

Using Landscape Drawings to Explore Destination Images

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This article is an exploratory study employing a drawing-based qualitative research method called landscape image sketching technique (LIST) to explore people's destination images. This method involves participants sketching symbolic scenes to express their perceptions of specific objects. In contrast to previous drawing-based studies, the LIST employs a four-aspect landscape perceptual model to interpret people's images and discern their values and interests. Using rural tourism in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China, as a case study, we collected image sketches from 166 local college juniors, shedding light on their perceptions of rural destinations. The LIST proved instrumental in understanding the functional characteristics of Guangxi's rural destinations and uncovering the psychological experiences anticipated by the respondents. The paper discusses the prospects and limitations of applying the LIST in destination image studies.

Keywords: drawing, destination image, rural tourism, landscape image sketching technique



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Introduction

Destination image generally refers to people's comprehensive beliefs, impressions, and knowledge regarding a particular travel destination. Its development is influenced by factors such as tourist resources, facilities, products, service quality, and other destination-related elements (Crompton, 1979; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Martin & Rodriguez, 2008; Lopes, 2011). The exploration of destination image has consistently been a focal point in tourism academia, with many studies suggesting a close correlation between destination image and tourists' satisfaction and behaviour (Chiu & Ananzeh, 2012; Janchai et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2023). However, as an image is intangible, abstract, and vague, researchers often struggle to precisely comprehend people's complex perceptions of travel destinations (Mazanec, 2009; Kock et al., 2016; Virdee, 2019).

Tourism scholars have constantly been trying to develop different methods to help understand destination images (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; 1993; Ryan & Cave, 2005; Yusof, 2014; Arabadzhyan et al., 2021), and visual research has emerged as a promising approach for this purpose (Fairweather & Swaffield, 2001; Hunter & Suh, 2007; Garrod, 2009; Rose, 2014; Kuhzady & Ghasemi, 2019; Seraphin & Green, 2019; Lobinger & Mele, 2021). Matteucci and Önder (2018) highlight drawing, a form of graphic representation using lines to depict an object, as a potential research method. While current visual studies primarily focus on analysing photographic materials, they conducted a questionnaire survey using drawings to explore images of Vienna. Although they captured tangible and affective symbolic dimensions of Vienna's image, the study fell short of scrutinizing the specific ideas and interests expressed by the respondents. Interpreting

the values conveyed in these image drawings is crucial, as they may provide insights into people's interests regarding the given place, including motivations and preferences.

Based on the above background, this study introduces a qualitative research method called the Landscape Image Sketching Technique (LIST) to explore the interests and values reflected in people's image drawings. As a pilot study, the research focuses on rural tourism, inviting 166 potential visitors from the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China, to express their perceptions of local rural destinations through landscape drawings. To assess the utility of the LIST, this paper examines three key questions in the context of Guangxi's case study: How effective is the LIST in capturing destination images? What unique insights can the LIST provide compared to previous drawing-based methods? What potential does the LIST hold for future tourism studies? Before presenting the findings, the paper reviews the literature on destination image measurement methods and illustrates the function and applicability of the LIST for examining destination images.

Literature Review

Components of Destination Image

Scholars generally consider destination image a multidimensional construct comprising two major components: cognitive and affective. The cognitive component involves perception and concerns beliefs or knowledge about a place. It relates to the tourist destination's attributes, including tangible resources (e.g. climate and infrastructures) and psychological attraction (e.g. safety and friendliness). The affective part refers to visitors' feelings and emotions (e.g. relaxing and safe) toward the destination (Gartner, 1993; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Martin & Rodriguez, 2008). Echtner and Ritchie (1991; 1993) propose a classical three-continuum conceptual framework (attribute-holistic, functional-psychological, and common-unique) to summarize all components of the destination image. First, they envision the destination image as having two main components: attribute-based and holistic. On the attribute side, there are various perceptions of the individual character-

istics of the destination, ranging from functional (e.g. climate and infrastructures) to psychological (e.g. safety and friendliness). On the holistic side, the functional part consists of the mental picture of the destination's physical features (e.g. wooded and mountainous), while the psychological impression could be described as the atmosphere or mood of the place (e.g. relaxing and safe). Then, they point out another dimension of the destination image: the 'common-unique' continuum. They suggest that destination images can range from those perceptions based on 'common' functional and psychological traits to those based on more 'unique' features, events, or feelings. Examples of 'unique' features (tangible traits) are as follows: India may evoke an image of the Taj Mahal and Brazil of the Amazon Jungle. As for the 'unique' feelings (psychological traits), Paris may be perceived as romantic, and Mexico as slow-paced. This model provides scholars with a reference when exploring destination images (Currie, 2020; Alarcón-Urbistondo et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021).

Approaches to Measuring Destination Image

Since the destination image construct is multidimensional, scholars seek to operationalize each dimension to comprehensively understand people's perceptions of travel destinations. Currently, there are two basic approaches to exploring destination images: structured and unstructured techniques (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; 1993). Structured approaches allow people to measure attribute-based dimensions. The researcher first designs the specific items and scoring methods for image evaluation, such as the Likert-type scale and then asks respondents to complete the questionnaire as required (Jenkins, 1999). Tourism scholars (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Hui & Wan, 2003; Lin et al., 2006) usually determine their image evaluation items based on the characteristics of different travel destinations and combine them with prior papers' attribute lists. For example, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) sorted out a 35-attribute list in their previous study. Since structured approaches can hardly allow people to describe their feelings or unique impressions of a destination, researchers devise an unstructured approach in which the image attributes are not specified

(Yusof, 2014). Unstructured methods focus on exploring tourists' unique aspects of a destination through the three open-ended questions developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993). The technique asks respondents to: (1) introduce their overall impressions of a destination, (2) describe the atmosphere or mood that they would like to experience when visiting a place, and (3) determine the distinctive or unique attributes of the travel spot. Researchers often combine structured and unstructured techniques to comprehensively interpret the destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Grosspietch, 2006; Martin & Rodriguez, 2008).

Regarding data collection, scholars usually analyse the textual description to interpret people's destination images (Jenkins, 1999; Matteucci & Önder, 2018; Yusof, 2014). However, since image is abstract and intangible, verbal-based narratives are sometimes vague and incomplete. Virdee (2019) notes that word descriptions often fail to be fully understood by destination marketers because of the ambiguity of language expression (e.g. 'comfort' or 'relaxing' are vague when communicated visually). Pavesi et al. (2016) suggest that since people's images always result from both their conscious and unconscious reactions to stimuli, researchers need more tools to explore the unconscious processes of human cognition. Visual research has proven to be a potential approach to breaking through the limitations of word-based studies, and an increasing number of scholars have tried to combine visual materials (e.g. photos and videos) to comprehensively understand people's destination images (Fairweather & Swaffield, 2001; Hunter, 2011; Prebensen, 2007; Garrod, 2009; Kuhzady & Ghasemi, 2019; Xiao et al., 2022).

Drawing as a Potential Approach

Although visual research has become a popular topic in tourism academia, few scholars have focused on drawing-based methods. Rose (2012; 2014) indicates that photographic materials have dominated visual research methods, with photographs being the primary means of visually capturing and analysing destination images. Tversky (1999) points out that the key difference between paintings and other realistic materials (e.g. videos and photos) is that drawings allow

for a deeper understanding of how people conceive places, conveying symbolic meaning rather than simply reproducing realism. In drawings, elements of reality can be distorted, added, or ignored, reflecting the subjective nature of perception. Using drawing-based methods presents numerous unique advantages. It has the potential to reveal a more comprehensive image of destinations (MacKay & Couldwell, 2004) and can uncover people's inner thoughts and unconscious thinking (Zaltman & Zaltman, 2008). Additionally, drawing allows time for reflection, facilitating a fuller depiction of events and places (Literat, 2013). Furthermore, this method has the capacity to provide a cross-cultural understanding of a tourist's experiences (Bagnoli, 2009). However, few relevant research cases are found within tourism literature (Matteucci & Önder, 2018; Virdee, 2019).

Son (2005) employed sketch maps to identify people's images of Sydney and Melbourne, indicating that mapping was valuable in understanding people's spatial orientation within a tourist destination. Sketch maps, however, differ significantly from drawings. While sketch maps focus on interpreting people's spatial knowledge and representations of a place—exploring how individuals geographically and topographically experience destinations (Young, 1999)—drawings aim to capture a broader, more subjective perception of a place, reflecting the metaphorical and emotional meanings attached to the destination. Hunter and Suh (2007) combined drawings to explore the destination images of Jeju Island. In their study, the image drawings were closer to portraits, with the drawing object being the island's standing stones. Their findings indicated that applying visual methods not only helped build confidence in their research hypotheses but also provided valuable insights into the distinct perceptions of urban and provincial visitors. The use of drawings allowed them to uncover deeper symbolic and emotional aspects of destination images that may have been missed through more conventional research methods.

Matteucci and Önder (2018) used more detailed drawings to explore destination images by asking respondents to create representative images of Vienna. Similarly, Köstinger and Matteucci (2022) conducted

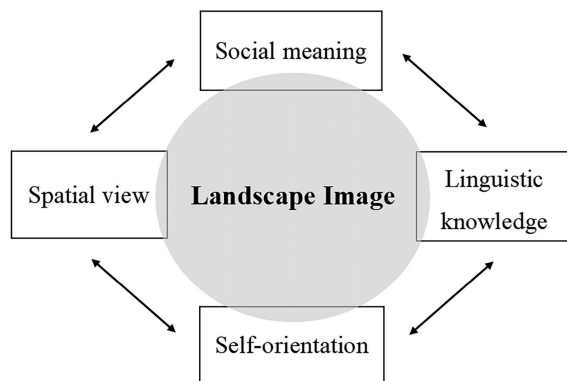


Figure 1 Diagram of Landscape Image Formation

another drawing study to investigate people's perceptions of Singapore. These studies highlighted the differences in destination image representations between visitors and non-visitors. However, as Matteucci and Önder (2018, p. 17) noted, 'By relying on content analysis and compositional interpretation, our study focused primarily on depictions of Vienna and the emotive impacts of these images.' Their research was less concerned with interpreting the ideas and values expressed in the image drawings. The values conveyed by respondents in their drawings, however, are significant, as they offer insights into preferences regarding travel destinations. To complement this analysis, we introduce another drawing-based qualitative approach, Landscape Image Sketching Technique (LIST), which aims to delve deeper into tourists' values and interests.

Landscape Image Sketching Technique

The LIST originated in the field of landscape research. Ueda et al. (2012) suggested that people typically associate a given place with various keywords, recalling their experiences and knowledge, and landscape drawings can incorporate many unrelated keywords in a symbolic picture via visualization. They developed a qualitative approach, the LIST, to help externalize people's abstract cognition of local forests. Later, the method was expanded to investigate square images (Kohori & Furuya, 2017) and home garden images (Mao et al., 2020). During an image survey, the LIST

typically prompts individuals to respond to questions such as, 'What landscape comes to mind when you hear "xxx"?' Respondents are then required to convey their imaginations through symbolic scene sketches. The method is similar to Echtner and Ritchie's (1993) open-ended technique, aiming to capture people's overall perceptions of a given place.

The LIST interprets people's image drawings using a four-aspect landscape image formation model called *Fukei* theory: linguistic knowledge, spatial view, self-orientation, and social meaning (Ueda et al., 2012). This model builds on the perspectives of Lynch (1960) and Nakamura (1982) regarding environmental image perception. Lynch (1960) identifies three components of an environmental image: identity (the object's uniqueness), structure (the spatial relationships between the observer and surrounding objects), and meaning (the object's practical or emotional significance to the observer). Nakamura (1982, pp. 55–56) expands on this, suggesting that the landscape image is a subset of Lynch's (1960) environmental image, perceived from a specific viewpoint that provides self-orientation within the surroundings. Nakamura (1982) outlines five elements of landscape image components: view (the visible spatial landscape), knowledge (representation through linguistic elements), orientation (the viewer's position in the environment), place-network ('public image' shared within a social group), and generation (temporal changes or evolution of the landscape). Ueda et al. (2012) synthesized these perspectives into their *Fukei* theory model.

Referring to Figure 1, assuming that an observer is now generating a landscape image of a place, we may state the following: first, the image will consist of semiotic (linguistic knowledge—corresponds to Lynch's 'identity' and Nakamura's 'knowledge') and spatial aspects (spatial view—corresponds to Lynch's 'structure' and Nakamura's 'view'). Moreover, the image cannot be separated from the observer's viewpoint. The observer's standpoint shows the person-environment relationship between the landscape elements and the viewer (self-orientation—corresponds to Nakamura's 'orientation'). Then, the landscape image bridges communication between the individual and collective; in the group, individuals share their images of the given desti-

nation and form a collective consciousness (social meaning—corresponds to Nakamura's 'place-network'). In turn, group cognition will affect the individual's image of the place through various media (e.g. video, books, and chats). The generation of the individual landscape image and its communicative changing process in the group reflect the 'generation' characteristic proposed by Nakamura. The landscape image is central to the square model and comprises all elements. Through image sketching and the above four-aspect visual analysis, researchers can understand people's shared values for a given object/place and observe how social recognition affects individual perceptions.

The LIST as a Complement to Existing Drawing Research

Although the LIST was not specifically developed for tourism research, its theoretical framework, as outlined by Ueda et al. (2012), conceptualizes landscapes as experiences that combine visible elements (objective scene components) with invisible structures (subjective emotions or personal memories triggered by the scenes). This aligns with Gunn's (1972) perspective on tourism landscapes in *Vacationscape*, where he argues that tourism landscapes are not merely physical spaces but also reflections of tourists' psychological needs and emotional attachments. In this sense, Ueda et al.'s (2012) definition and understanding of 'landscape' in developing the LIST are equally applicable to the concept of 'tourism landscape' within the field of tourism studies. Terkenli et al. (2021) suggest that all types of tourism landscapes—whether grand or modest—have the potential to attract different visitors. These landscapes offer varied experiences, such as tranquillity, excitement, awe, inspiration, and a sense of belonging. Their perspective highlights the symbolic role of landscapes in expressing tourists' emotional connections and psychological needs. Thus, while landscape imagery may not encompass the entirety of a destination image, landscape image surveys can provide valuable insights into tourists' expectations and emotional needs—what elements appear in their sketches (cognitive aspect) and what emotional or psychological meanings these elements convey (affective connections).

Based on the above discussion, the LIST is expected to complement aspects of visual research that previous image drawing studies (Matteucci & Önder, 2018; Köstinger & Matteucci, 2022) have not addressed. While their drawing analysis focuses on identifying elements within objective images and the emotions they convey, the LIST offers a fresh perspective by interpreting image drawings as landscape experiences and emphasizing the dynamic process of image creation. By examining how participants organize their fictional worlds—what visual elements they choose, how they arrange them, and the symbolic meanings they embody—the LIST delves deeper into the psychological and emotional dimensions of destination imagery, opening new possibilities for analysing the interests and values reflected in people's image drawings.

Methodology

Case Study and Research Design

Our research focuses on rural tourism in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China, as the subject of study. The primary aim is to assess the effectiveness of the LIST in exploring destination images in this context. Rural tourism generally refers to the activities of tourists staying, learning, and experiencing in and around the countryside (Gilbert & Tung, 1990; Reichel et al., 2000). China's rural tourism has become larger scale since the 1990s (e.g. the number of visitors received by the rural tourism industry in 2019 reached 3 billion) (Zhu & Cao, 2021). Although it is flourishing rapidly, there are also many failed business cases (Peng, 2016). The situation in Guangxi is such an example. As more than 80% of Guangxi's tourist resources are in suburban villages and mountainous areas, the region enjoys great potential for developing rural tourism (e.g. characteristic landscapes and diverse minority cultures). However, due to the lack of a complete understanding of people's travel needs, tourist operators often fail to make wise marketing decisions, even destroying the original rural environment (Lan, 2011; Liang, 2011). Tourism marketing researchers point out that operators must determine people's travel preferences and build strong brand images to maintain a competitive edge (Mansfeld, 1992;

Bigne et al., 2001). Pearce (1988, p. 163) notes that while the individual's mental picture of a destination may be somewhat unique, there will be a common mental picture (a 'stereotype' image) of that place in the group. Therefore, conducting an image survey can help understanding of tourists' collective ideas about rural destinations, providing marketing-oriented implications for Guangxi's tourism operators. The case study can also provide a methodological reference for tourist marketing analysis in similar regions.

Referring to Ueda et al.'s (2012) research, we designed our LIST survey as follows: Suppose that today is a holiday and you plan to visit some rural destination in Guangxi. What kind of scenery do you expect to see there? Make imagination within three minutes and complete the questions below:

Q1: *What are the scenic elements in your landscape for Guangxi's rural destination?*

Q2: *Draw a landscape sketch in black and white to show your imagination.*

Q3: *Briefly introduce your drawing: Why did you choose such a picture?*

Data Sampling

We administered questionnaires to juniors from Guangxi Science and Technology Normal University. The university is located in Laibin, Guangxi, a city whose suburban areas have many emerging rural resorts. Since the juniors have lived in the city for several years and most of them are Guangxi's permanent residents, we assumed that they would be familiar with the issue of interest in this research (Guangxi's rural tourism). Tourism scholars often use student samples to conduct destination image studies, seeing them as future tourists (Crompton, 1979; Matteucci & Önder, 2018; Tasci et al., 2006). Although students' images cannot represent those held by other groups, as an exploratory methodological study, our main concern was whether the LIST could help explore images of a given destination rather than a comprehensive market investigation. Moreover, filling out the LIST questionnaire involves imagining, drawing, and writing, which requires respondents to have corresponding knowledge and expressive abilities. Taking student

samples can help guarantee the completion rate of the questionnaire survey and simultaneously minimize the difference in answers due to different demographic attributes (e.g. age, occupation, and educational level). Some of the students may never have visited rural destinations, but they can still construct an image of a place without physically travelling to it given that such an image is formed through multiple sources of information (e.g. photos, books, videos) (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

A total of 240 college juniors from five random classes at Guangxi Science and Technology Normal University were issued drawing questionnaires. We provided students with pencils and erasers for image sketching. Students in each class had 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Many students encountered difficulties in the process of filling out the image-drawing section. Some complained that they lacked artistic talent, and some said they had no idea what to sketch. Referring to prior research (Ueda et al., 2012), we explained that the image sketch does not require the respondent to create works of art. The author can also refer to complex landscape elements with simple letters or graphics. The drawing is valid as long as the author can show the elements' positional relationships in their images. Then, we informed the students that everyone would form different associated representations (including natural things and artificial objects) in their minds when it comes to 'rural tourism in Guangxi'—these fictional pictures are what you should draw on the questionnaire paper.

We collected 166 valid questionnaires, of which 106 were from male students, and 60 were from females. As previously stated, most of the students (81%) are Guangxi residents. Of the remaining respondents, 20 (12%) are from Yunnan, Guizhou, Hunan, and Guangzhou—neighbouring provinces that border Guangxi—and 12 (7%) are from distant provinces, such as Sichuan, Henan, Shanghai, and Shandong. The students' different backgrounds may have potentially affected the survey results, but because the primary purpose of this exploratory experiment was to observe whether the LIST could help pinpoint the respondents' ideas and values from their drawings of destination images, we concentrated primarily on

The LIST questionnaire

What are the scenic elements in your landscape for Guangxi's rural destination?

None

Draw a landscape sketch in black and white to show your imagination.



Briefly introduce your drawing: why did you choose such a picture?

None

Figure 2 An Example of an Invalid Answer

analysing the characteristics of the images from the entire sample without conducting group comparisons in terms of demographics.

An accepted answer should have graphical elements and corresponding textual descriptions, allowing researchers to read the author's intent. Invalid samples, as shown in Figure 2, were rejected because the respondents lacked the necessary textual explanations of their image sketches. Although we can observe some image elements (e.g. trees, mountains, and houses) through that drawing, without the corresponding textual introductions, it is difficult for researchers to judge why the picture represents the rural landscape. For example, is the combination of trees, mountains, and houses aimed at expressing beautiful nature or a quiet rural atmosphere? Are the houses depicted in the picture restaurants, entertainment facilities, or villager's residences? Since it is hard to grasp the author's ideas, such an answer will not be counted during data analysis. Likewise, questionnaires that only have textual descriptions but have not completed the drawing section will be regarded as invalid. Questionnaires with significant inconsistencies

between the textual description and the image sketch were also considered invalid.

Data Processing

The visual data were not analysed psychologically or pathologically but in terms of the landscape elements that the respondents imagined and the scene's composition via their interconnection and self-oriented field of view. According to Ueda et al.'s (2012) *Fukei* theory, people's landscape images consist of linguistic knowledge, spatial views, self-orientations, and social meanings. These four constructs were analysed to identify and summarize the landscape images drawn by the current research's respondents to depict Guangxi's rural tourism:

1. In the linguistic knowledge analysis, we counted what scene elements appeared and what rural tourism attributes they corresponded to.
2. The spatial view is an interpretation of the angle the respondents depict their destinations.
3. As for the self-orientation statistic, we analysed the respondents' standing points and saw what person-environment relationship their image drawings reflected.
4. In the social meaning analysis procedure, we read group values/interests expressed by the respondents' image drawings and their textual introductions.

Findings

Linguistic Knowledge

First, we compiled statistics on the landscape element descriptions in the questionnaire. As seen in Figure 3, the respondent first suggested four elements (river, flowers, fruit picking, and wild animals) through textual answers. Then, in the flowing drawing section, the author supplemented two more elements (weather and pavilion). All these textual and graphical descriptions were counted and classified. We counted 1,193 image descriptions and combined elements of the same attribute, such as 'flowers, grass, trees' as 'plants', 'barbecue, picnic, meals' as 'cuisines', and 'KTV, cards, sports' as 'entertainment'. These descriptions can be summarized as 21 rural landscape ele-

The LIST questionnaire

What are the scenic elements in your landscape for Guangxi's rural destination?

① River ② Flowers ③ Fruit picking ④ Wild animals

Draw a landscape sketch in black and white to show your imagination.

⑥ Weather

⑤ Pavilion

Briefly introduce your drawing: why did you choose such a picture?

Surrounded by flowers, streams, and animals, I am enjoying the fruits and nature happily. This moment is the best for me.

Figure 3 An Example of a Valid Questionnaire

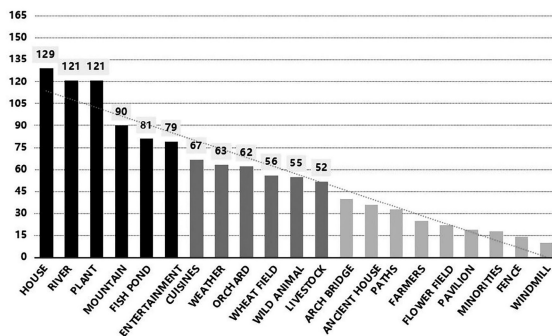


Figure 4 Frequency Ranking of the 21 Rural Landscape Elements

ments. As seen in Figure 4, 'House 129' means that out of 166 respondents, 129 have mentioned 'House' (e.g. guest rooms, restaurants, and lounges) in their image sketches. Darker columns represent elements with a large proportion of people. We can see that the respondents' rural landscape generally contains 'house', 'river', 'plant', 'mountain', 'fish pond', and 'entertainment'. The following six elements were also popular: 'cuisines', 'weather', 'orchard', 'wheat field', 'wild animal', and 'livestock'.

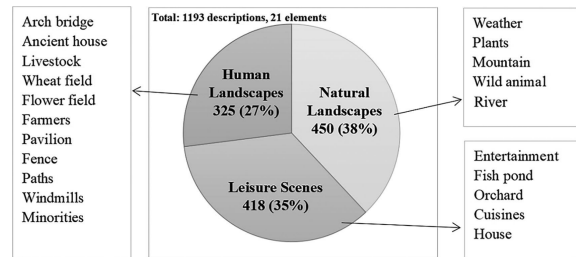


Figure 5 Proportional of Three Rural Landscape Element Groups

We then classified the above 21 elements according to three non-overlapping groups: natural landscapes, human landscapes, and leisure scenes (Figure 5). Each group consists of different exclusive attributes. The classification results were based on prior studies (e.g. Fan & Wang, 2010; Xu et al., 2013) and researchers' preliminary considerations. To increase the rationality of the grouping, the two researchers first coded and categorized the image descriptions, respectively, and then combined the results. We observed that the respondents showed great interest in leisure activities, being close to nature, and enjoying the rural atmosphere in Guangxi's rural destination.

Spatial View

Ueda et al. (2012, p. 25) state, "The represented visual appearance of each landscape element can be understood in terms of viewing angle and distance that indicate which part of the landscape is captured from which viewpoint." Referring to Ueda et al.'s (2012) research case, we classified the respondents' image sketches into four types:

1. Close-up view (Figure 6): Respondents describe the object from a very close perspective. Due to the viewing angle limitation, the described objects are only partially shown.
2. Medium-range view (Figure 7): A moderate distance between the sketchers and the object they describe. From this distance, the object's overall outline and detailed features are reflected in the sketches.
3. Distant view (Figure 8): The authors describe things far away from them, sometimes using the object's blurred outline as the sketch's background.

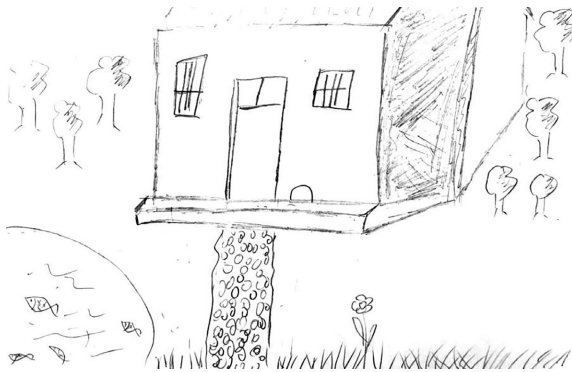


Figure 6 An Example of a Close-Up View Sketch

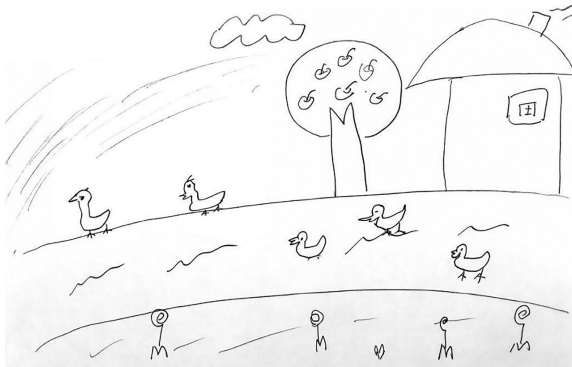


Figure 7 An Example of a Medium-Range View Sketch

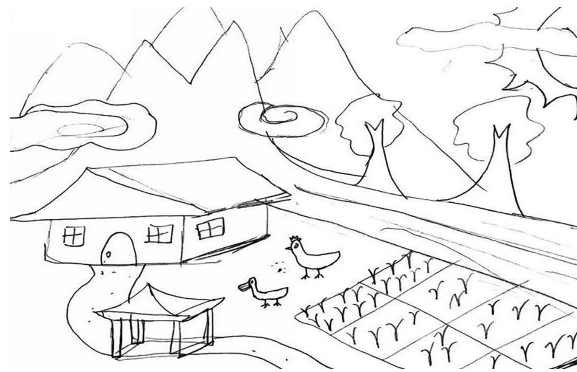


Figure 8 An Example of a Distant View Sketch

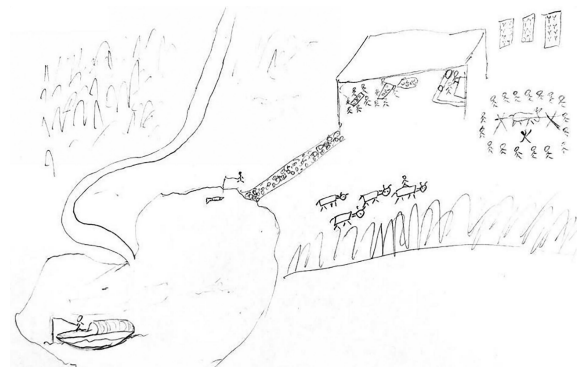


Figure 9 An Example of a Bird's-Eye View Sketch

The farthest point of the respondent's view is the basis for distinguishing distant and medium-range views.

4. Bird's-eye view (Figure 9): Any sketch of the observation angle from the sky to the ground is counted as this type. In this research, the classification results can be understood regarding the respondents' concerns about the spatial diversity of the destination.

We see that the ratio of close-up views is rare (Figure 10). Respondents generally expressed a broad vision in their image sketches, with most depicting rural landscapes that feature rich background layers, reflecting openness and expansiveness. These preferences likely reflect the natural characteristics of Guangxi's rural areas, which are renowned for their vast mountainous landscapes and diverse rural environments. The expansive scenic beauty of Guangxi's natural landscapes—including towering mountains,

open fields, and diverse ecosystems—seems to strongly resonate in the respondents' mental images of rural destinations. Respondents predominantly used distant or bird's-eye perspectives, emphasizing spatial layering and offering wide views of the landscape. This suggests that their perceptions of rural tourism in Guangxi are not confined to isolated scenic spots or

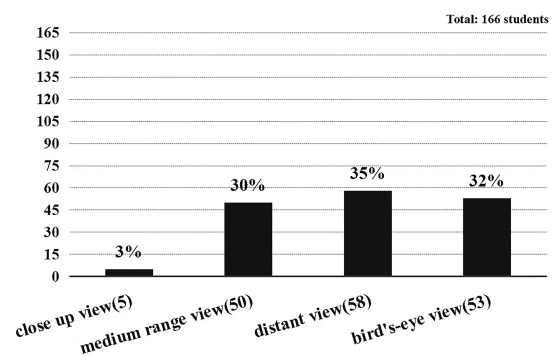


Figure 10 Statistics of the Spatial View Classification.

individual elements, but rather focus on constructing a composite image that integrates various landscape features. Their preference for panoramic views highlights a deeper appreciation for the vastness and multi-dimensional nature of the region, signalling a strong desire to experience the broad environmental context and spatial diversity that Guangxi has to offer.

Self-orientation

Ueda et al. (2012) suggest that the linguistic description usually describes the destination objectively, but the visual image sketches further reveal how the respondents related the surrounding objects to themselves. Referring to Ueda et al.'s (2012) research, we classified the respondents' image sketches into four types :

1. Single object (Figure 11): The respondent describes only a single element or a single element group in the sketch.
2. Objective scene (Figure 12): An objective landscape composed of multiple elements. There is no hint of the respondent's presence in the picture.
3. Surrounding place (Figure 13): We can see various interactions between the respondents and their surroundings.
4. Overlooking place (Figure 14): The respondents mainly focus on distant landscape surroundings. The self-orientation classification results illustrate the most distinctive characteristics of the person-environment relationship.

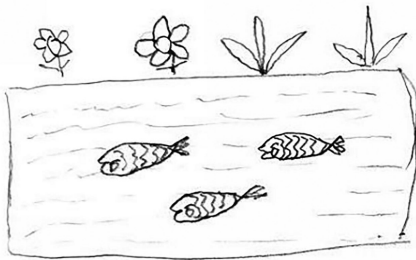


Figure 11 An Example of a Single Object Sketch

The self-orientation test results (Figure 15) indicate that most respondents envision themselves actively engaging in leisure activities at the destination, highlighting a strong personal connection to the space (the surrounding place). This suggests that rural tourism in Guangxi is not merely seen as passive observation of nature but as an immersive experience, where visitors mentally position themselves as part of the landscape. Interestingly, about a quarter of respondents focused more on the distant landscape rather than immediate, tangible features like facilities or infrastructure (the overlooking place). This preference reveals a desire for a broader, more expansive perspective, signalling a deeper yearning for tranquillity and escape into a panoramic environment. Such imagery points to a wish to experience the vastness of the natural surroundings, emphasizing the emotional and reflective aspects of rural tourism over functional or material elements.

Social Meaning

Through landscape drawing, respondents attach various meanings to the given object. Based on the three visual interpretations above—linguistic knowledge, spatial view, self-orientation—and respondents' linguistic descriptions of their image drawings (only the part of the texts that was consistent with the visual image sketch was used to interpret the social meaning), we summarized the respondents' collective interests of Guangxi's rural destinations. To improve the validity of the classification, we added two more researchers who were familiar with the Chinese context to participate in our data processing (inter-

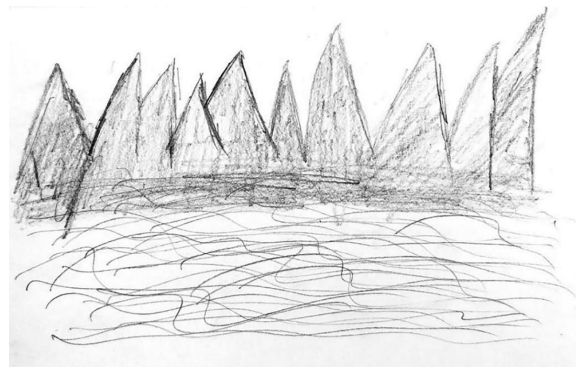


Figure 12 An Example of an Objective Scene Sketch.



Figure 13 An Example of a Surrounding Place Sketch

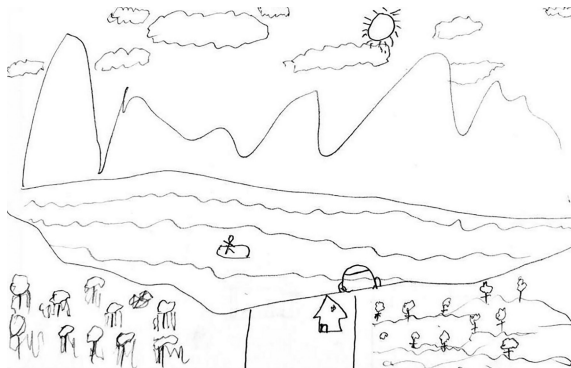


Figure 14 An Example of an Overlooking Place Sketch

preting the drawings' meaning requires the classifiers and respondents to have similar cultural backgrounds). Each classifier interpreted the respondents' image sketches separately and divided them into different themes. The grouping results were based on previous Chinese rural tourism papers (e.g. Cong & Dong, 2013; Fan & Wang, 2010; Zhou, 2014) and the classifiers' preliminary considerations.

Some image drawings reflected multiple meanings (e.g. country cuisine and recreation in the same image), so we classified these sketches redundantly, allowing them to belong to multiple social meaning categories. We aggregated the classification results from all classifiers and identified eight key rural tourism interests: recreational places, country cuisine, aesthetic experiences, village life, Guilin scenery, poetic culture, peaceful retreats, and minority interactions. As the focus of the social meaning analysis was to explore the range of interests reflected by the respondents (the

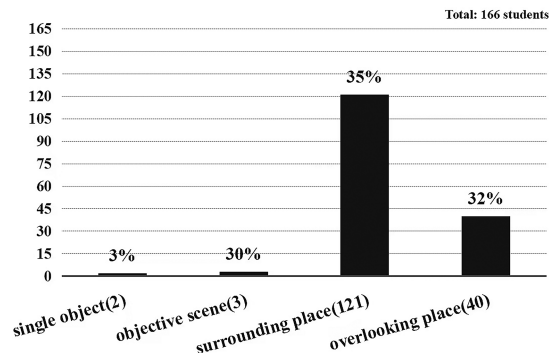


Figure 15 Statistics of the Self-Orientation Classification



Figure 16 An Example of a Recreational Place Sketch

diversity of meanings), rather than comparing their proportions, we did not analyse the statistical differences between categories.

(1) Recreational place (Figure 16): The rural destination is a place to experience leisure activities. The image sketch comprises various leisure elements, such as fishing, boating, fruit picking, sports, barbecue, and karaoke. Respondents generally described the richness of leisure enjoyment and imagined themselves having fun with friends.

(2) Country cuisine (Figure 17): Enjoying local delicacies is the primary purpose of visiting a rural destination. The picture mainly consists of food tasting and a beautiful natural environment, such as mountains, rivers, plants, and wild animals. Respondents usually described the sketches from a medium and distant view, with the dining table in close range and a beautiful scenery background. They appear in their drawings as gourmands.

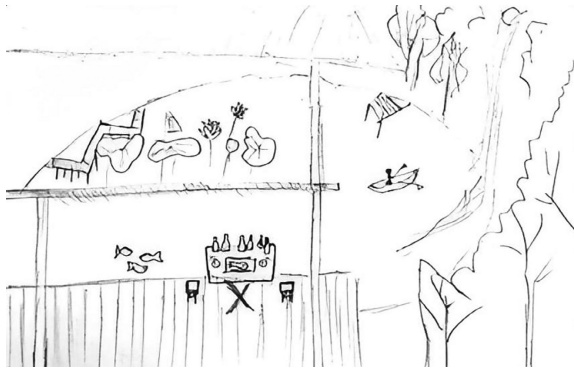


Figure 17 An Example of a Country Cuisine Sketch

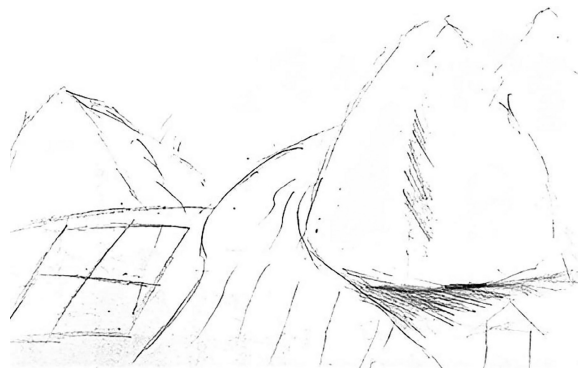


Figure 20 An Example of a Guilin Scenery Sketch.

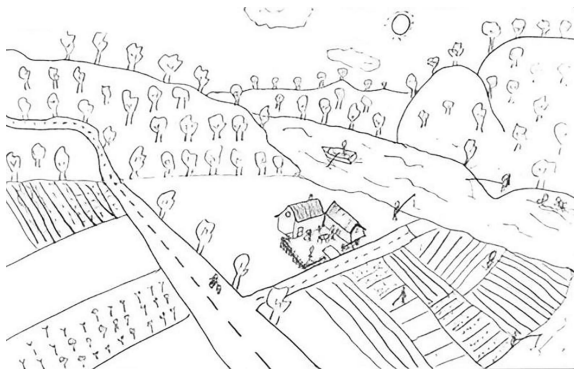


Figure 18 An Example of an Aesthetic Experience Sketch



Figure 21 An Example of a Poetic Culture Sketch.

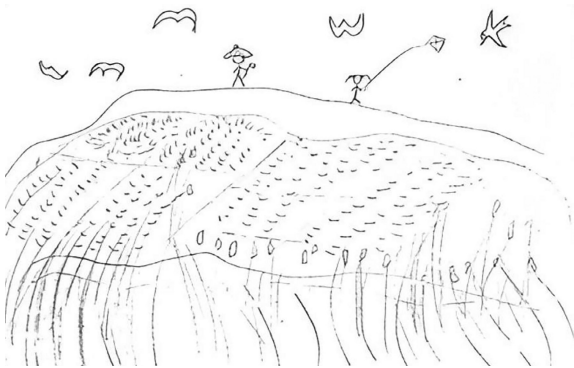


Figure 19 An Example of a Village Life Sketch



Figure 22 An Example of a Peaceful World Sketch

(3) Aesthetic experience (Figure 18): The rural landscape shows the aesthetic experience; precisely, the harmony between humans and nature. The picture predominantly includes various natural elements such as weather, mountains, rivers, plants, and wild animals, along with rural elements like fields, houses, and working farmers. Respondents usually described the

sketches from a distance to show the combination of nature and the village. Respondents imagined themselves being intoxicated by such a harmonious world.

(4) Village life (Figure 19): The rural scenery shows an intimate experience of rural life, which differs from urban areas. The picture contains various rural landscape elements, such as houses, fields, farmers, fences,

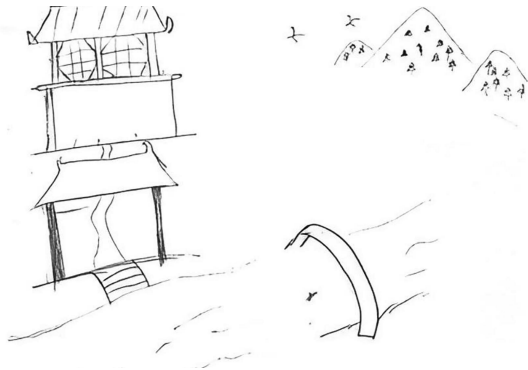


Figure 23 An Example of a Minority Contact Sketch

and livestock. The respondents usually described the sketches in a medium-range view to show the rural life scene. They imagined themselves watching the lives of rural residents and feeling the laidback rural atmosphere.

(5) Guilin scenery (Figure 20): The pictures have the same natural elements (weather, mountains, and rivers) and similar spatial characteristics: under a clear blue sky, green hills surrounded by winding rivers. Such a landscape (桂林山水 in Chinese) is a symbol of Guangxi scenery and can also be seen in the background pattern of RMB banknotes. Respondents usually described the scene through a distant view to show the picture's momentum.

(6) Poetic culture (Figure 21): The pictures generally reflect the romantic descriptions of the countryside in ancient Chinese poetry: 'Xiaoqiao Liushui Renjia (小桥流水人家)'—'The river is rustling under the small bridge'. On the opposite side stands an old tree under which there is the villager's house. Respondents sketched the scene through a medium-range view, hoping to enjoy this combination of scenery in rural destinations.

(7) Peaceful world: The rural destination should be where visitors can escape the city's hustle and bustle and forget their life pressures. The picture comprises weather, mountains, plants, rivers, fish ponds, and houses. Respondents used a distant or medium-range view to describe such an environment: the surroundings are quiet, and the remote scenery is pleasant.

They usually drew their fishing posture in image sketches (Figure 22).

(8) Minority contact: Guangxi's rural destinations are similar to ethnic minority villages. The picture includes giant plants, ancient houses, rivers, mountains, and various minority elements, such as clothes, dances, and murals. Respondents described ethnic minority villages in mountainous areas from a bird's-eye view and hoped to experience ethnic cultures in such places (Figure 23).

Conclusion and Discussion

Practical Implications for Rural Tourism Industries

This research employed the LIST to analyse people's landscape images of rural tourism destinations in Guangxi, China, uncovering key elements and spatial characteristics of an ideal rural travel destination. Using Ueda et al.'s (2012) four-aspect landscape image analysis model, the study identified 21 significant landscape elements, highlighting respondents' strong interest in leisure activities, nature, and rustic lifestyles. Most participants envisioned rural destinations as expansive spaces with layered landscapes, where they could interact with leisure facilities while enjoying a serene natural environment. The landscape image sketches revealed eight key interests in Guangxi's rural tourism: recreational places, country cuisine, aesthetic experiences, village life, Guilin scenery, poetic culture, peaceful retreats, and interactions with minorities. These findings offer valuable insights for tourism operators to tailor experiences and marketing strategies.

First, in destination management, operators should prioritize experiences that address both physical and psychological needs. Based on the spatial analysis results from the LIST, rural destinations in Guangxi should offer an immersive experience rather than just passive nature observation. To achieve this, operators can create environments that allow visitors to feel integrated into the landscape, such as panoramic viewing platforms and tranquil spaces that foster serenity. Culturally resonant settings, such as *Xiaoqiao Liushui Renjia*, can enhance spiritual satisfaction by evoking a poetic atmosphere. Furthermore, offering both active engagement and quiet reflection spaces will cater to

different ways of experiencing the landscape. For instance, recreational areas for hands-on activities and elevated viewing points for peaceful vistas will fulfil the need for physical interaction and mental relaxation. This combination of dynamic and tranquil environments aligns with the preferences identified in the self-orientation test, allowing visitors to connect with the destination in both active and reflective ways.

Second, for marketing efforts, promotional materials like posters and short films should incorporate the visual elements highlighted in this study, particularly the expansive views and distant landscapes, which were emphasized by respondents. Showcasing iconic features such as Guilin's stunning scenery and minority cultural symbols will not only emphasize Guangxi's unique regional identity but also appeal to the desire for broad, panoramic experiences. By highlighting the harmony between humans and nature, tourism operators can strengthen the destination's brand image, attract more visitors, and foster meaningful emotional connections with potential tourists.

Although this study focuses on Guangxi's context, the shared patterns of visitor expectations—such as the longing for pastoral lifestyles, the pursuit of poetic aesthetics, and the appreciation of harmony between humans and nature—offer valuable inspiration for the design of rural destinations in other regions of China. By tailoring experiences that resonate with these preferences, tourism operators can better meet the emotional and experiential needs of rural tourists across the country.

The LIST's Contributions to Past

Drawing-Based Methods

Reviewing this research, it becomes clear that LIST and previous drawing techniques (Matteucci & Önder, 2018; Köstinger & Matteucci, 2022) share certain similarities—both require respondents to express holistic impressions of a given destination through a symbolic picture (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993), capturing both tangible and psychological attributes of the destination. However, their analytical approaches are quite different. For instance, in the case of Vienna, the study does not impose specific requirements regarding the type of drawing and method does not im-

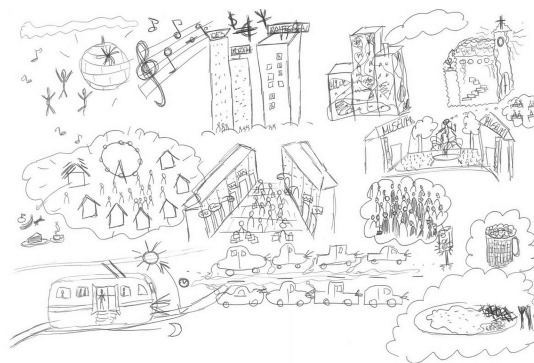


Figure 24 An Example of Vienna's Free Image Drawing

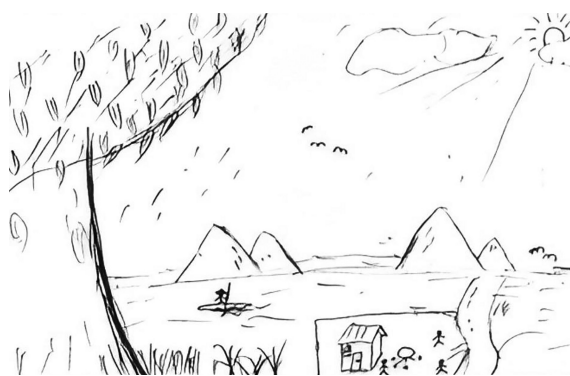


Figure 25 An Example of the LIST's Sketch

se any specific requirements on the type of drawing and focuses on observing the static characteristics of completed pictures, analysing the objective features conveyed by the destination's image. Although some respondents submitted pictures featuring unrelated or disconnected objects, with unclear relationships between elements and no unified scene (see Figure 24), researchers were still able to identify the content (e.g. tramways, museums, parks) and emotions (e.g. modern, vibrant, and fun) expressed in the images. In comparison, the LIST asks respondents to create landscape sketches, treating the image generation process as a dynamic experience. This method explores how respondents construct their drawings from scratch, selecting and organizing elements that reflect their personal interests and values, such as a desire to experience rural life or pursue poetic culture (see Figure 25). By requiring participants to logically organize destination elements into cohesive landscapes,

the LIST offers a more nuanced understanding of how respondents engage with and represent their destination experiences.

In conclusion, by treating landscape drawings as expressions of subjective experiences, the LIST uncovers the layered cognition and emotions within individuals' consciousness. It provides a novel analytical approach that goes beyond traditional studies, which typically focus on objective destination image representations (Hunter & Suh, 2007; Matteucci & Önder, 2018; Köstinger & Matteucci, 2022). Additionally, since the term 'landscape' often carries positive connotations, the drawings collected by the LIST tend to convey positive feedback. In contrast, in Vienna's image drawings, some respondents also expressed negative emotions, such as boredom and alienation.

Evaluating the LIST: Benefits and Limitations

During this LIST survey, we found that drawing allows researchers to more intuitively understand people's mental images and uncover hidden subconscious information. In particular, some respondents initially provided limited information during the social meaning analysis in Q1 and Q3. For instance, scenes of (6) poetic culture were initially classified under (4) village life, as respondents typically used terms such as 'plant' and 'houses' to express rural landscape images. However, we noticed recurring combinations of 'an arch bridge, a flowing river, an old tree, and a farmer's house' in these rural life drawings, suggesting a specific tacit understanding. This evokes the imagery in the classic Chinese pastoral verse: 'Xiaoqiao Liushui Renjia' (小桥流水人家). A similar pattern emerged in (5) Guilin scenery. Some drawings, described with words like 'mountain' and 'river', were initially categorized as (3) aesthetic experiences. However, many respondents depicted 'green hills surrounded by winding rivers' (桂林山水), indicating that the unique geographical symbols of Guangxi influenced their destination image formation. As a result, we classified these drawings into a new group: Guilin scenery. This highlights how image drawings can unearth deeper, subliminal meanings, which are often overlooked in textual descriptions. As other drawing-based studies have noted, visual methods have distinct advantages

in revealing cognitive information (Hunter & Suh, 2007; Matteucci & Önder, 2018; Virdee, 2019).

We also see some limitations of the LIST. First, the drawing questionnaire still faces challenges in terms of its popularity. Despite providing guidance on how to complete the image drawings, a third of the respondents were unable to fill out the questionnaire. This issue mirrors the situation encountered by Hunter and Suh (2007), where many tourists struggled with drawing-based methods, indicating that drawing is not universally accepted as a means of conveying meaning. Given the rapid development of artificial intelligence, future studies could explore the potential of integrating AI technologies to assist respondents in creating image drawings. Second, during the analysis of social meaning, we found that some sketches were difficult to interpret. While respondents provided both textual and graphic descriptions, the vagueness or inconsistency in some content made it challenging to fully grasp the respondents' intentions. Matteucci and Önder (2018, p. 17) encountered a similar issue in their drawing research. They noted, 'While we could confidently identify the pictorial content of each drawing, our interpretation might not reflect the intent of the research participants.' Frochot et al. (2009) argue that qualitative conclusions are often criticized for being overly reliant on the researchers' subjective interpretation. Future studies could explore quantitative methods to increase the objectivity and accuracy of drawing analysis or use drawings as a supplementary tool to better understand people's destination images. As noted by Hunter and Suh (2007), the visual approach is practical and can contribute to the development of methodologies in tourism studies due to its ability to integrate various research methods.

Future Considerations

The process of landscape image generation reflects not only the physical attributes of destinations but also the diverse emotional and psychological connections that visitors form during their tourism experiences. While drawing-based approaches may require more effort, they offer a distinct advantage in uncovering latent needs and emotional meanings—such as subconscious ideas—that are difficult to capture through textual

descriptions. As an interdisciplinary methodological attempt, this paper primarily utilizes the LIST to assess rural tourism market demand in Guangxi, China, testing its applicability in destination image measurement research. Since the survey focused solely on the destination images of undergraduate students, it overlooked the needs and perspectives of other potential tourist groups (e.g. children, middle-aged individuals, and older adults). Future studies should include a broader range of respondents to gain a more comprehensive understanding of travel interests across different demographic segments.

Although this paper primarily validates the application value of landscape image drawing in tourism market analysis, the potential of the LIST extends well beyond this context. Gunn (1972) argues that tourism destinations are dynamic systems shaped by the perceptions, expectations, and interactions of multiple stakeholders. He emphasizes that the design of tourism landscapes should not only address the needs of tourists but also integrate the perspectives of local residents and other stakeholders to achieve social, cultural, and environmental sustainability. Similarly, Bramwell and Lane (2000) highlight the importance of 'collaboration and partnerships', asserting that the sustainable management of tourism destinations depends on the balanced participation of stakeholders. Moreover, Hall (2021) underscores the necessity of effective dialogue and collaborative mechanisms among stakeholders to resolve conflicts, build consensus, and implement sustainable development practices. Building on these insights, landscape image drawing offers significant potential as a platform for fostering stakeholder collaboration in future tourism studies. By visualizing the diverse expectations of different stakeholders regarding specific destinations, the LIST can help facilitate communication, promote consensus-building, and provide a shared understanding that supports the sustainable development of these destinations. For instance, in the case of the Guangxi's rural image study, the LIST revealed the varied expectations of respondents about their ideal rural destinations (eight distinct types of rural tourism expectations). These insights offer valuable guidance for managers seeking to create tourism destinations

that align with public expectations. Future research that includes the perspectives of other groups, such as local residents and government officials, would yield even deeper insights—beyond marketing considerations—by helping to develop destination images that reflect the expectations of all relevant stakeholders. We hope that this paper will inspire scholars to explore the broader potential of the LIST in future tourism studies, recognizing its applicability not only in market analysis but also in enhancing stakeholder collaboration and promoting sustainable development.

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