

Embracing History and Cultural Heritage Through the Chinese Hanfu Costume Tourism

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Abstract: Cultural heritage tourism is conceptually framed by the dialectic between heritage conservation imperatives and commercial market demands, while intangible cultural heritage tourism encompasses the experiential engagement with performative, craft-based, and ritualistic practices that encapsulate both historical and contemporary socio-cultural narratives. Dressing in traditional costumes represents an emergent phenomenon within this paradigm, particularly in China, where Hanfu has gained prominence as an instrument for cultural immersion and intangible heritage preservation. By the end of 2023, the number of Hanfu enthusiasts in China exceeded 9 million, reflecting an exponential increase and highlighting the rapid evolution of this market segment. Employing a quantitative research design, this study utilises an online questionnaire survey administered to a sample of 476 adult tourists. This study aims to critically examine the underlying motivations that drive tourists to engage in traditional costume tourism, with a particular focus on Hanfu costume tourism in China. The findings elucidate three principal motivations underlying participation in Hanfu costume tourism. First, Hanfu functions as a critical medium for immersive cultural heritage engagement, facilitating a deeper connection with traditional culture while simultaneously satisfying tourists' aesthetic aspirations and non-quotidian self-presentation. Second, the proliferation of Hanfu-related content on social media significantly influences tourist decision-making processes, reinforcing aspirational and performative dimensions of engagement. Third, the widespread adoption of Hanfu reflects an intensified cultural identification among Chinese tourists with their indigenous heritage, concomitant with a pronounced inclination towards cultivating ritualistic and affective dimensions within their travel experiences. This research makes a substantive contribution to the discourse on cultural heritage tourism by elucidating the interrelationship between traditional costume engagement and heritage tourism motivations. The findings offer valuable theoretical and practical insights for the strategic integration of traditional costume elements into cultural heritage tourism frameworks, thereby advancing both the preservation of intangible heritage and the enhancement of tourist experiences through embodied cultural participation.

Keywords: Hanfu costume tourism, Cultural tourism, Heritage, Travel motivation, Tourist experience

1. Introduction

Over recent decades, scholars have increasingly focused on cultural tourism, though a universally accepted definition remains elusive. McKercher and Du Cros (2002, p.3) highlight the diversity of definitions, noting that 'there are almost as many definitions...as there are cultural tourists'. Richards (2003) adds that defining cultural tourism is challenging due to the complexity of defining 'culture' itself. Cultural tourism activities encompass a wide range of attractions, including heritage sites, festivals, rituals, artistic performances, and architectural landmarks (Bonetti et al., 2014; Singh & Najjar, 2020). This diversity reflects the multifaceted nature of cultural tourism. Furthermore, the intrinsic link between culture and tourism suggests that all forms of tourism may involve cultural experiences (Richards, 2018; MacCannell, 1976).

Hanfu, the traditional attire of the Han ethnic group, originated during the Han Dynasty (202 BC–220 AD) and symbolises ancient Chinese values such as order, etiquette, and identity recognition (Chen, 2022). However, the term 'Hanfu' lacks a standardised definition. Broadly, it refers to traditional Han ethnic clothing, while narrowly, it signifies Han Dynasty attire (Wang, 2013; Yin, 2021). Modern Hanfu, influenced by traditional styles, emerged after the Xinhai Revolution as a cultural adaptation aligning with contemporary Chinese identity (Zhou et al., 2019). In tourism industries, Hanfu costume tourism often features this modern iteration, redesigned for modern aesthetics and commercial appeal (Huang, 2023). Since the early 21st century, Hanfu culture has been reintroduced to the market, sparking its expansion and integration into tourism activities. Increasingly, destinations in China and beyond are embracing Hanfu-themed tourism, contributing to the rise of Hanfu costume tourism (Huang, 2023).

While existing studies examine tourists' experiences and destinations' integration of Hanfu culture (e.g., Hansen, 2004; Dodds et al., 2016; Liu & Wang, 2022; Huang, 2023), limited research addresses the motivations behind tourists choosing Hanfu over everyday clothing. Understanding these motivations can illuminate the connection between pre-trip motivations and on-site activities, providing insights for destinations to incorporate Hanfu culture more effectively into their tourism products. This paper explores the motivations driving Hanfu costume tourism. It begins by reviewing key concepts, including cultural tourism and cultural heritage tourism, Hanfu

costume tourism, and travel motivations. Using a descriptive quantitative methodology, this study employs online surveys of 476 Hanfu costume tourists to investigate the self-centered (intrinsic) and socially-driven (extrinsic) motivations (Pearce, 1988; Pearce & Lee, 2005), as well as mixed travel motivations, for dressing in Hanfu at tourism destinations. The results of this study will provide deeper insights into the role of Hanfu in enriching cultural tourism experiences, which will be discussed in the subsequent sections of this paper.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cultural Tourism and Cultural Heritage Tourism

Cultural tourism has been defined in numerous ways, reflecting the diverse perspectives of both scholars and tourists (McKercher & Du Cros, 2002). Richards (2003) emphasises the challenge of defining cultural tourism, as the term 'culture' itself is inherently complex. Cultural tourism attractions often include heritage sites, festivals, rituals, monuments, and artistic or cultural expressions (Bonetti et al., 2014; Singh & Najar, 2020). This diversity underscores the wide-ranging nature of cultural tourism activities. Moreover, culture and tourism are deeply interconnected, leading some scholars to argue that all tourism has a cultural dimension (Richards, 2003, 2018; MacCannell, 1973). Cultural tourism encompasses various forms, such as heritage tourism, arts tourism, gastronomic tourism, film tourism, and creative tourism (Richards, 2018). Among these, cultural heritage tourism focuses on the cultural significance of destinations, often aligned with tourists' personal heritage connections (Poria et al., 2003). Recent research has expanded the concept of heritage to include both tangible and intangible elements. However, Smith (2006) contends that all heritage is ultimately intangible, emphasising the meanings, values, and memories associated with heritage over its physical forms. Heritage, as a cultural process, engages acts of remembering to help individuals understand and interact with the present (Smith, 2006). In this view, heritage sites and objects act as tools for memory-making rather than ends in themselves. In this way, Hanfu serves as a carrier of historical and cultural memory. Its significance lies not in the physical garment but in the meanings and values it conveys. As such, the distinction between tangible and intangible heritage becomes less important. Hanfu represents a dynamic cultural heritage rooted in people's emotional, cultural, and experiential engagement. Thus, the importance of Hanfu as cultural heritage is grounded in how it helps people interpret and connect with the past. Its role in shaping individual and collective memory, history, and cultural understanding highlights the priority of its impact and meaning over its classification. This underscores Hanfu's enduring relevance as a living cultural symbol in contemporary society.

2.2 Hanfu Costume Tourism

Previous studies suggest that traditional clothing experiences significantly enhance tourists' perceptions of cultural destinations (Lee & Lee, 2019). Many tourist sites now incorporate traditional attire into their marketing to attract tourists (Zhong et al., 2023). Hanfu, as a traditional Chinese garment, is a vital element of the nation's heritage (Chen, 2022), enriching tourists' activities at cultural sites (Zhong et al., 2023; Huang, 2023). Despite Hanfu's deep history and the rising popularity of Hanfu costume tourism, especially among young Chinese tourists (Zhong et al., 2023; Yan, 2023; Zhou & Zhu, 2024), there is no consistent academic definition for this form of tourism. Hanfu costume tourism involves tourists dressing in modern Hanfu to visit destinations, engaging in cultural and experiential activities (Huang, 2023). Some researchers also focus on tourists' experiences, highlighting Hanfu's role in creating ritual, fostering cultural immersion, and expressing national identity (Zhong et al., 2023; Zhou & Zhu, 2024). Understanding tourists' motivations for dressing Hanfu at cultural sites can reveal valuable insights into Hanfu costume tourism and its impact on cultural heritage engagement.

2.3 Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and mix Travel Motivations

Tourist motivations can be understood as a mental state compelling an individual to travel, and later interpreted as a valid reason for their choice (Dann, 1981). From the tourist's perspective, these motivations include both internal and external factors that guide their destination selections. Tourism scholars have studied these motivations from various perspectives, categorising them to better understand tourists' interests and behaviours (e.g., Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Pearce, 1988; Mansfeld, 1992). According to Crouch (et al., 2005), tourist experiences are shaped by motivations, activities, and reflections. For Hanfu costume tourists, their motivations can influence their on-site activities, which in turn, shape future travel experiences related to Hanfu.

The 'intrinsic-extrinsic' motivation framework, developed by Mansfeld (1992), is widely used in tourism research. Leitao (2022) explains that motivations can be segmented into extrinsic and intrinsic factors, revealing deeper needs and values from different perspectives. Mokhtarian et al. (2015) highlight self-determination theory, which identifies three motivation types: intrinsic (driven by enjoyment or interest), extrinsic (motivated by

external goals), and amotivation (lack of motivation due to perceived incompetence or control). Intrinsic motivation is autotelic, while extrinsic motivation can be either self-determined or non-self-determined, involving external pressure. This paper will apply the intrinsic-extrinsic framework and self-determination theory to analyse the travel motivations of Hanfu-wearing tourists engaging in cultural heritage tourism. However, the framework and theory still have limitations, particularly when applied to cultural heritage tourism like Hanfu costume tourism, where intrinsic and extrinsic motivations can be intertwined. Tourist motivations are multifaceted and dynamic, often stemming from multiple influences rather than a single factor (Sharples, 2006; Page & Connell, 2009). To address this, this paper introduces a new category—mixed motivation—alongside amotivation within the intrinsic-extrinsic framework, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the motivations behind Hanfu tourism. It will focus on intrinsic, extrinsic, and mixed motivations to better capture the complexity of Hanfu costume tourism.

3. Methodology

The data and information relevant to the paper were gathered through an online questionnaire with 476 adult tourists from 5 November to 11 November, 2024, who have Hanfu costume tourism experiences. The questionnaire was developed by the authors and administered through the Chinese online survey platform ‘WenJuanXing’. It comprised 25 questions structured into four sections. The first section included a single question aimed at assessing the frequency of participants’ Hanfu costume tourism. The second section contained eight questions designed to explore the motivations behind participants’ choice to travel in Hanfu. The third section also consisted of eight questions, focusing on participants’ experiences and perceptions of traveling in Hanfu. The final section included eight questions collecting demographic information, such as gender and age group. The questionnaire examines tourists’ motivations and on-site experiences by seven-point Likert scale, where a score of 7 represents the strongest alignment with a participant’s motivations and on-site experiences, and a score of 1 represents the least. The questionnaire data will be also translated from Chinese to English in this paper and presented by textual descriptions and tables in order to clearly illustrate the numbers and proportions of participants that chose each option in each question. Cross-over analysis will be also employed to see the connections between tourists’ travel motivations and on-site activities of dressing in Hanfu to visit tourism destinations.

4. Results

4.1 Participants Profile

Table 1: Participant profile of the questionnaire

Demographic variables	Levels	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Gender	Female	311	65.34%
	Male	165	34.66%
Age	18-25	58	12.18%
	26-35	288	60.5%
	36-45	106	22.27%
	46-55	21	4.41%
	Above 56	3	0.63%
Occupation	Performer, anchor, Hanfu industry practitioner	9	1.89%
	Party and governmental staff	7	1.47%
	Researchers of institutes and universities	19	3.99%
	Enterprise managers, technicians, administrative and logistical personnel	318	66.81%
	Enterprise sales staff	46	9.66%
	Full-time housewife/husband	2	0.42%
	Service personal, workers, farmers and other manual laborer	15	3.15%
	Freelancers and self-employed people	32	6.72%
	Student	25	5.25%
	Retired	0	0.00%
	Others	3	0.63%
Educational Background	Junior high school and below	3	0.63%
	High school	5	1.05%
	College	43	9.03%
	Undergraduate	393	82.56%
Travel Companion	Graduate and above	32	6.72%
	With family	14	2.94%
	With fellow tourists	115	24.16%
	With friends	275	57.77%
	With classmates and colleagues	40	8.4%
	Alone	31	6.51%
Others	1	0.21%	

The majority of participants who choose to wear Hanfu at tourism destinations are female, comprising 65.34% of the total. Most participants (60.5%) are young adults aged 26 to 35 and have achieved a higher level of education; 82.56% hold an undergraduate degree, and 6.72% have completed graduate or advanced studies. A significant portion, 66.81%, work in fields like enterprise management, technical roles, and administrative or logistical positions. Additionally, 57.77% of participants frequently prefer to wear Hanfu when traveling with friends, indicating that social interactions play an important role in this cultural practice (see Table 1).

4.2 Tourists' Travel Motivations

The intrinsic motivation factors displayed in the questionnaire include 'Dressing in Hanfu give me the feeling of travelling back the past', 'Dressing in Hanfu can make travelling more ceremonial', and 'I want to try different cultural experiences to enrich my life and experience through dressing in Hanfu'. The extrinsic motivation factors include 'It's inspiring to see beautiful photos or videos of other people dressing in Hanfu online and on social media', 'Hanfu is highly compatible with the history and cultural atmosphere of the destination', and 'I know that many people dress in Hanfu to visit the destinations, my choice of clothes is influenced by others' dress code'. The mix motivations which cover both intrinsic and extrinsic factors include 'I want to experience dressing differently from everyday life and show a different kind of beauty' and 'Hanfu is an important symbol of Chinese civilisation'.

Results show that the average scores for each motivation option exceed 5, above the neutral midpoint of 4, indicating that all motivations are meaningful for participants (see Table 2). Mean values were measured based on a seven-point Likert scales, where '1' refers to 'strongly disagree' and '7' refers to 'strongly agree'. As Table 2 shows that the highest average score, 6.17, is for 'Hanfu as a symbol of Chinese civilization,' highlighting cultural heritage as a primary motivator. This suggests that Hanfu is more than a fashion choice; it embodies cultural pride and identity. The second-highest score, 6.04, relates to 'Hanfu's compatibility with the destination's historical and cultural context', indicating that tourists value Hanfu's cultural resonance, especially at heritage sites (Yan, 2023).

Table 2: Results of each option regarding tourists' travel motivations

Options	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Means
Dressing in Hanfu give me the feeling of travelling back the past.	2(0.42%)	5(1.05%)	22(4.62%)	55(11.55%)	121(25.42%)	167(35.08%)	104(21.85%)	5.53
Dressing in Hanfu can make travelling more ceremonial.	2(0.42%)	2(0.42%)	5(1.05%)	40(8.4%)	91(19.12%)	197(41.39%)	139(29.2%)	5.86
I want to try different cultural experiences to enrich my life and experience through dressing in Hanfu.	0(0%)	3(0.63%)	8(1.68%)	26(5.46%)	106(22.27%)	196(41.18%)	137(28.78%)	5.88
It's inspiring to see beautiful photos or videos of other people dressing in Hanfu online and on social media.	0(0%)	4(0.84%)	7(1.47%)	33(6.93%)	117(24.58%)	179(37.61%)	136(28.57%)	5.82
Hanfu is highly compatible with the history and cultural atmosphere of the destination.	1(0.21%)	2(0.42%)	6(1.26%)	22(4.62%)	97(20.38%)	166(34.87%)	182(38.24%)	6.02
I know that many people dress in Hanfu to visit the destinations, my choice of clothes is influenced by others' dress code.	0(0%)	6(1.26%)	14(2.94%)	47(9.87%)	143(30.04%)	177(37.18%)	89(18.7%)	5.55
I want to experience dressing differently from everyday life and show a different kind of beauty.	0(0%)	1(0.21%)	4(0.84%)	26(5.46%)	128(26.89%)	194(40.76%)	123(25.84%)	5.85
Hanfu is an important symbol of Chinese civilization.	0(0%)	2(0.42%)	3(0.63%)	23(4.83%)	73(15.34%)	156(32.77%)	219(46.01%)	6.17
Total	5(0.13%)	25(0.66%)	69(1.81%)	272(7.14%)	876(23%)	1432(37.61%)	1129(29.65%)	5.84

The lack of any 'strongly disagree' (score of 1) responses and the preference for scores of 5, 6, or 7 across most items further illustrates the alignment between these motivations and tourists' decisions to dress in Hanfu. Additionally, considering the top three options with highest mean scores include intrinsic, extrinsic, and mixed motivation categories, it follows that motivations are multifaceted. Tourists are driven by a combination of internal interests, social influences, and cultural pride, consistent with research suggesting that motivations for cultural tourism are often diverse and complex (Chiang et al., 2015). This supports the idea that motivations for cultural practices in tourism are seldom single-faceted, aligning with theories of multi-dimensional travel motivations (Crompton, 1979; Chiang et al., 2015).

4.3 Tourists' on-site Experiences

The questionnaire investigating tourists' on-site experiences includes eight response options, each reflecting a different aspect of behavior or feeling and rated on a seven-point Likert scale. Participants ranked these options according to personal experience, with a score of 7 representing the most reflective action or feeling and a score of 1 the least reflective. The results, shown in Table 3, reveal that mean scores for each option exceed 5, above the neutral median of 4, with over 45% of participants rating each option at 6 or 7. Some options reach over 70%, demonstrating a strong correlation between participants' experiences and the presented questionnaire options.

Table 3: Results of each option regarding tourists’ on-site activities

Options	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Means
Dressing in Hanfu allowed me to temporarily detach myself from the real world and escape from the worries of life.	9(1.89%)	15(3.15%)	26(5.46%)	72(15.13%)	133(27.94%)	142(29.83%)	79(16.6%)	5.2
Dressing in Hanfu enhanced the completeness of my journey and added greater significance to the travel experience.	1(0.21%)	1(0.21%)	6(1.26%)	27(5.67%)	109(22.9%)	203(42.65%)	129(27.1%)	5.87
Dressing in Hanfu to visit tourism destinations allowed me to experience the charm of traditional Chinese culture.	0(0%)	1(0.21%)	1(0.21%)	19(3.99%)	72(15.13%)	179(37.61%)	204(42.86%)	6.18
Photos and videos taken on Hanfu costume tourism received more feedback from friends and more reactions on social media.	0(0%)	2(0.42%)	10(2.1%)	53(11.13%)	135(28.36%)	160(33.61%)	116(24.37%)	5.66
Dressing in Hanfu made me more immersed in the historical and cultural atmosphere of the destinations and learned about the local history and culture	0(0%)	1(0.21%)	14(2.94%)	35(7.35%)	116(24.37%)	186(39.08%)	124(26.05%)	5.77
Dressing in Hanfu allowed me to be more integrated into a group of Hanfu enthusiasts or fellow tourists.	1(0.21%)	3(0.63%)	13(2.73%)	33(6.93%)	134(28.15%)	193(40.55%)	99(20.8%)	5.67
Dressing in Hanfu to visit tourism destinations gave me a different sense of beauty from the clothes I wear in everyday life	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(0.63%)	10(2.1%)	142(29.83%)	188(39.5%)	133(27.94%)	5.92
Dressing in Hanfu to visit tourism destinations made me feel the pride of being a Chinese.	0(0%)	2(0.42%)	9(1.89%)	24(5.04%)	100(21.01%)	152(31.93%)	189(39.71%)	6.01
Total	11(0.29%)	25(0.66%)	82(2.15%)	273(7.17%)	941(24.71%)	1403(36.84%)	1073(28.18%)	5.79

The top three options, based on mean scores, are ‘Dressing in Hanfu allowed me to experience the charm of traditional Chinese culture’ (6.18), ‘Dressing in Hanfu made me feel pride in being Chinese’ (6.01), and ‘Dressing in Hanfu gave me a unique sense of beauty compared to everyday clothing’ (5.92). These responses suggest that participants feel a strong connection to Chinese heritage, along with cultural pride and appreciation for the distinct aesthetics of Hanfu (Zong, 2023; Zhong et al., 2023). National traditional attire can deepen cultural identity and foster a sense of belonging, especially at heritage sites (Fan & Ip, 2023). This highlights how Hanfu serves not only as a link to history but also as an expression of cultural pride and individuality. Dressing in Hanfu transforms a typical tourism activity into an immersive heritage experience, allowing tourists to symbolically connect with their heritage (Chen, 2022; Zhou & Zhu, 2024). The aesthetic appeal of Hanfu enhances tourists’ experiences at historic sites, creating a sense of harmony between the costume and the cultural environment (Zhong et al., 2023).

5. Discussions

While the participants in this research may not represent all tourists who wear Hanfu to visit cultural destinations, their perspectives offer valuable insights into the appeal of Hanfu costume tourism and its impacts. This study’s contributions are categorised into three key areas.

First, Hanfu enriches cultural heritage tourism by enhancing tourists’ appreciation of traditional Chinese culture and fulfilling their quest for unique, aesthetically significant experiences. Cultural heritage tourism enables visitors to connect with history and engage meaningfully with cultural traditions (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Traditional costume like Hanfu provides a deeper cultural immersion, fostering understanding and meeting tourists’ desires for distinctive experiences that diverge from everyday life (Cohen, 1979; Chhabra, 2010). As a garment with thousands of years of history, Hanfu embodies values and aesthetics from various dynasties, offering a tangible link to China’s heritage. Donning Hanfu not only immerses tourists in Chinese tradition but also strengthens their emotional connection to history (Yan, 2023). Unlike viewing artifacts in a museum, wearing Hanfu at heritage sites allows tourists to actively participate in the cultural experience, aligning with Urry’s (1990) concept of the ‘tourist gaze’, which gains depth through active involvement. This participatory approach provides a more intimate encounter with culture, allowing tourists to embody ancient Chinese aesthetics briefly. Additionally, Hanfu offers an aesthetic escape from modern fashion trends, reintroducing the distinctive, ornamental beauty of traditional costume (Zong, 2023; Zhong et al., 2023). According to Pine and Gilmore’s (1998) ‘experience economy’ model, today’s consumers value experiences that are memorable and emotionally resonant. Hanfu satisfies this by allowing tourists to adopt a different cultural identity temporarily. This trend mirrors other cultural practices, such as wearing kimonos in Japan’s cultural districts, which similarly deepens cultural engagement and offers aesthetic escapism (Farsani & Jamshidi, 2021).

Second, social media significantly influences Hanfu costume tourism by motivating tourists to visit specific destinations, dress in Hanfu, and share their experiences online. Platforms like Little Red Book accelerate the spread of Hanfu culture by showcasing people in traditional costume at historical sites, acting as tools that

promote cultural heritage while shaping travel behavior (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Social media functions as both an informational source and a motivator, shaping tourists' intentions by enabling them to imagine similar experiences (Dwityas & Briandana, 2017). In the context of Hanfu costume tourism, social media supports a collective identity among Chinese heritage enthusiasts. The Hanfu movement aligns with a broader trend that emphasises Chinese culture and identity, gaining momentum through social media communities. Enthusiasts gather online to share experiences, offer travel advice, and discuss the cultural significance of traditional costume, creating a space where cultural pride and heritage can be shared. This online community fosters a sense of belonging that further motivates Hanfu tourism participation, reinforcing cultural identity and connecting like-minded individuals. Social media's interactive nature also enhances its impact on travel decisions; comments, likes, and shares provide validation and encouragement, which reinforces the intention to participate. Instant feedback on shared photos and videos fosters a sense of accomplishment, positively influencing travel intentions (Dwityas & Briandana, 2017). Such the post-sharing gratification creates a feedback loop that sustains interest in Hanfu costume tourism.

Third, the growing popularity of Hanfu costume tourism among Chinese tourists reflects a strong cultural identity and a desire for meaningful, ritualistic experiences. Hanfu, the traditional clothing of the Han Chinese, is not merely a fashion choice; it symbolises cultural heritage and historical continuity. Amid rapid modernisation and globalisation, a group of Chinese tourists, particularly younger generations, are reconnecting with their roots. This resurgence is part of a broader movement to preserve and celebrate traditional Chinese culture, resisting the pressures of modernisation (Huang, 2023). The revival of Hanfu reflects a nationalistic desire to assert cultural pride in a globally uniform world, symbolising a stronger connection to historical traditions. In tourism context, dressing in Hanfu represents an embodied practice of cultural engagement. Tourists dress in Hanfu as part of an immersive experience to reconnect with their heritage, viewing it as more than a visual novelty. This ritualistic engagement with the past offers emotional and symbolic significance, allowing tourists to participate actively in the traditions of their ancestors (Zhou & Zhu, 2024). By embodying the past, tourists reinforce their collective memory and identity through a form of cultural reenactment. The rise of Hanfu costume tourism aligns with a broader trend in China toward cultural tourism. As tourists increasingly seek personalized and meaningful experiences, they are drawn to activities that offer deeper engagement with their heritage (Cui & Song, 2024). Hanfu costume tourism exemplifies experiential tourism, emphasizing interactive and participatory activities over traditional sightseeing (Zhou et al., 2019; Zhong et al., 2024). By dressing in traditional costume, tourists not only learn about the past but also experience it in an interactive way. This shift toward experiential travel reflects a growing desire for authenticity and emotional resonance in tourism, as travelers seek more than just sightseeing—they aim for a personal, cultural connection.

6. Conclusion

This study examined Hanfu costume tourism in China, highlighting its cultural, aesthetic, and social motivations. By analysing survey data, the findings reveal how Hanfu costume tourism allows participants to connect with Chinese heritage, blend tradition with personal style, and reinforce collective cultural identity. This research shows how dressing in Hanfu enables tourists to form an emotional link with China's history and aesthetic legacy.

The study contributes to cultural heritage tourism in three ways. First, it shows how dressing in Hanfu at historical sites boosts cultural authenticity and emotional engagement, turning passive observation into an immersive celebration of history. This aligns with experiential tourism theories, suggesting that sensory involvement deepens the tourism experience. Second, the study highlights social media's role in promoting Hanfu costume tourism. Social media spreads Hanfu culture and fosters community among enthusiasts by displaying travelers' experiences, reinforcing identity-based motivations and social trends in cultural tourism. Finally, the study sheds light on contemporary cultural identity expressions in modern China. Hanfu costume tourism's popularity reflects a movement among younger generations to reconnect with tradition amid globalization, expressing a reimagined cultural identity that honors heritage. This trend suggests a commitment to preserving Chinese culture and opens avenues for future research on Hanfu's social and economic impacts within tourism.

This study has two key limitations. First, it relies solely on self-reported data from an online survey, which can introduce response bias, as participants may present socially desirable answers or omit certain details. Second, the study is limited by its focus on Hanfu costume tourism in China, which may restrict the generalisability of the findings to other cultural or geographical contexts. Future research could address these limitations by employing a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or observational studies to capture more accurate and comprehensive insights. Additionally, expanding the scope of the study to include

cross-cultural comparisons could provide valuable insights into how motivations for wearing traditional costumes vary across different countries or regions. Further exploration of the influence of social media on tourists' decision-making and experiences could also deepen our understanding of its role in shaping cultural tourism trends. Longitudinal studies could help track how tourists' motivations for engaging in Hanfu costume tourism evolve over time, providing a more nuanced understanding of the long-term impact of such experiences on cultural heritage engagement.

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