Tourism Management and Technology Economy (2026)
Clausius Scientific Press, Canada

DOI: 10.23977/tmte.2026.090114
ISSN 2616-2199 Vol. 9 Num. 1

Optimizing User Experience in Cultural and Creative Markets for Tourism Consumption

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Keywords: Cultural and Creative Markets; Servicescape; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Grounded Theory; User-Generated Content; Tourism Consumption; Hangzhou

Abstract: As cultural tourism shifts toward experiential engagement, cultural and creative markets serve as essential carriers for urban consumption and local heritage. Taking Hangzhou Tianmuli Market as a case study, this paper integrates servicescape theory and cultural heritage tourism perspectives. Utilizing grounded theory on 2025 Xiaohongshu user-generated content, a three-level qualitative coding process identified six core dimensions: Market Activity Matrix, Spatial & Servicescape Creation, Product Ecosystem & Cultural Heritage Products, User Experience & Emotional Identity, Multi-business Synergies, and Urban Cultural Tourism Commercial Value Additions. Results indicate Tianmuli Market forms a closed-loop through thematic curation, minimalist servicescapes, and artisan offerings, effectively boosting regional tourist traffic and urban vitality. Strategic implications are provided across vendor service management, UGC experiential marketing, heritage product design, and digital smart tourism governance.

1. Introduction

As global tourism consumption transitions toward experiential and culturally immersive modes, cultural and creative markets have evolved into dynamic carriers for activating urban consumption vitality and broadcasting local heritage. In this context, user satisfaction is pivotal for sustainable market operations and regional tourism growth. Adopting grounded theory methodology, this study systematically extracts the core dimensions of user experience through three-level coding, aligning with refined content-driven market operations.

Research on creative markets originated in Western scholarship, examining tourist consumption motivations, product diversity, and entrepreneurial intentions [1-3]. Domestically, studies have focused on booth spatial design, subcultural engagement, and empirical experience evaluation [4-6]. However, systematic qualitative analysis on user satisfaction in landmark cultural and creative markets remains limited. To fill this gap, this paper examines Hangzhou Tianmuli Market through servicescape theory and cultural heritage tourism perspectives, conceptualizing it as an interactive servicescape that fuses physical environment, spatial layout, vendor service, and customer emotion to uncover mechanisms driving cultural tourism consumption.

2. Research Design

2.1. Research Methodology and Workflow

This study employs grounded theory on Xiaohongshu (Rednote) web post data collected using the keyword 'Tianmuli Market'. Using NVivo software, unstructured text underwent three-level qualitative coding (open, axial, selective) to extract core experiential dimensions. A 20% reserved validation sample confirmed theoretical saturation. The following figure 1 shows the research steps and basic study logic.

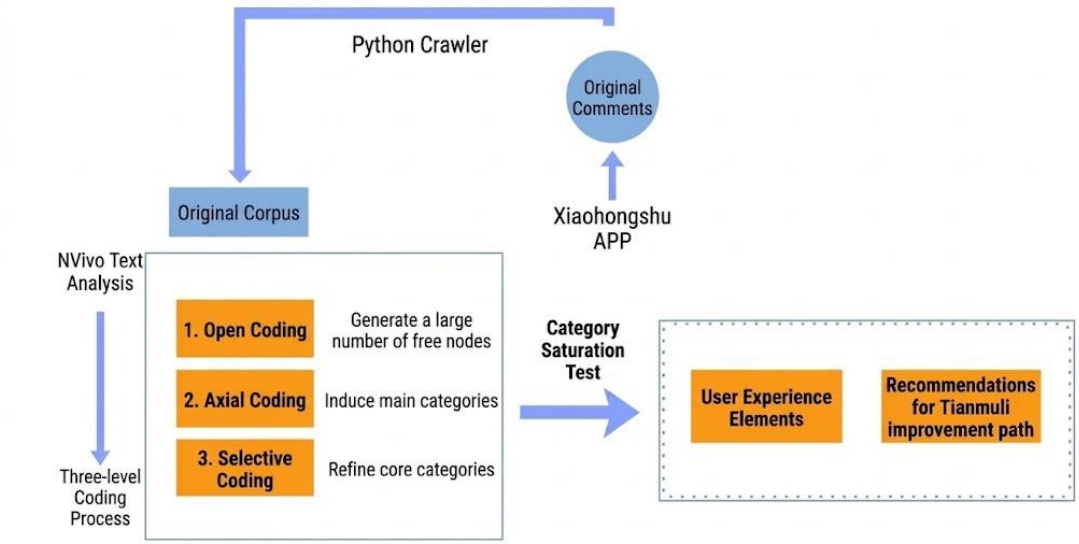

Figure 1: Workflow for user experience elements extraction

2.2. Data Mining and Data Cleaning

Xiaohongshu post data covering the complete calendar year of 2025 were collected to ensure data continuity and thematic coverage. Combining images, text, and social interactions, Xiaohongshu provides spontaneous, contextually authentic word-of-mouth data from young consumers. Data cleaning involved manual filtering by the research team: (1) eliminating empty posts, titles-only, or pure emojis; (2) removing image-only posts lacking text; (3) excluding non-market posts (e.g., office leasing, museum exhibits) and sponsored ads; and (4) deduplicating identical user reposts. A final dataset of 1,160 valid posts was retained for qualitative coding.

2.3. Coding Workflow

Grounded theory is a systematic qualitative research methodology that follows the primary trajectory of 'Three-Level Coding -> Theoretical Framework Construction'. By subjecting qualitative data sequentially to open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, raw unstructured textual materials are progressively abstracted into initial concepts, sub-categories, and core categories, ultimately forming a conceptually dense theoretical model.

3. Analysis and Findings

3.1. Open Coding Phase

Raw posts were conceptualized sentence-by-sentence in NVivo to eliminate bias and extract initial labels. For example, a note mentioning 'bought nice stickers at underground market' (User ID: 2) was conceptualized as 'Cultural & Creative Goods' under 'Artistic Lifestyle' label. A query on 'must-drink coffees at coffee festival' (User ID: 4) yielded 'Coffee Festival' under 'Specialty Events' label. In total, 236 unique initial concepts were extracted. Table 1 presents representative open coding examples.

Table 1: Open Coding Conceptualization and Categorization Matrix

Item No.	Raw Data Excerpt	Initial Concept	Ref. Points	Category
1	1.17–1.29 Erdong Store at Tianmuli B1 'Nianwei Snake Fruit Market' daily 11:30–20:00, strolled, ate, and shopped!	Underground	30	Underground Market
2	Bought nice sticky notes/stickers/tape. Small scale, similar to usual B1 market, but still found a few favorites. Went late so stamp-collecting materials were gone, pity. Japanese stationery in Tsutaya Books is nice, Pingfang studio TN and stamps were there too.	Cultural & Creative Goods	33	Artistic Lifestyle
		Stationery Market	114	Themed Bookstore
3	Super many interesting craft stalls, plus lots of stalls had check-in activities, collected many small novelties haha. Recommend an outdoor TCM stall (didn't take photo), free consultation in afternoon, TCM pulse-reading was very accurate. Tomorrow is the last day, everyone come play!	Check-in Activity	258	Check-in Interaction
		Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) Stall	187	Market Stalls
4	Which are the must-drink coffees at Tianmuli Coffee Festival? Take advice!	Coffee Festival	240	Specialty Events
5	So many super interesting stalls! Most were plant-related, so happy seeing flowers/plants in spring. Passed an installation-like place called 'Da Kuai', told it was a soil exchange event, went in to sense plant & soil frequencies, essentially 'link' and 'relationship', super interesting!! Recommend experiencing it~ listen to your own frequency sound. Many	Food Products	66	Food Products
		Interesting Stalls	94	Market Stalls
		Affordable Price	42	Price Positioning
		Soil Exchange	21	Interactive Feeling

	food stalls too, ate fried green pepper stuffed with shrimp paste, delicious, 35 RMB/portion enough for two! A blueberry wine stall was good, but walked away and forgot to buy.			
6	Tianmuli Fragrance Festival again! Strolled all afternoon and finally found my holy grail perfume! Saw this perfume online before, comments called it a soft, cozy milk-sweet scent, smelled it today and understood / Buding Suo ·Summer Eve / initial spray is fresh sweet apple, then soft cotton and rose, clean pseudo-body scent!! Both guys and girls want to get close to~ Glad I came offline to smell it! Their booth is photo-worthy too!! Feels like stepping into Garden of Eden, red apples, great Christmas vibe!!	Photo-worthy Scene	40	Visual Recording
		Fragrance Festival	183	Specialty Events
		Spatial Ambiance	90	Atmosphere Perception
7	Good Times & Good Food Fermentation Festival~ Strolled at noon today, saw booth setups, all fermentation-related food~ coffee, seasonings, snacks, tea... all delicious! Finally understand why Tianmuli is a trend crowd hub, so artistic! Love Hangzhou's overall landscaping, working here seeing nearby public facilities adjusted with flowers and trees decorated beautifully~ Love it!	Trend Crowd Hub	10	Peer Group
		Public Amenities	9	Leisure Facilities
		Floral Landscaping	16	Surrounding Environment

3.2. Axial Coding Phase

Axial coding aims to uncover logical relationships and categorical hierarchies among open codes, consolidating initial concepts into higher-level sub-categories. This iterative process yielded 36 distinct sub-categories organized logically under six primary categories, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Axial Coding Category Structure

Primary Category	Sub-category	Initial Concepts (Representative Examples)
1.Market Activity Matrix	Market Theme Planning	Children's Day Event, Coffee Festival, Fragrance Festival, Fermentation Festival, Fingertip Creations, Planner/Journal Market, Worker Theme, Flower Music Festival, Themed Pop-ups
	Stamp Collecting & Check-in	Stamp collecting, check-in gift pack exchange, free small gifts, limited gift packs

	On-site Experience Projects	Swing dance, pickleball, cycling, DIY crafts, handicraft experience, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) experience, bamboo weaving, papermaking, baking tasting, perfume blending, retro hairdressing
	Art Exhibition Events	Art exhibition, installation art, printmaking, illustration exhibition
	Brand Pop-up Events	themed pop-up, brand collaboration pop-up events
	Cross-border Integration	Flower Music Festival, outdoor cinema, improvisational comedy, live band performances
	Event Timing & Location Setup	Market limited-time events, weekend sessions, weekday market, limited opening
2.Spatial & Servicescape Creation	Overall Campus Space	Tianmuli campus overall, architectural reflection, public spatial design
	Indoor Market Space	B1 level, 1F Plaza, indoor market, underground
	Outdoor Market Space	Waterfront, lawn, courtyard, riverside walkway, central water mirror
	Landscape Amenities Space	Waterfront, central water mirror, fountain water features, shade trees, maple forest, green plants, red leaves, fallen leaves
	Functional Service Space	Children's area, rest benches, retail shops, art museum, Tsutaya Books, service desk
	Transportation Amenities Space	Lianhua Street, walkways, parking lot, subway exit, riverside walkway
	Spatial Aesthetic Design	Grey space, enclosed courtyard, fair-faced concrete, glass, spatial scale design
3.Selection & Heritage Products	Creative & Handcrafted Goods	Handmade items, ceramics, jewelry, illustrations, stationery, planners, printmaking, indigo dye, wooden toys, handmade ornaments, ICH artifacts, vintage goods, merchandise gifts, pet merchandise
	Catering & Food Services	Coffee, special drinks, craft beer, western food, bakery, desserts, pizza, Yunnan cuisine, creative light meals, juice, smoothies, tea, bistro catering
	Product Category Diversity	Category diversity, full category, multi-category
	Product Design Uniqueness	Designer items, unique design, niche design, original design
	Product Curation & Booth Design	Strictly selected items, booth design, aesthetic display, micro-theater style booth
	Consumption Pricing & Benefits	Peripheral gifts, affordable items, per capita consumption, paid projects, free gifts
4.User Experience &	Scene Atmosphere	Ambiance, vintage style, American style,

Emotional Identity	Experience	relaxed/chill, healing, upscale, bustling, quiet, noise, spacious, soft colors
	Leisure & Relaxation Experience	Leisure relaxation, comfortable, cozy, weekend leisure, holiday outings
	Parent-Child Interaction	Stroller walking, parent-child, kids, children, parent-child interaction, child-friendly
	Photo & Check-in Experience	Photo-worthy, aesthetic, sunset light/shadow, blue hour, film texture, photography, taking photos, check-in, video recording, camera shooting
	Emotional Value Satisfaction	Gentle, childlike, artistic, niche, refined, emotional value, immersive experience
	Revisit & Loyalty	Revisit, return visit, recommendation, market brand loyalty
5.Multi-business Synergies	Market Operational Management	Operational management, event rules, fee standards, event duration
	Supporting Service Completeness	Supporting services, service completeness, wayfinding system, park facilities
	Foot Traffic & Queue Management	Long queues, crowded, congestion, flow control, weekday/weekend traffic balance
	Wayfinding & Guidance Services	Stamp maps, guide pamphlet, spot guidance, visit guide
	Promotion & Marketing Operations	Social media dissemination, Xiaohongshu posting, hashtag operations, publicity promotion
6.Urban Tourism Value Additions	Local Cultural Dissemination	Intangible heritage experience, local culture, native culture, local heritage
	Urban Tourism Landmark	Tianmuli, urban tourism landmark, new cultural life landmark
	Activation of Consumption Vitality	Urban consumption vitality, boosting cultural tourism consumption, night economy development
	Integrated Cult-Tourism Development	Cultural tourism integration, destination building, urban leisure functions
	Urban Renewal Empowerment	Urban renewal, community commercial activation, creative ecosystem building, youth culture hub

3.3. Selective Coding Phase

Selective coding involves re-abstracting and integrating axial categories to isolate core central categories that articulate the overarching logic of the phenomenon. Following deep synthesis of Table 2, this study derived six core dimensions that drive user satisfaction and commercial engagement at Tianmuli Market: Market Activity Matrix, Spatial & Servicescape Creation, Product Ecosystem & Cultural Heritage Products, User Experience & Emotional Identity, Multi-business Synergies, and Urban Cultural Tourism Commercial Value Additions. These six dimensions interlock synergistically

to form the core driving mechanism of Tianmuli Market.

3.4. Theoretical Saturation Verification

To test theoretical saturation, a reserved validation sample comprising 20% of the total dataset (~230 posts) was independently coded. Comparative analysis revealed that all newly extracted concepts fit squarely into the existing six core dimensions and 36 sub-categories, with no new conceptual categories or structural relationships emerging. This confirms that theoretical saturation was achieved.

4. Model Analysis and Managerial Implications

4.1. Market Activity Matrix Creation

Tianmuli Market maintains a high-density event tempo, hosting bi-weekly pop-ups and monthly festivals (e.g., Bread, Coffee, Fragrance Festivals). This seasonal matrix establishes recognizable social media brands that resonate strongly with youth demographics and align with regional 'youth-development city' policies.[7]

4.2. Spatial and Servicescape Creation Capability

Industrial minimalist architecture and the central Water Mirror Plaza create an attractive servicescape for social check-in photography, though complex layouts suggest room for wayfinding optimization.

4.3. Uniqueness of Product Selection and Heritage Offerings

Tianmuli differentiates itself through themed curation and artisan originality, incorporating intangible cultural heritage (ICH) elements (e.g., bamboo weaving, indigo dyeing) as core heritage service offerings. Such products transform physical goods into authentic 'heritage service offerings' that deliver rich cultural immersion.[8]

4.4. User Experience and Emotional Identity

The combination of architectural aesthetic design and youth-centric festival programming cultivates a relaxed spatial atmosphere. Active social media users generate organic user-generated content (UGC) that acts as word-of-mouth marketing, establishing a self-reinforcing loop where physical scenes attract check-ins, and online check-ins generate foot traffic.

4.5. Multi-business Synergies and Urban Tourism Value Additions

The closed-loop chain of 'Theme Planning -> Spatial Hosting -> Product Curation -> User Reach' generates cross-city tourist traffic, enhances Hangzhou's reputation as a 'Digital Cultural Tourism City', and provides low-barrier incubation platforms for local creative micro-entrepreneurs.[9-10]

4.6. Strategic Managerial Implications

Four strategic recommendations are derived for operators and destination management organizations（DMOs):

1) Vendor Screening and Service Quality Co-Creation: Establish a theme-matching audit and train

vendors as frontline service co-creators of the heritage servicescape.

2) UGC Experiential Marketing: Proactively design themed check-in spots and hashtag challenges to amplify digital word-of-mouth.

3) Customer Retention and Repeat Visit Promotion: Foster long-term loyalty through ICH artisan workshops, community calendar notifications, and exclusive member experiences.

4) Digital Governance and Smart Tourism: Utilize crowd heatmaps and data dashboards combining social sentiment with on-site spend to optimize spatial governance.

5. Conclusions

This study applies grounded theory to 1,160 Xiaohongshu posts, integrating servicescape and cultural heritage perspectives to identify six core dimensions driving Tianmuli Market's success. The findings reveal a synergistic closed loop—"Theme Planning → Spatial Hosting → Product Curation → User Reach"—where aesthetic servicescapes and heritage offerings stimulate a digital loop: "scenes attract check-ins, and check-ins feed traffic."

Theoretically, it extends servicescape theory to dynamic cultural markets, showing how physical environments and intangible heritage co-create brand loyalty. Practically, it outlines four replicable pathways (Content-Driven, Spatial Aesthetics, Original Ecosystem, Digital Integration) and actionable strategies for vendor management and digital governance. Future research should expand to multi-platform data and apply quantitative models (e.g., SEM) across diverse regional cases.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Tourism College of Zhejiang Research Fund (Grant Number: 2025QKYB04).

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