

Student Perceptions of Study Travel in Huizhou and Activity Optimization

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ABSTRACT

Based on questionnaire data from 193 students, this article analyzes students' perceptions of study travel activities in Huizhou, including their basic information, personal preferences, perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. The study finds that most students hold positive attitudes toward study travel in Huizhou and believe that these activities enhanced their social, service, emotional, cultural-cognitive, environmental, and functional value. At the same time, students reported relatively high satisfaction with the study-travel activities and showed strong intentions to revisit and to recommend the destination to others. Finally, the article proposes suggestions and recommendations for improving study-travel activities.

KEYWORDS

Study travel; Student perception; Huizhou culture; Satisfaction; Behavioral intention

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

With the acceleration of globalization and the arrival of the knowledge economy, educational models are undergoing unprecedented transformation. Driven by the demand for twenty-first-century skills, traditional classroom education can no longer fully meet the needs of students' holistic development. Experiential learning theory emphasizes that knowledge is generated through the transformation of direct experience, which provides an important theoretical basis for study tours as an extension of classroom learning^[1]. Educators and policymakers have therefore begun to seek new educational models capable of cultivating students' innovation, practical ability, critical thinking, and intercultural communication competence. Against this background, study travel, as an emerging educational model, has attracted extensive attention and developed rapidly across the world. Increasingly valued by educational authorities and schools, study travel combines tourism and education and aims to improve students' comprehensive capabilities through practical activities. Because of its distinctive culture and natural landscape, the Huizhou region has become a popular destination for study travel.

1.2 Research Significance

Study travel is an important innovative practice in educational reform^[1]. It breaks through the limitations of traditional education by extending learning from the classroom to social and natural environments. The implementation of this educational model helps students acquire knowledge through practice and develop capabilities through experience, thus realizing the unity of knowledge and action^[2]. Previous studies on travel-based learning have also suggested that travel experiences can generate educational benefits by broadening learners' horizons, enriching social experience, and promoting personal growth^[3]. With the deepening of quality-oriented education, study travel has become an effective way to cultivate students' comprehensive capabilities. It can enhance not only students' knowledge levels but also their practical abilities, innovative spirit, and sense of social responsibility. By analyzing students' perceptions of study travel in Huizhou, this study aims to understand students' needs and expectations, provide a basis for optimizing study-travel activities, and further improve the educational effectiveness and satisfaction associated with such activities^[2]. Research on study travel is of substantial significance. It concerns not only educational reform and development, but also cultural inheritance and innovation, students' all-round development, the transformation and upgrading of the tourism industry, the construction of social harmony, and the deepening of international exchange. For these reasons, the study of study travel has important theoretical and practical value and deserves broad attention and in-depth discussion from the fields of education and tourism as well as from society more generally^[4].

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

This article seeks to answer the following questions: How do students perceive study-travel activities in Huizhou? What are students' levels of satisfaction and their behavioral intentions? Based on student perception, how can study-travel activities in Huizhou be improved?

2 The Concept, Characteristics, and Domestic and International Development of Study Travel

Study travel originated from the combination of "inquiry-based learning" and "travel experience"^[1]. It is an educational model that integrates learning and travel. Under this model, students leave the traditional classroom

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environment under the guidance and organization of teachers and learn in outdoor settings or specific educational sites, acquiring knowledge, cultivating abilities, and improving their overall quality through first-hand experience and practice^[2]. Study travel emphasizes the unity of learning and practice and seeks to achieve educational objectives through the vehicle of travel. It is an activity that combines tourism and education and aims to enhance students' knowledge and skills through practical activities. Its major characteristics include experientiality, educational value, and interactivity^[1]. In international literature, similar practices are often discussed under the concepts of educational tourism, field trips, and experiential learning, all of which emphasize learning through direct observation, participation, and reflection^{[1][3][5]}.

As a mode of learning that combines education and tourism, study travel has developed rapidly across the world. In China, the study-travel industry has shown a marked growth trend in recent years, and market size has continued to expand. According to data from the China Research Puhua Research Institute, the market size of China's study-tour industry reached RMB 146.9 billion in 2023. It was projected to expand further to RMB 179.1 billion in 2024, representing year-on-year growth of 21.9%. The Chinese government has continuously increased its support for study travel. Eleven departments, including the Ministry of Education, jointly issued policy opinions promoting study travel for primary and secondary school students, emphasizing its importance in fostering virtue and cultivating talent, and proposing specific work objectives and basic principles^[4].

At the international level, study travel has developed for many years in developed countries and regions such as the United States, Europe, Japan, and Republic of Korea, where it is regarded as an important component of adolescents' education and growth. In these countries, study travel is often referred to as educational tourism and has already developed relatively mature models. Camp education in the United States, for example, has a history of more than 150 years, and the sector shows five major trends: the coexistence of traditional and innovative models; a developmental path from interest and play to skill learning and then to quality-development platforms; emphasis on safety management and staff training; preservation of camp characteristics and camp culture; and strong attention to cooperation with schools.

The development of the global study-travel market is regionally uneven. In developed countries and regions such as Europe, the United States, and Japan, study travel is already relatively mature, and a number of leading study-travel organizations have emerged. In emerging economies, however, study travel still faces such problems as unclear boundaries, confusing standards, and vague objectives. Data show that the global study-travel market expanded rapidly through 2019 and earlier. Because repeated waves of the global pandemic affected tourism and travel, the global study-travel market fell to US\$17.9 billion in 2020. With the gradual recovery of the market and the tourism industry, the size of the global study-travel market rebounded modestly, reaching approximately US\$41.5 billion by 2022^[4].

Overall, both domestically and internationally, study travel is regarded as an important educational means that helps cultivate students' comprehensive qualities and practical abilities. With policy support, growing market demand, and improving industry services, the study-travel sector demonstrates broad development prospects worldwide.

3 The Influence of Student Perceptions on Study Travel

Student perception is an important factor influencing satisfaction with study travel and behavioral intention^[4]. Students' perceptions include their cognitive evaluations of activity value, emotional relationships, cultural experience, and related dimensions. Tourism studies have shown that perceived value and experience quality are important antecedents of satisfaction and subsequent behavioral intentions, such as recommendation and revisit intention^{[6][7]}.

Study travel usually involves teamwork, and while completing tasks and overcoming challenges together, students can strengthen their sense of belonging to the collective and their team spirit^{[1][6]}. During study travel, students may take on different roles and responsibilities, and these role experiences help them understand the importance of teamwork and enhance team awareness. By overcoming difficulties and completing tasks during study travel, students can experience the joy of success and thereby improve themselves. Study travel also provides opportunities for communication with people from different cultural backgrounds, which helps cultivate students' empathy and cross-cultural understanding. Through interaction with local residents, students can better understand different lifestyles and values and enhance their sense of social responsibility. The close cooperation and shared living involved in study travel help strengthen emotional ties between students and teachers, creating deeper trust and respect^[4,6]. Students and their peers also share challenges and enjoyment, and these shared experiences can deepen friendship. Study travel often takes place in natural environments, which help students release stress and experience peace and relaxation. Recreational and leisure activities during study travel, such as games and evening events, provide students with opportunities for emotional release and also help alleviate academic pressure. Through first-hand experience and learning about local culture, students can strengthen their identity with and pride in their own national culture, while visits to historical relics and cultural sites help them establish links with history and enhance cultural confidence. By providing rich emotional experiences, study travel contributes to students' all-round development at emotional, psychological, and social levels. Educators and organizers should therefore attach importance to these emotional influences and fully consider how to maximize such positive emotional effects when designing study-travel activities.

4 Huizhou Culture and Study Travel

Huizhou culture is an important component of traditional Chinese culture and is renowned for its profound historical heritage, distinctive geographical environment, and rich cultural landscape. Located in southern Anhui Province, the

Huizhou region possesses such cultural features as Huizhou-style architecture, Huizhou merchant culture, Huiju opera, Huizhou cuisine, and the Xin'an painting school. Integrating Huizhou culture into study travel can provide students with abundant learning resources while also promoting the inheritance and development of local culture. From the perspective of informal learning, cultural sites, museums, and heritage spaces provide learners with situated experiences in which personal, social, and physical contexts jointly shape learning outcomes^[8].

By embedding Huizhou culture in study-travel activities, students can not only improve their knowledge and skills but also receive emotional and aesthetic enrichment, thereby strengthening their identification with and pride in traditional culture. At the same time, this integration helps promote the inheritance and development of Huizhou culture and injects new vitality into the local economy and cultural tourism industry^{[6][7][8]}.

5 Research Methods

5.1 Research Design

This study uses a questionnaire survey method to investigate students who participated in study travel in Huizhou and to collect and analyze relevant data.

5.2 Data Collection

A total of 193 student responses were collected through the questionnaire survey. The data included basic information, personal preferences, perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intention.

6 Analysis of Survey Results

6.1 Analysis of Basic Information

6.1.1 Grade Distribution

The survey shows that the students who participated in study travel were mainly from Grade 7, accounting for 91.71% of the sample, while students from the Qingchuang Class accounted for 8.29%.

6.1.2 Gender Ratio

Male students accounted for 41.97% of the sample, and female students accounted for 58.03%.

6.1.3 Frequency of Participation in Study-Travel Activities

Most students participated in study-travel activities once per year, accounting for 58.55% of the sample, followed by those who participated zero times, accounting for 21.76%.

6.2 Survey of Personal Preferences

6.2.1 Preferences for Experiential Activities

Students' most preferred experiential activities included the commercial experience on Tunxi Old Street, tours of the Xin'an River Landscape Gallery, and Huizhou-style cooking, among others.

6.2.2 Preferences for Product Types

Students' preferred product types included handcraft experiences, nature exploration, historical and cultural experiences, and agricultural experiences.

6.3 Measurement of Perceived Value

6.3.1 Social Value

Most students believed that study-travel activities strengthened their relationships with classmates and teachers and increased their popularity among friends. This indicates that study travel created opportunities for peer cooperation, teacher-student interaction, and shared experience, thereby enhancing students' perceived social value.

6.3.2 Service Value

Students generally believed that safety and order during the activities were effectively guaranteed, that explanations were clear, and that study-travel instructors provided appropriate services. These results suggest that service quality, including safety management, interpretation, and instructor support, was an important factor contributing to students' positive evaluation of the Huizhou study-travel program.

6.3.3 Emotional Value

Students indicated that the study-travel activities helped them forget their usual worries and academic pressure and allowed them to spend enjoyable time with their class group. This shows that study travel provided positive emotional value by offering relaxation, novelty, collective enjoyment, and a temporary release from routine academic stress^[3].

6.3.4 Cultural-Cognitive Value

Students believed that Huizhou possesses broad and profound cultural heritage and that this study-travel activity enhanced their understanding and knowledge of Huizhou culture. This finding is consistent with research on culturally

enriching field trips, which indicates that exposure to cultural institutions and heritage resources can enhance students' interest, understanding, and broader educational outcomes^[9].

Huizhou is the birthplace of Huizhou culture and has a long history and deep cultural accumulation. By visiting historical sites such as the ancient city of Huizhou and the Tangyue Memorial Archways, students can gain an in-depth understanding of the historical changes, cultural inheritance, and social landscape of the Huizhou region. Huizhou-style architecture is a treasure of classical Chinese architectural culture. By personally visiting World Cultural Heritage sites such as Hongcun, students can observe the geographical characteristics of village layouts and learn architectural knowledge such as plan and spatial treatment and the integrated use of carving arts. Huizhou is also the place of origin of Xuan paper, Hui inksticks, and She inkstones. Through on-site investigation of the development and production processes of these "Four Treasures of the Study," students can reflect on effective ways of transmitting traditional culture.

Huizhou is the birthplace of classical Chinese landscape ink painting. By sketching landscape paintings in places such as Hongcun, students can improve both their aesthetic appreciation and artistic skills. Collective activities during study travel can also cultivate students' teamwork and leadership abilities. Through deeper understanding of Huizhou culture, students can reflect on their own values and beliefs and strengthen self-awareness and cultural confidence.

Study travel in Huizhou not only enriches students' academic knowledge but also lays a solid foundation for their development into citizens with global vision and cultural sensitivity.

6.4 Measurement of Satisfaction

6.4.1 Satisfaction with the Study-Travel Experience

Most students were satisfied with their study-travel experience, accounting for 65.28%.

6.4.2 Satisfaction with the Study-Travel Destination

Students were satisfied with Huizhou as a study-travel destination, accounting for 70.47%.

6.4.3 Satisfaction with the Activity Experience

Students were satisfied with the experience of study-travel activities, accounting for 68.91%.

6.4.4 Satisfaction with Accommodation and Catering

Students were satisfied with accommodation and catering during study travel, accounting for 58.03%.

6.4.5 Satisfaction with Organization and Services

Students were satisfied with the organization and services of study travel, accounting for 70.98%.

6.5 Measurement of Behavioral Intention

In tourism research, satisfaction is commonly regarded as a key predictor of positive behavioral intentions, including willingness to recommend and revisit^{[6][7]}.

6.5.1 Willingness to Share the Study-Travel Activity

Most students were willing to share the study-travel activity with family and friends, accounting for 71.5%.

6.5.2 Willingness to Recommend the Destination

Students were willing to recommend Huizhou to others, accounting for 70.47%.

6.5.3 Willingness to Revisit the Destination

Students indicated that, given the opportunity, they would be willing to visit Huizhou again, accounting for 67.35%.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Research Conclusions

Students generally held positive attitudes toward study travel in Huizhou. The survey results indicate that the program enhanced students' perceived social, service, emotional, cultural-cognitive, environmental, and functional value. Students also reported relatively high satisfaction, especially with the destination, activity experience, organization, and services. Their willingness to share, recommend, and revisit further suggests that the Huizhou study-travel program generated positive behavioral intentions. Overall, Huizhou's historical heritage, cultural landscapes, traditional architecture, local customs, and natural environment provide rich resources for educational tourism. The findings show that integrating regional culture with experiential learning can help students broaden their horizons, strengthen cultural understanding, and improve their overall study-travel experience. Therefore, future activity design should focus on improving curriculum depth, service quality, interactive experience, and feedback mechanisms.

7.2 Recommendations for Improving Study-Travel Activities

7.2.1 Curriculum Design and Content Deepening

More diversified and personalized study-travel curricula should be designed in light of students' interests and learning needs. Cooperation with experts in local culture, history, art, and related fields should also be strengthened in order to

provide more in-depth explanation and guidance. In addition, more interactive and experiential learning components should be incorporated, such as simulated Huizhou merchant business operations and participation in traditional handicraft production.

7.2.2 Activity Implementation and Innovation

Modern technologies such as AR and VR should be used to enhance the interest and interactivity of study-travel activities. At the same time, project-based learning should be introduced so that students can complete specific project tasks during study travel and thereby improve their practical abilities^{[2][3]}. Themed study-travel activities, such as Huizhou culture festivals and workshops on Huizhou-style architecture, should also be organized regularly to increase the attractiveness of the activities.

7.2.3 Safety Assurance and Risk Management

Detailed safety plans should be developed, including medical first aid and emergency evacuation, and regular drills should be carried out. Accident insurance should be purchased for every participating student so that timely assistance can be provided in the event of an accident. Safety education should also be strengthened beginning with the students themselves, thereby improving their awareness and ability in self-protection^{[6][7]}.

7.2.4 Outcome Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms

An evaluation system for study-travel effectiveness should be established, including student satisfaction surveys and the presentation of learning outcomes. A feedback mechanism should be created to encourage students, parents, and teachers to offer opinions and suggestions, thereby continuously optimizing study-travel activities. Reports on study-travel activities should be published regularly to summarize experience and lessons learned and to provide reference for future activities.

7.2.5 Cross-Cultural Exchange and Cooperation

Cooperative relationships should be established with other study-travel institutions at home and abroad in order to carry out international study-travel projects and broaden students' international horizons. Foreign teachers or experts should be introduced to provide students with study-travel experiences from cross-cultural perspectives. Students should also be encouraged to participate in international study-travel exchange activities, such as overseas study travel and international student mutual visits.

7.2.6 Resource Integration and Sharing

Regional study-travel resources, such as museums, cultural heritage sites, and educational institutions, should be integrated into a study-travel resource network. A sharing platform for study-travel resources should be established to provide information on study-travel activities, teaching resources, and experience sharing. Schools should be encouraged to share study-travel resources with one another so as to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

7.2.7 Publicity, Promotion, and Brand Building

Publicity and promotion for study-travel activities should be strengthened through channels such as social media and education expos in order to improve their visibility. Study-travel brands, such as a "Journey of Exploring Huizhou Culture," should be developed to enhance brand influence. Exhibitions of study-travel outcomes should also be held regularly to showcase students' achievements and increase social recognition of study-travel activities.

Through the implementation of the above recommendations, the quality of study-travel activities can be effectively improved, students' sense of participation and gain can be strengthened, and the sustainable development of study-travel activities can be promoted.

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