**Original Research Article**

**How to Enhance the Identity and WOM of Educational Tourism in Ethnic Minority Areas: An Empirical Study of the Confucian Academy in Guiyang City**

Abstract

Educational tourism is a combination of education and the tourism industry, which is beneficial for students to enter the real world and apply what they have learned. Moreover, the development of educational tourism requires a large number of tour guides and interpreters to provide more job opportunities for the adjacent areas of scenic spots. More importantly, educational tourism can be arranged to make up for the shortage of tourists in scenic spots during the off-season. However, few studies have explored how cultural learning can positively evaluate and sustainably contribute to the tourism industry. There is still a theoretical gap. The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship among the relevant factors influencing the words of mouth of educational tourism and put forward suggestions. Based on the attributes of the research topic, this paper selects the questionnaire survey method. It was based on the Confucian Academy in Guiyang City and obtained 278 valid questionnaires through questionnaire surveys. Findings have showed that there is a positive correlation among tourists' perceived value, tourist satisfaction, place dependence, place identity and word-of-mouth. Moreover, tourist satisfaction, place dependence, and place identity are important mediating factors for perceived value and word-of-mouth. Finally, the research suggests that scenic spots should set goals carefully to enhance tourists' perception of perceived value, tourist satisfaction, place dependence, and place identity.

Keywords: Ethnic minority areas; Educational tourism; Word-of-mouth; perceived value; place dependence; place identity

**I. Introduction**

Ethnic minority areas are mostly far from the coast and located in regions with many mountains. Although its economic development level is not as high as that of coastal cities, it is rich in diverse ethnic cultures and suitable for developing various tourism industries. Guizhou Province was taken as an example. Its terrain is mostly plateau and mountainous, and it is a province where multiple ethnic groups live together. Among them, there are 56 ethnic groups in the province. The indigenous ethnic groups include the Han, Miao, Buyi, Dong, Tujia, Yi, Gelao, Shui, Hui, Bai, Yao, Zhuang, She, Maonan, Manchu, Mongolian, Mulao and Qiang, totaling 18 ethnic groups. The development of ethnic tourism not only helps preserve existing culture but also benefits the sustainable development of the economy, making it a feasible direction for industrial planning.

Based on this, Guizhou has vigorously developed health and wellness tourism, red tourism and cultural tourism for wine in recent years. However, educational tourism seems to be a less promising but worthy area for promotion. For this reason, Guizhou Province has formulated the "Scoring Criteria for the First Batch of Top Ten Study Tour Bases in Guizhou Province", and selected and publicized the top ten study tour bases (Guizhou Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, 2024). Guiyang City has also issued the "Interim Measures for the Construction and Service Management of Educational Bases (Camps) for Study Tours of Primary and Secondary School Students in Guiyang City", standardizing the relevant work requirements and procedures for study Tours (Guiyang Education Bureau, 2024). These policies and regulations all demonstrate the government's emphasis and support for educational tourism.

Educational tourism, sometimes called educational trip (edu-tourism) or study tourism, is one of the forms of domestic tourism (Yen and Xiong, 2020). Its main participants are primary and secondary school students, followed by current students from universities and kindergartens, as well as tourists who conduct research and study with specific purposes. Educational tourism is the overlapping part of education and tourism (Ritchie, 2003). Meanwhile, it is process-oriented, including three key features such as tourism focusing on deliberately arranged and educational aspects, experiential learning forms, and surrounding the structure of educational plans (Pitman et al.,2010). In other words, this kind of travel is planned and targeted. It may be organized by schools or planned independently by individuals, in line with the school's curriculum planning, and designed for specific knowledge areas (Fang 2019). Meanwhile, this kind of tourism also attaches great importance to students' extracurricular learning and practical ability cultivation, such as teamwork, expression and communication, experience, etc. (Yen and Xiong, 2020).

However, even with policy support, the operation of educational tourism attractions still faces some problems in reality. For instance, educational tourism is a combination of education and tourism. It is a specialized tourism activity where one travels from their place of residence to a specific area to learn and study the cultural knowledge of other regions (Chen 2018). Few researchers have explored how this kind of cultural learning can positively evaluate and sustainably contribute to the tourism industry, and consequently, there is still a theoretical gap. The Confucian Academy Scenic Area in Guiyang City was taken and the study of Confucius' thoughts and Confucian literature were presented as its main axis. After young students have learned Confucius' thoughts here, there are few studies and discussions on what kind of identity they have towards the scenic area; and what positive evaluations about Confucius culture they have. This might not be conducive to the inheritance of Confucius culture and the sustainable development of the scenic area.

In response to the problems in the above-mentioned educational tourism industry, tourism research has proposed the concepts of place attachment and words of mouth. Place attachment is regarded as various psychological bound that tourists generate after staying in a place and interacting with the people, things and events of the scenic spot (Yen, 2019; Cheng, Chen, and Chang, 2023; Chen and Cai, 2025; Shrestha, L'Espoir Decosta, and Whitford, 2025; Can, Ekinci, and Dilek-Fidler, 2025). These links include place dependence, which refers to the dependence on the site facilities of scenic spots (Yen, 2019; Cheng, Chen, and Chang, 2023); Place identity refers to the psychological chain of identity formed after contact with scenic spots (Cheng, Chen, and Chang, 2023; Chen and Cai, 2025; Shrestha, L'Espoir Decosta, and Whitford, 2025; Can, Ekinci, and Dilek-Fidler, 2025); and psychological links, emotional links towards scenic spots (Chen and Cai, 2025; Shrestha, L'Espoir Decosta, and Whitford, 2025; Can, Ekinci, and Dilek-Fidler, 2025), etc. Generally speaking, place dependence and place identity are the more commonly used measures of place attachment. Furthermore, studies on place attachment have confirmed that it is an important antechamber of behavioral intention and loyalty (Huang, Zhang, and Hu, 2017; Can, Ekinci, and Dilek-Fidler, 2025). Therefore, it is suitable to be the antecedent of the WOM of educational tourism. However, the antecedents for the place identity and WOM of educational tourism scenic spots remain to be verified.

 Based on this, the Confucius Academy Scenic Area was taken as the research base. The research purpose of this article is to analyze the paths that affect the place identity

and words of mouth of the Confucius Academy Scenic Area, and put forward suggestions. After referring previous research (Yen, 2019; Yen and Luo, 2019; Yen, 2020; Yen and Wang, 2020; Yan, Guo, Zeng, Xu, Lu, and Yu, 2025; Yen, Tian, Xiong, Zou, and Mei, 2025; Yen, He, Shi, Xie, and Ban, 2025), perceived value, tourist satisfaction, place dependence and place identity were selected as the antecedents of word-of-mouth, and analyze the correlations among the variables.

**2. Research Methods**

2.1 Research Framework and Hypotheses

The research purpose of this article is to analyze the paths that influence the place identity and WOM of scenic spots in ethnic minority areas, and it is suitable to use quantitative research methods. The research framework of this article is shown in Figure 1, which includes research dimensions such as perceived value, tourism satisfaction, place dependence, place identity, and word-of-mouth. In terms of research hypotheses, based on relevant studies such as perceived value, tourism satisfaction, place dependence, place identity, and word-of-mouth (Qiu et al., 2024; Yen et al., 2025a; Yen et al., 2025b; Yen et al., 2025c), originally proposed Hypothesis 1 (in the interaction relationship between tourists and tourist attractions, the perceived value of tourists significantly positively affects their reputation); Hypothesis 2 (In the interaction between tourists and tourist attractions, tourists' satisfaction with their trips has a significantly positive impact on their reputation). Based on previous studies on place dependency and place identity (Yen and Wang, 2020; Yen, 2019 Yen and Luo, 2019; Yen, 2020), this study proposes Hypothesis 3 (in the interaction relationship between tourists and tourist attractions, tourists' place dependence significantly positively affects their word-of-mouth;) Hypothesis 4 (In the interaction between tourists and tourist attractions, tourists' place identity has a significantly positive impact on their reputation). According to previous studies (Yen, 2018; Yen, 2020), this paper proposes Hypothesis 5 (in the interaction relationship between tourists and tourist attractions, tourists' perceived value significantly positively affects their place identity) (Yen, 2019; Yen and Luo, 2019; Yen, 2020); Hypothesis 6 (In the interaction between tourists and tourist attractions, tourists' travel satisfaction significantly positively affects their place identity) (Yen, 2019; Yen and Luo, 2019; Yen, 2020); Hypothesis 7 (In the interaction between tourists and tourist attractions, tourists' place dependence significantly positively affects their place identity) (Yen, 2019; Yen and Luo, 2019; Yen, 2020). Based on previous studies, this study proposes Hypothesis 8 (in the interaction relationship between tourists and tourist attractions, tourists' perceived value significantly positively affects their place dependence) (Yen, 2019; Yen and Luo, 2019; Yen, 2020); Hypothesis 9 (In the interaction between tourists and tourist attractions, tourists' travel satisfaction significantly positively affects their place dependence) (Yen, 2019; Yen and Luo, 2019; Yen, 2020); and Hypothesis 10 (in the interaction relationship between tourists and tourist attractions, tourists' perceived value significantly and positively affects their tourism satisfaction) (Yen et al., 2025a; Yen et al., 2025b; Yen et al., 2025c).



Figure 1 Research Framework

2.2 Variable Definition and Measurement

In terms of the definition of research dimensions, refer to relevant studies such as perceived value, tourism satisfaction, place dependence, place identity, and word-of-mouth (Yen, 2019; Yen and Luo, 2019; Yen, 2020; Qiu et al., 2024; Yen et al., 2025a; Yen et al., 2025b; Yen et al., 2025c). Perceived value was defined as "the overall assessment by tourists visiting the Confucius Academy Scenic Area of the relationship between the time, energy, physical strength, money spent and the results obtained after the visit; Tourism satisfaction was defined as" the assessment by tourists visiting the Confucius Academy Scenic Area of the environmental landscape and the expected and actual experience of the scenic area." Place dependence was defined as "the psychological tendency of tourists visiting the Confucius Academy Scenic Area to engage in a specific activity that is suitable for residents, tourists or stakeholders." Place identity was defined as "the attitudes, values and beliefs that tourists visiting the Confucius Academy Scenic Area gain from their actual experience of the scenic area's environment." Word-of-mouth was defined as "the assessment of tourists' positive evaluations of the Confucius Academy Scenic Area and their tendency to recommend others."

About the development of measurement items, after referring to relevant literature (Yen, 2019; Yen and Luo, 2019; Yen, 2020; Qiu et al., 2024; Yen et al., 2025a; Yen et al., 2025b; Yen et al., 2025c), we proposed questions: 3 questions on perceived value, 3 questions on tourism satisfaction, 6 questions on place dependence, 6 questions on place identity, and 2 questions on word-of-mouth. The Likert 5-point scale was used for measurement. 5 indicates strong agreement and 1 indicates strong disagreement. The higher the score, the higher the degree of agreement. In addition, in terms of demographic variables, questions such as gender, age, education level, average monthly income and occupation were designed to understand the basic background of tourists. After the measurement tools were developed, this study sent the questionnaires to tourism experts and operators to confirm the way the questions were presented, the difficulty of the tourists' responses, and to seek their suggestions for revision. Secondly, this study also consulted place scholars to correct the choice of words and expressions, confirm the way the meaning is expressed, and make appropriate adjustments. Through the above steps, the scale of this study was completed.

2.3 Questionnaire survey

The main purpose of this article is to analyze the correlations among variables, and it is suitable to use the questionnaire survey method. This study solicited voluntary participation from tourists in relevant scenic spots to fill out questionnaires, mainly in the Confucian Academy Scenic Area and the Shili River Beach Scenic Area in Guiyang City, Guizhou Province. This study selected tourists to participate in the questionnaire survey through sampling. In terms of sample size, it is generally recommended that the number of samples in the initial test should be greater than the number of questions, preferably 3 to 5 times the number of questions. 80 copies should be distributed in the initial test, and all 80 valid questionnaires should be valid. When conducting the formal investigation, considering the number of questions in this study (a total of 14 questions) and subsequent analysis, a total of 300 samples were surveyed in this study. In terms of sampling methods, considering the feasibility of the study and subsequent analysis, this study adopts the quota sampling method. Based on field observations and the characteristics of relevant research samples, sampling was conducted with gender and age as the quota criteria to obtain the samples required for analysis.

In terms of the investigation methods, this study conducted a questionnaire survey through face-to-face interviews with interviewers, distributing responses on the spot. To ensure the quality of the survey, researchers conduct interviewer training before the formal investigation, enabling interviewers to be familiar with the purpose, content and methods of the questionnaire survey, and to master the coping strategies for various questions, so as to ensure that the questionnaire survey can be carried out safely and smoothly and obtain high-quality data. In addition to organizing a photo-taking record group, the researchers also went to the scene in person to participate, take photos for evidence, and ensure that the questionnaires were filled out by the tourists. The initial test was held in April 2025, and the formal survey period was from April 2025 to June 2025. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, 287 were valid, with an effective questionnaire rate of approximately 95.6%.

In terms of sample characteristics (as shown in Table 1), 55.7% were male and 44.3% were female. In terms of age, 66.2%(190 times) of the respondents were aged 18-20, 15.0%(43 times) were aged 21-25, 2.80%(8 times) were aged 25-30, 5.9%(17 times) were aged 31-40, and 4.2%(12 times) were aged 41-50. The proportion for those aged 51 to 60 was 5.2%(15 times), and for those over 60, it was 0.7%(2 times). In terms of educational attainment, 5.2%(15 times) attended junior high school, primary school or below, 12.5%(36 times) attended senior high school, 14.6%(46 times) attended junior college, and 67.6%(194 times) attended bachelor's degree or above. In terms of occupational distribution, military, police, public servants and teachers accounted for 2.8%(8 times), manufacturing accounted for 2.4%(7 times), commercial and service industries accounted for 8.4%(24 times), agriculture accounted for 3.8%(11 times), and students accounted for 70.4%(202 times). The average monthly income (RMB) of less than 3,000 yuan accounted for 75.3%(216 times), 3,001-6,000 yuan accounted for 10.5%(30 times), 6,001-8,000 yuan accounted for 9.4%(27 times), and more than 8,001 yuan accounted for 4.9%(14 times). In terms of the number of visits, 31%(89 times) were first-time visits and 69%(189 times) were repeat visits.

Table 1 Sample Characteristics

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Items | Freq. | % | Items | Freq. | % |
| Gender | Occupation |
| Male | 160 | 55.7% | Military & police | 8 | 2.8 |
| Female | 127 | 44.3% | Agriculture | 11 | 3.8 |
| Age |  |  | Others | 35 | 12.2 |
| 15~20 | 190 | 66.2 | Manufacturing | 7 | 2.4 |
| 21~25 | 43 | 15.0 | Student | 202 | 70.4 |
| 26~30 | 8 | 2.8 | Service industry | 24 | 8.4 |
| 31~40 | 17 | 5.9 | Average monthly income |
| 41~50 | 12 | 4.2 | <3000 | 216 | 75.3 |
| 51~60 | 15 | 5.2 | 3001-6000 | 30 | 10.5 |
| 60以上 | 2 | .7 | 6001-8000 | 27 | 9.4 |
| Educational Level | >8000 | 14 | 4.9 |
| Undergraduate | 194 | 67.6 | Frequent of visits |
| Junior college | 42 | 14.6 | First time | 89 | 31.0 |
| High school | 36 | 12.5 | 2 to 4 times | 162 | 56.4 |
| Primary school | 15 | 5.2 | 5 to 8 times | 21 | 7.3 |
|  |  |  | >8 times | 15 | 5.2 |

**3. Empirical Results**

3.1 The Descriptive Statistics

In terms of narrative statistics (as shown in Table 2), the average value ranges from 3.76 to 4.28, which is at an average to acceptable level, and the standard deviation ranges from 0.931 to 1.217. Furthermore, the kurtosis coefficient is less than 3 and the skewness coefficient is less than 10, indicating that the data used in this study does not violate the normal distribution (Tabachnick, Fidell and Ullman, 2007), and subsequent analysis can be conducted.

3.2 The Validity and Reliability

In terms of the validity analysis, the reference literature of the scale in this study was developed, which has a theoretical basis. It has also been reviewed by experts and researchers and has expert validity. Secondly, in this study, the maximum variation method was adopted. Through principal component analysis, the factor analysis process was covered, and the sphericity test was used to determine whether it was suitable for factor analysis. Check whether the Communalities among the questions are greater than 0.5 to verify the degree of intersection of the questions. By using the maximum variation method to rotate the axis, factors with characteristic values greater than 1 are extracted. In addition, the factor loading after the pivot was all greater than 0.7 and other processes were used to test the construct validity of the research variable items (Guadagnoli and Velicer, 1988).

The analysis results show that the Bartletts' sphericity test for the four variables is significant, meaning they are suitable for factor analysis. In terms of the validity of perceived value, tourism satisfaction, place dependence, place identity and word-of-mouth, each scale extracts one factor, which is also named in sequence as perceived value, tourism satisfaction, place dependence, place identity and word-of-mouth. After rotating the axis, the factor load of all questions was greater than 0.7. The variance extraction was 86.47% for perceived value, 87.69% for tourism satisfaction, 79.83% for place dependence, 73.62% for place identity, and 90.61% for word-of-mouth. It shows that the scale of perceived value, tourism satisfaction, place dependence, place identity and word-of-mouth used in this study has good construction validity. Finally, the reliability coefficients of perceived value, tourism satisfaction, place dependence, place identity and word-of-mouth were 0.920, 0.929, 0.949, 0.926 and 0.895 respectively, all greater than 0.7, belonging to the high reliability range (Hair et al., 2010), and the scales had good internal consistency (as shown in Table 3).

Table 2 The Descriptive Statistics

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Items | M | SD | SK | KU |
| PV1 Compared with the time, money and effort I spent, I received a good return. | 4.01 | 1.005 | -.728 | -.144 |
| PV2 The cultural festival activities of the Confucius Academy are worth my time, money and effort. | 3.87 | 1.101 | -.605 | -.553 |
| PV3 Overall, this Confucian Academy cultural festival event is a good deal. | 3.93 | 1.087 | -.740 | -.249 |
| SA1 I'm very happy to spend time participating in the activities of the Confucius Academy. | 4.03 | .989 | -.711 | -.120 |
| SA2 It's a good decision to watch the activities of the Confucius Academy. | 3.91 | 1.072 | -.597 | -.592 |
| SA3 I'm very glad that I have decided to participate in the Confucius Academy activities. | 4.00 | 1.041 | -.824 | .099 |
| PD1 XX have unique and representative meanings. | 4.28 | .931 | -1.212 | .996 |
| PD2 XX represent unique Confucian culture. | 4.19 | .971 | -.984 | .174 |
| PD3 XX represent the place Confucian culture. | 4.14 | 1.005 | -1.018 | .264 |
| PD4 XX represent historical manifestations. | 4.21 | .956 | -1.009 | .175 |
| PD5 XX represent a unique Confucian cultural atmosphere. | 4.22 | .930 | -.950 | .101 |
| PD6 XX represent a unique carnival of Confucian culture. | 4.10 | .987 | -.804 | -.209 |
| PI1 The Confucian Academy is rich in the spirit of Confucian culture. | 4.15 | .958 | -.905 | .107 |
| PI2 The Confucian Academy is regarded as a symbol of Confucian culture. | 4.17 | .966 | -1.052 | .533 |
| PI3 The Confucius Academy is of great significance to me. | 4.05 | .990 | -.809 | .066 |
| PI4 I am extremely infatuated with the Confucian Academy. | 3.76 | 1.209 | -.624 | -.611 |
| PI5 The Confucian Academy makes me feel alive. | 3.72 | 1.217 | -.647 | -.537 |
| PI6 I agree with the Confucian Academy. | 4.02 | 1.007 | -.705 | -.382 |
| WO1 I will tell others about the advantages of the Confucius Academy festival activities. | 4.03 | 1.007 | -.802 | .066 |
| WO2 I will recommend others to participate in the Confucius Academy festival activities. | 3.97 | 1.091 | -.766 | -.306 |

M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; SK: Skew; KU: Kurtosis

Table 3 The Validity and Reliability

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Items | FL | Eig. | %V | R |
| PV1 Compared with the time, money and effort I spent, I received a good return. | .945 | 2.594 | 86.476 | 0.920 |
| PV2 The cultural festival activities of the Confucius Academy are worth my time, money and effort. | .922 |  |  |  |
| PV3 Overall, this Confucian Academy cultural festival event is a good deal. | .923 |  |  |  |
| SA1 I'm very happy to spend time participating in the activities of the Confucius Academy. | .936 | 2.631 | 87.698 | 0.929 |
| SA2 It's a good decision to watch the activities of the Confucius Academy. | .930 |  |  |  |
| SA3 I'm very glad that I have decided to participate in the Confucius Academy activities. | .944 |  |  |  |
| PD1 XX have unique and representative meanings. | .890 | 4.790 | 79.832 | 0.949 |
| PD2 XX represent unique Confucian culture. | .916 |  |  |  |
| PD3 XX represent the place Confucian culture. | .876 |  |  |  |
| PD4 XX represent historical manifestations. | .875 |  |  |  |
| PD5 XX represent a unique Confucian cultural atmosphere. | .900 |  |  |  |
| PD6 XX represent a unique carnival of Confucian culture. | .902 |  |  |  |
| PI1 The Confucian Academy is rich in the spirit of Confucian culture. | .827 | 4.418 | 73.625 | 0.926 |
| PI2 The Confucian Academy is regarded as a symbol of Confucian culture. | .809 |  |  |  |
| PI3 The Confucius Academy is of great significance to me. | .899 |  |  |  |
| PI4 I am extremely infatuated with the Confucian Academy. | .880 |  |  |  |
| PI5 The Confucian Academy makes me feel alive. | .845 |  |  |  |
| PI6 I agree with the Confucian Academy. | .885 |  |  |  |
| WO1 I will tell others about the advantages of the Confucius Academy festival activities. | .952 | 1.812 | 90.617 | 0.895 |
| WO2 I will recommend others to participate in the Confucius Academy festival activities. | .952 |  |  |  |

FL: Factor Loading; Eig: Eigenvalue; %V: % Variation; R: Reliability

3.3 The Correlation Analysis

To clarify the correlations among the variables, this study employed the Pearson correlation coefficient, and the analysis results are shown in Table 4. The analysis results show that all variables are significantly positively correlated. That is to say, perceived value is positively correlated with tourism satisfaction, place dependence, place identity and word-of-mouth, with correlation coefficients of 0.896, 0.735, 0.860 and 0.906 respectively. Tourism satisfaction is positively correlated with place dependence, place identity and word-of-mouth, with correlation coefficients of 0.752, 0.866 and 0.892 respectively. Place dependence is positively correlated with place identity and word-of-mouth, with correlation coefficients of 0.828 and 0.723 respectively. Place identity is positively correlated with word-of-mouth, with a correlation coefficient of 0.844. Based on this, this study continues to conduct regression analysis.

Table 4 The Correlation Analysis

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Item | M | SD | PV | SA | PD | PI | WO |
| PV | 11.81 | 2.97 | 1 |  |  |  |  |
| SA | 11.94 | 2.91 | .896\*\* | 1 |  |  |  |
| PD | 25.14 | 5.16 | .735\*\* | .752\*\* | 1 |  |  |
| PI | 23.87 | 5.45 | .860\*\* | .866\*\* | .828\*\* | 1 |  |
| WO | 8.00 | 2.00 | .906\*\* | .892\*\* | .723\*\* | .844\*\* | 1 |

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01; M: Mean; SD: Standardized Deviations; PV: Perceived Value; SA: Tourist Satisfaction; PD: Place Dependence; PI: Place Identity; WO: Words of Mouth

3.4 The Regression Analysis

Based on the research hypothesis, this study requires a total of four model regression analyses. The first model is the impact of perceived value on tourist satisfaction; The second model is the impact of perceived value and tourist satisfaction on place dependence. The third model is the influence of perceived value, tourist satisfaction and place dependence on place identity. The fourth model is the influence of perceived value, tourist satisfaction, place dependence and place identity on word-of-mouth. The analysis results are shown in Table 5.

In Model One, the model fit is good (F value =1160, p=0.000), the VIF (coefficient of variation self-inflation) is 1(theoretical recommended value, VIF<10), and the collinearity problem is not serious. The verification results show that perceived value significantly affects tourism satisfaction (β= 0.87; t=34.0), Hypothesis 10 is statistically supported. The perceived value of the respondents can effectively predict 80.3% variation in tourist satisfaction.

 In Model Two, the model fit is good (F value =200, p=0.000), the VIF (coefficient of self-inflation of variance) is 5.00(theoretical recommended value, VIF<10), and the collinearity problem is not serious. The verification results show that the perceived value of the respondents (β=0.31; t=3.61) and tourist satisfaction (β=0.47; t=5.51) significantly and positively affects place dependency, and Hypothesis 8 and Hypothesis 9 are supported. The perceived value and tourist satisfaction of the respondents can predict a 58.5% variation in place dependence.

In Model Three, the model fit is good (F value =496, p=0.000), the VIF (coefficient of self-inflation of variance) is 2.4-5.6(theoretical recommended value, VIF<10), and the collinearity problem is not serious. The verification results show that the perceived value of the respondents (β=0.31; t=5.71), tourist satisfaction (β=0.32; (t=5.59) and place dependence (β=0.36; t=9.81) significantly and positively affects place identity, and hypotheses 5, 6 and 7 are supported. The perceived value, tourist satisfaction and place dependence of the respondents can predict 84% variation in place identity.

In Model Four, the model fit is good (F value =421, p=0.000), the VIF (coefficient of self-inflation of variance) is 3.2-6.2(theoretical recommended value, VIF<10), and the collinearity problem is not serious. The verification results show that the perceived value of the respondents (β=0.49; t=9.01) and tourist satisfaction (β=0.35; t=6.14) and place identity (β=0.12; t=2.05) significantly and positively affects word-of-mouth, and hypotheses 1, 2, and 4 are supported. The perceived value, tourist satisfaction, and place identity of the respondents could predict an 85.7% variation in word-of-mouth.

Table 5 Regression Analysis

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| IV | DV |
| SA(M1) | PD(M2) | PI(M3) | WO(M4) |
| β(t) | β(t) | β(t) | β(t) |
| PV | 0.87\*\*\*(34.00) | 0.31\*\*\*(3.61) | 0.31\*\*\*(5.71) | 0.49\*\*\*(9.01) |
| SA |  | 0.47\*\*\*(5.51) | 0.32\*\*\*(5.59) | 0.35\*\*\*(6.14) |
| PD |  |  | 0.36\*\*\*(9.81) | 0.00(0.11) |
| PI |  |  |  | 0.12\*(2.05) |
| F(p) | 1160(.000) | 200(.000) | 496(.000) | 421(.000) |
| VIF | 1 | 5.0 | 2.4-5.6 | 3.2-6.2 |
| R2 | 0.803 | 0.585 | 0.840 | 0.857 |

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, p,0.001

3.5 Discussion

It can be known from Model One that tourists' perceived value significantly affects tourism satisfaction, and the analysis results are consistent with existing studies (Yen et al., 2025a; Yen et al., 2025b; Yen et al., 2025c). The Confucian Academy Scenic Area enables tourists to perceive that the money and spirit they have invested are rewarded, and they can have a higher level of satisfaction with the scenic area than expected. This study confirms that in the context of educational tourism, if scenic spots merely aim to enhance tourist satisfaction, perceived value is a powerful anemone.

Secondly, the research found that both perceived value and tourist satisfaction significantly and positively influenced place dependency (Model Two), and the analysis results were consistent with existing studies (Yen and Wang,2020; Yen, 2019 Yen and Luo, 2019; Yen, 2020). This means that in order to make tourists develop a sense of place dependence on the Confucian Academy, scenic spots should attach importance to tourists' perceived value and their satisfaction with the trip. When tourists perceive that the returns they receive from a scenic area are significantly higher than the efforts they have made (perceived value), and their actual experience assessment is higher than expected (tourist satisfaction), they will develop a high degree of dependence on the unique meaning represented by the scenic area, the Confucian cultural connotation, and the Confucian cultural atmosphere. Accordingly, if the operational goal of a scenic area is to achieve a high degree of cultural dependence among tourists, enhancing tourists' perceived value and tourist satisfaction might be the top priority.

Furthermore, the research found that perceived value, tourist satisfaction, and place dependence all significantly and positively affect place identity (Model 3), and the analysis results are consistent with existing studies (Yen and Wang,2020; Yen, 2019 Yen and Luo, 2019; Yen, 2020). This indicates that when the gains gained by tourists from visiting scenic spots exceed the sum of all their efforts (perceived value), the actual experience of visiting the scenic spots exceeds expectations (tourist satisfaction), and they have a high perception of the unique connotations represented by the scenic spots, the cultural connotations of Confucianism, and the cultural atmosphere of Confucianism (place dependence), Their fascination and sense of identification with the Confucian cultural spirit and symbols of the scenic area will be higher. In other words, if the operational goal of a scenic area is to gain a high level of recognition from tourists, enhancing tourists' perceived value, tourist satisfaction and place satisfaction is a useful solution.

Finally, the study found that perceived value, tourism satisfaction and place identity all significantly and positively affect word-of-mouth (Model Four), and the analysis results are consistent with existing studies (Yen and Wang,2020; Yen, 2019 Yen and Luo, 2019; Yen, 2020; Yen et al., 2025a; Yen et al., 2025b; Yen et al., 2025c). This means that if scenic spots want more tourists to give positive reviews and recommend others, they should give priority to tourists' perceived value, travel satisfaction and place identity.

Furthermore, through the path map influencing the WOM of scenic spots (Figure 2), it can be found that in the path relationship between perceived value and WOM, tourist satisfaction plays an extremely important role. It not only directly enhances word-of-mouth, but also serves as an intermediary factor between perceived value and word-of-mouth. It is an important business indicator in the early stage of scenic area operation. Secondly, in the path relationship between perceived value and word-of-mouth, place dependence and place identity are also important mediating factors. Place dependence has no significant direct impact on word-of-mouth; instead, it influences it through the effect of place identity. This indicates that when the scenic area sets its operational goals, there is a sequence for the goal setting, and it needs to be set reasonably and in stages. For instance, the initial goal of operation should be set as tourist satisfaction, the medium-term goal as place dependence (making tourists feel dependent on the representativeness and cultural significance of the Confucian Academy) and place identity (identifying with Confucius and Confucian culture), and the long-term goal can be set as word-of-mouth (positive comments and recommendations).



Figure 2 The path map affecting the WOM of scenic spots

**5. Conclusions and Suggestions**

Educational tourism is a combination of education and the tourism industry, which is beneficial for students to enter the real world and apply what they have learned. Moreover, the development of educational tourism requires a large number of tour guides and interpreters to provide more job opportunities for the adjacent areas of scenic spots. More importantly, educational tourism can be arranged to make up for the shortage of tourists in scenic spots during the off-season. Based on the above analysis, this paper reaches the following conclusions:

* The perception status (average score) of the research variable by tourists is relatively high, and the difference in perception is relatively small (standard deviation is small).
* During the process of tourists' interaction with scenic spots, tourists' perceived value, tourist satisfaction and place identity have a significant and positive impact on their words of mouth; perceived value, tourist satisfaction and place dependence significantly and positively affect their place identity; the perceived value and tourist satisfaction have a significant and positive impact on place dependence; the perceived value is significant and positively affects their tourist satisfaction.
* In the context of educational tourism destinations, tourist satisfaction may be a very important mediating factor for perceived value and word-of-mouth. Place dependence and place identity are also mediating factors of perceived value and word-of-mouth.

In light of the above conclusions, this article offers the following suggestions to business operators:

* In terms of setting business goals, in the short term, the focus should be on tourtism satisfaction. Scenic spots should be committed to enhancing the perceived value of tourists. Moreover, scenic spots should be committed to identifying the projects or activities that tourists are satisfied with and dissatisfied with.
* In terms of setting medium-term goals, scenic spots should focus on enhancing place dependence and place identity. In this regard, in addition to enhancing the perceived value of tourists and enabling them to achieve a higher level of tourist satisfaction, scenic spots should also consider how to make tourists develop a stronger sense of place dependence and identification. Specifically, in terms of environmental facilities, image, as well as activity arrangements and experiences, there should be a high degree of connection with Confucius culture, and it should be conveyed through more modern facilities.
* In terms of long-term goal setting, scenic spots should focus on achieving the best word-of-mouth from tourists. As the main participants in the tourism are young people, the scenic area should strengthen the application and marketing promotion of new media and increase contact with the young group. Specifically, schools can organize essay competitions, painting competitions, photography competitions and short video competitions related to Confucianism.

In addition, this paper offers the following suggestions for future research:

* This study has investigated and analyzed the relevant factors of the WOM of the Confucian Academy Scenic Area. Future research can attempt other antecedents influencing reputation, such as tourism inertia, etc.
* Secondly, in educational tourism, the completeness of facilities and services in some tourist bases (scenic spots) varies. In terms of the influencing factors of place dependence and place identity, there may be other more suitable factors, such as the reputation, image and quality of scenic spots, etc. Future research will continue to explore and excavate.
* Finally, for the dissemination and development of Confucian culture, it may require more diverse activities and cultural and creative products. Future research can attempt to explore Confucian studies activities and cultural and creative products, and analyze the demand trends of tourists.

COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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