting indices presented in Table 6 demonstrate that the $\chi 2$/df, RMSEA, GFI, AGFI, NFI, TLI, and CFI meet the standard requirements according to reference standards. As a result, the model can be considered highly reliable. The model is valid according to Table 7.

Table 6. Confirmatory factor model fit metrics

Fit index	$\chi 2$/df	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI
Reference standards	<3	<0.08	>0.9	>0.85	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9
Result	0.937	0.000	0.951	0.940	0.957	1.003	1.000

Table 7. Model fit metrics

Fit index	$\chi 2$/df	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI
Reference standards	<3	<0.08	>0.9	>0.85	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9

Result	1.338	0.029	0.929	0.916	0.937	0.982	0.983

3.2.3 Direct effect

Once the SEM is established, model fitting and measurement software provide estimated values of path coefficients, standardized path coefficients, standard errors (S.E.), C.R. values, and significance P values. Generally, if the C.R. value exceeds 1.96 and the p value is less than 0.05, it indicates that the path coefficient passes the significance test within a 95% confidence interval, supporting the corresponding path hypothesis of the preset model e (Mia et al., 2022; Syamsudin et al., 2022). Conversely, if these criteria are not met, the assumption is considered untrue. The direct effect path analysis result is shown in Table 8 and Figure 1.

Table 8. Structural equation model path test (direct effect)

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	β	S.E.	C.R.	P
H1	ESM→PCDI	0.539	0.544	0.070	7.743	***
H2	ESM→PADI	0.776	0.752	0.063	12.376	***
H3	ESM→AI	0.737	0.724	0.061	12.096	***
H4	AI→PCDI	0.304	0.312	0.063	4.801	***
H5	PADI→DCI	0.285	0.302	0.064	4.469	***
H6	PCDI→DCI	0.299	0.304	0.064	4.642	***
H7	ESM→DCI	0.314	0.322	0.087	3.613	***
H8	DCI→OIPD	0.826	0.735	0.066	12.455	***

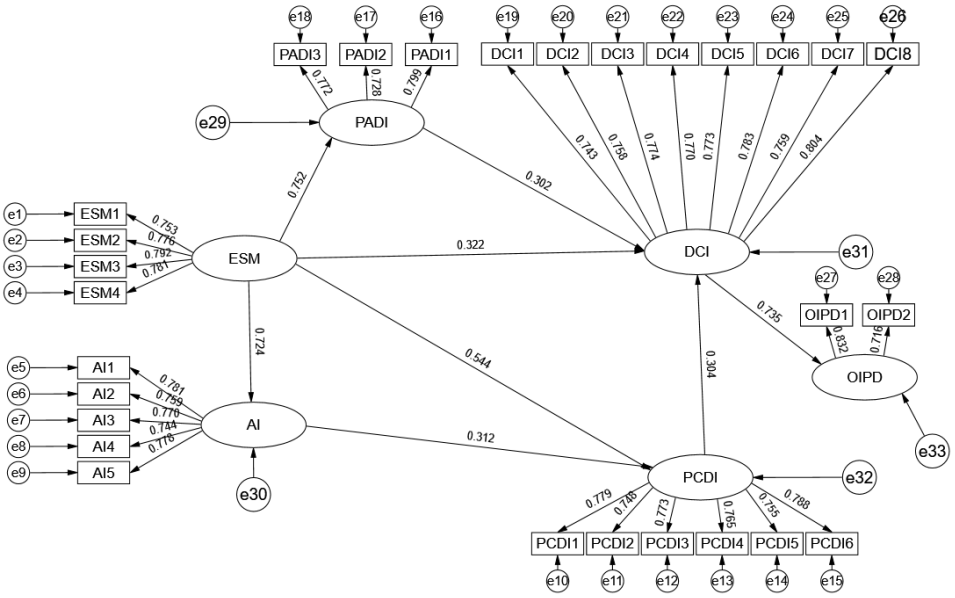

Figure 1. AMOS SPSS output of Path Diagram for the structural model

The positive effect of ESM on PCDI is significant (β=0.544, p<0.001), H1 is supported.

The positive effect of ESM on PADI is significant (β=0.752, p<0.001), H2 is supported.

The positive effect of ESM on AI is significant (β=0.724, p<0.001), H3 is supported.

The positive effect of AI on PCDI is significant (β=0.312, p<0.001), H4 is supported.

The positive effect of PADI on DCI is significant (β=0.302, p<0.001), H5 is supported.

The positive effect of PCDI on DCI is significant (β=0.304, p<0.001), H6 is supported.

The positive effect of ESM on DCI is significant (β=0.322, p<0.001), H7 is supported.

The positive effect of DCI on OIPD is significant (β=0.735, p<0.001), H8 is supported.

3.2.3 Mediation effect

Table 9 displays the findings of a mediation analysis using bootstrapping, a resampling technique utilized to estimate the sampling distribution. The objective of mediation analysis is to examine whether the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable is mediated by one or more intermediate variables.

Table 9. Mediation effect bootstrap test

Hypothesis	Mediation path	Effect size	SE	Bias-Corrected 95%CI	
H9	ESM→DCI→OIPD	0.116	0.053	0.063	0.501
H10	ESM→PADI→DCI→OIPD	0.067	0.047	0.066	0.337
H11	ESM→PCDI→DCI→OIPD	0.050	0.042	0.045	0.238
H12	ESM→AI→PCDI→DCI→OIPD	0.034	0.066	0.004	0.134

In Table 8, hypothesis represents the proposed mediated relationship between multiple variables that the researcher aims to investigate. Mediation Path indicates the direction of the proposed mediated relationship. For instance, "ESM→DCI→OIPD" suggests that the influence of ESM on OIPD is mediated by DCI.

Effect Size presents the estimated magnitude of the indirect effect through the mediator. It quantifies the strength of the relationship. S.E. provides a statistical measure of the precision of the estimate, specifically for the effect size. Bootstrapping generates a distribution of effect sizes, from which a 95% confidence interval can be derived. If this confidence interval encompasses zero, it indicates that the effect is not statistically significant. The 'Bias-Corrected 95% CI' considers any bias in the estimation of the confidence interval attributable to the sample data. Results indicates whether the hypothesis is supported or rejected based on the results. If the confidence interval does not include zero, the mediation effect is generally considered statistically significant, thereby supporting the hypothesis.

From Table 8, we can conclude that the mediation path "ESM→DCI→OIPD" had a significant effect between ESM and OIPD, with a mediation effect value of 0.116. The 95% confidence interval for this path was [0.063, 0.501], excluding zero, indicating that DCI played a significant mediating role. Therefore, Hypothesis 9 (H9) is supported.

The mediation path "ESM→PADI→DCI→OIPD" also had a significant effect, with a mediation effect value of 0.067. The 95% confidence interval for this path was [0.066, 0.337], excluding zero. This suggests that both PADI and DCI had a significant mediating role. Consequently, Hypothesis 10 (H10) is supported.

Likewise, the mediation path "ESM→PCDI→DCI→OIPD" showed a significant effect, with a mediation effect value of 0.050. The 95% confidence interval for this path was [0.045, 0.238], excluding zero. This indicates that both PCDI and DCI played a significant mediating role. Therefore, Hypothesis 11 (H11) is supported.

Lastly, the mediation path "ESM→AI→PCDI→DCI→OIPD" also demonstrated a significant effect, with a mediation effect value of 0.034. The 95% confidence interval for

this path was [0.004, 0.134], excluding zero. This suggests that AI, PCDI, and DCI had a significant mediating role in the relationship between ESM and OIPD. Hence, Hypothesis 12 (H12) is supported.

4. Conclusion and discussion

The significance of destination image has been emphasized in the field of marketing and destination development (Arefieva, Egger, & Yu, 2021; Gretzel & Collier de Mendonça, 2019; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). The influence of social media on the reputation of cities and countries is evident (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2021; Nadeau, Wardley, & Rajabi, 2021). It is particularly important to China whose destination image was challenged during pandemic (Lu & Atadil, 2021).

Using survey and SEM, this study attempts to conceptual and validate a model to illustrate the relationship and mechanism between the French people's exposure to YouTube, architecture identity, perceived affective destination image, perceived cognitive destination image, destination-country image and overall impression of China perceived as destination. The research conducted indicates that exposure to YouTube plays a crucial role in shaping various aspects related to destination image, including architecture identity, perceived cognitive destination image, the overall impression of China as a travel destination, and the perception of China as a country. Furthermore, the study reveals a chain mediation effect among these variables. Such a result confirmed the cultivation effect of YouTube on destination-country image of China, which helps to shape French's view on China as a destination. The impact of social media on destination visibility and recognition has been extensively discussed by researchers such as Bernkopf and Nixon (2019),, Lin, Liang, Xue, Pan, and Schroeder (2021), Qi and Chen (2019). Moreover, it has been established that YouTube videos play a significant role in shaping the overall image of a destination (Song et al., 2023). Thus, it is evident that YouTube and architecture-related videos serve as effective communication tools. Additionally, the influence of architecture identity on perceived cognitive destination image, destination-country image, and the overall impression of China has been substantiated. Architecture, as a visual representation of a city's history and spatial characteristics, enables residents and tourists to grasp various dimensions of its municipal identity (Campbell, 1992). However, it is important to note that the perceived image of a place is subject to constant change (J. Li & Weng, 2022). Nevertheless, architecture acts as a non-verbal form of communication, silently preserving the cultural heritage from which it originated (Roth, 2018). In addition, such a result coincides with finding of Song et al. (2023) that iconic architecture related video on YouTube impact positively not only the destination image of a specific city but also go further to the destination-country image.

5. Implication and limitation

In terms of practical implications, this research offers valuable insights for tourism destination managers and relevant cultural and tourism departments regarding the effective utilization of YouTube for tourism marketing. It provides recommendations and strategies for scenic spots to maximize their presence on YouTube. Additionally, the findings suggest that government bodies and tourism agencies should allocate more resources towards video dissemination and actively engage with YouTube users to enhance communication outcomes. As mentioned by (Yao, Li, & Song, 2022), given that YouTube is a platform driven by user-generated content, collaborating with individual online influencers is also crucial alongside official communication efforts. In today's media landscape, the combination of "video+tourism" has emerged as a new paradigm for tourism development. YouTube plays a vital role in attracting potential tourists to visit scenic spots. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct comprehensive research on the

relationship between video content and tourism. Such research aligns with the current development trend and supports the innovation of video content in tourist attractions, ultimately facilitating the integrated growth of the tourism sector and emerging media platforms. Organizations or agencies that want to improve the destination-country image may choose architecture of appropriate cities as video object for destination-country image building.

We cautiously claim the representativeness of this study. As this study only involves the French people, the results are not enough to prove that videos on YouTube have general effect cultivating people's positive perception. Secondly, this study has not conducted in-depth research on French users to understand their intentions and motivations when watching videos.

Video is important for perceived destination image and country image, however, in addition to YouTube, on Twitter, Flickr, Facebook and other social media, user-generated or professional-generated architecture photos are also valued by destination marketing organizations. In the future, these social media can be investigated through studying the iconic architecture photos with big data and deep learning technologies, so that both cognitive and affective images of these architectures can be understood. In addition, by comparing the photos of Chinese architectures shared by tourists from different countries on social media, we can also learn about tourists' perception of the destination images.

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