

Research Article

Narrative Experience Integration in Landscape Design Curriculum: A Case Study of Jiaxing Henggang Art Village

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Abstract

In response to the dilemmas in traditional rural landscape design education, this study takes Henggang Village, a typical Jiangnan watertown in Jiaxing, as a practical carrier to explore a data-driven teaching reform model integrating landscape narration, sensory experience and aesthetic perception. Based on field surveys and questionnaire data from 330 visitors, this research constructs an integrated evaluation system by combining the Activity-setting-Experience-Benefit (AESB) and Plot-Experience-Assessment-Reflection (PEAR) models, and systematically analyzes tourists' demographic features, behavioral preferences, spatial perceptions and experiential feedback. The findings indicate that visitors highly appreciate the natural scenery, artistic spaces and humanistic environment of Henggang Village, while the perception of folk customs and historical context remains weak, and the interactivity of cultural activities and some functional landscapes needs improvement. Accordingly, this study proposes a closed-loop teaching framework of “narrative theory–case analysis–investigation–design optimization”, which effectively addresses the deficiencies of conventional courses such as overemphasis on form rather than connotation and insufficient practical training. This teaching mode enhances students' abilities in cultural translation, spatial narration and evidence-based design innovation, provides a replicable paradigm for rural landscape curriculum reform, and offers empirical support for the sustainable development of rural cultural tourism.

Keywords

Poetic Countryside, Landscape Narrative, Experience Research, Rural Landscape Design

1. Introduction

Landscape narrative, poetic countryside construction, sensory and aesthetic experience are the core theories of rural landscape design [1]. Research on rural landscape and tourism experience is carried out from multiple dimensions such as emotion, environment, culture and facilities. It optimizes design based on tourists' situational perception and emotional feedback, enhances the attractiveness and competitiveness of

rural areas, realizes sustainable development, and creates a high-quality experience that is safe, comfortable and rich in cultural connotation [2].

In the literature Sensory Experience of Experiencers: Research Review and Prospect by Wu Xinyang, Liang Xuecheng and Song Hang from Northwest University, profound insights

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into experience research are presented. The scholars emphasize the selection of research methods, the importance of immersive experience, the integration of specific cultural experiences, the multidimensional analysis of tourism experience, the new trends of user experience, and the role of sensory experience in tourism [3]. Relevant research findings help to further explore the design and optimization strategies of tourism experience, so as to meet the needs of experiencers and improve their satisfaction.

Long Yalin and Wu Jun from Zhejiang Gongshang University pointed out in the paper *A Review on the Application of Aesthetic Experience in Tourism Research at Home and Abroad* that aesthetic experience plays an indispensable role in the tourism industry, covering cultural and artistic experiences such as folk crafts and folk performances, as well as novel experiential forms including literary tourism and animation tourism [4]. Aesthetic experience and poetic experience are both key components of contemporary rural tourism experience, which provide important theoretical reference for the research on aesthetic perception, aesthetic emotion and artistic conception creation. These theories constitute the core teaching content of the course *Rural Landscape Design*.

The research on rural landscape narrative experience intends to inherit local culture and upgrade cultural tourism experience through landscape design and narrative expression, highlighting the dual value of ecology and culture [5]. At present, the traditional curriculum has obvious shortcomings: attaching importance to formal design while neglecting cultural connotation leads to students' inadequate ability of cultural interpretation and transformation; emphasizing design creation over field research results in the lack of support from real user experience; focusing on classroom theoretical teaching rather than practical training causes disconnection between teaching cases and actual rural sites; valuing final design results while ignoring the whole training process fails to form a complete training system, making it difficult to cultivate professional talents who can adapt to the development of rural cultural tourism [6].

2. Construction of Landscape Narrative Teaching System Based on Henggang Village

2.1. Selection of Teaching Basis and Practical Carrier

This course adopts the teaching mode of theory + case analysis + field investigation + data-based design [7], and takes Henggang Village of Jiaxing as the core research case and practical teaching base. As a typical Jiangnan water town, the village is endowed with abundant local cultural resources. It adheres to the concepts of art-driven village revitalization and sustainable spatial construction, and presents a well-structured hierarchical spatial layout and innovative design techniques.

Meanwhile, it owns a complete landscape narrative system and detailed research data [8].

The teaching process deconstructs the logical framework of Henggang Village from the aspects of narrative theme, narrative clue, spatial arrangement and expression form. Combined with field investigation and empirical data, professional design training is carried out to realize the in-depth integration of theory, case study and practical application, so as to cultivate students' comprehensive capabilities in rural landscape narrative design [9].

2.2. Construction of Teaching Knowledge Points for Narrative Landscape

As a typical case of rural landscape narrative in the Jiangnan region, Henggang Village can provide systematic and comprehensive teaching support for rural landscape courses. Rooted in the regional characteristics of water towns, its landscape narrative covers five major themes: water town culture, sericulture heritage, folk opera, artistic intervention, and ecological countryside. It guides students to master core design concepts including the integration of nature and folk customs, industrial landscaping, experiential cultural creation, and the integration of tradition and modernity. It also expands extended teaching content involving industrial transformation and the sense of community belonging [10].

In terms of narrative structure, Henggang Village has formed a three-dimensional narrative system consisting of axis, time and nodes. It takes the water system and cultural context as the spatial axis, historical relics and artistic renewal as the temporal context, and diverse landscape nodes as narrative carriers, providing methodological references for students to construct spatial narrative logic [11]. At the spatial planning level, the village adopts a layout integrating points, lines and planes. Landscape nodes carry cultural connotations, street and alley circulation lines connect scene sequences, and ecological zones set off the overall spatial atmosphere. The touring route is arranged following the narrative rhythm of introduction, development, transition and conclusion, which effectively cultivates students' ability of spatial organization and plot arrangement [12]. In addition, Henggang Village has established four narrative expression modes: text, vision, environment and activity. Through textual interpretation, old building renovation, rural style shaping and folk custom experience, it systematically realizes the visualized presentation of local culture, forming a replicable and referable practical paradigm for the teaching of rural landscape narrative.

3. Teaching Implementation: Practical Teaching Based on Questionnaire Data

This study integrated field reconnaissance and questionnaire survey. The framework and items of the questionnaire

were determined through on-site investigation, with a focus on tourists' perceptual evaluation of the artistic rural construction and parent-child educational experience in Henggang Village [13].

Taking Henggang Village as a case study, this research constructed a feedback mechanism between landscape narrative and tourist experience. By integrating the two experience evaluation models, namely AESB and PEAR, the dimensions

of spatial perception and experiential cognition were further added. Tourist experience was divided into four modules: basic characteristics, perception, experience, and feedback. Specifically, perception included themes and plots, while narrative experience covered three narrative dimensions, namely scenic spots, environment, and activities [14]. (such as Figure 1)

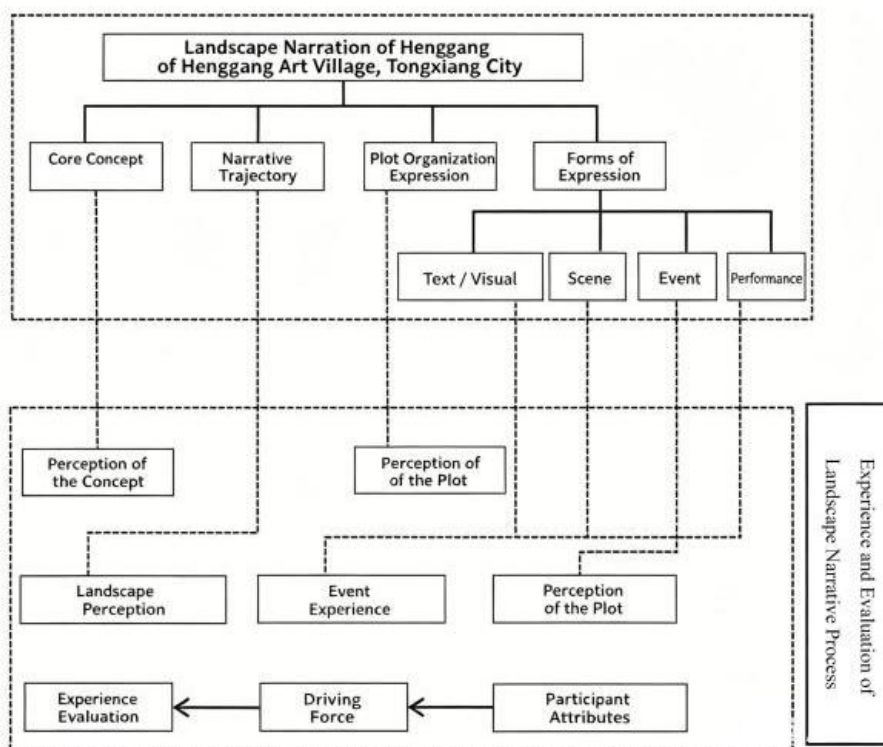


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of Narrative Experience Research.

To ensure the scientific accuracy of the research, the questionnaire adopts declarative sentences of narrative experience and uses an agreement scale to collect evaluation feedback. Meanwhile, it focuses on the application of narrative techniques in scenic spots and commercial environments, providing a basis for landscape design and experience optimization

[15]. The table sorts out the main components, subcategories, expression forms, and graphic-text options of the questionnaire framework, fully presenting the questionnaire design system (such as Table 1).

Table 1. Questionnaire Design Framework System.

Number	Category	Subcategory	Expression way	Text/Pattern Options
1	Theme Connotation	Core Theme	Literal Description	Historical Culture and Rural Characteristics & Style
		Auxiliary Theme	Picture Display	Ancient Architecture, Traditional Cultural Activities
2	Narrative clue	Time Clue	Timeline Display	Timeline from tradition to modernity
		Spatial Clue	Map Annotation	Geographical Location and Scenic

Number	Category	Subcategory	Expression way	Text/Pattern Options
				Spot Distribution
3	Plot Arrangement	Setup, Development, Turn, Resolution	Plot Description	Preliminary Impression, Experience Change, Feelings and Memories
		Climax Node	Highlight Display	Scenic Spots or Activities, Emotional Resonance
4	Viewer Experience Based on Landscape Narrative	Viewer Perception	Theme and Plot Perception	Satisfaction with plot arrangement
		Viewer Experience	Scenic Spot, Environment, Activity Narrative	Scenic Spot Evaluation, Environmental Perception, Participation and Preference
5	Basic Characteristics of Viewers	Viewer Feedback	Satisfaction and Suggestions	Visitor satisfaction, improvement suggestions and expectations.
			Basic Information Collection	Age, gender, occupation, travel purposes and expectations.
6	Viewer Motivation		Motivation Survey	Analyze visitors' motives and interests in Henggang Village.

This survey on Henggang Village selected 330 visitors as samples and carried out a systematic analysis from three dimensions: demographic characteristics, behavioral characteristics, and venue visiting and spatial staying features. The respondents were mainly young, highly educated, middle-income local visitors. The 25–34 age group accounted for 52% of all participants, and those with a bachelor's degree or above reached 84.5%. Occupations were dominated by company employees and enterprise managers with strong consumption power, and tourists mainly came from Jiaying and surrounding areas.

First-time visitors made up 64.2% of the total, whose primary motivation was leisure and relaxation, followed by accompanying relatives and friends as well as taking photos and checking in at scenic spots. Tourist information was mainly acquired through word-of-mouth from relatives and friends, suggesting that the scenic publicity and brand influence of Henggang Village still have much room for improvement.

The living area of Henggang Village integrates folk customs and commercial experiences, showing prominent differences in spatial visiting popularity. Xiaoyan Post Station and rural kiln sites enjoy high visitor flow, while art studios present a relatively low visiting rate. Spatial characteristics, visual landscape and cultural atmosphere are core factors influencing tourists' folk custom perception and place attractiveness.

The above results comprehensively reveal the tourist structure, behavioral preferences and spatial utilization rules, providing empirical data for rural landscape upgrading, commercial format layout and practical teaching research.

3.1. Overall Perception of Landscape Narrative

The vocabulary association survey indicates that tourists hold the highest recognition for the natural scenery of Henggang Village, accounting for 59.7%; the recognition of rural cultural elements such as pastoral sericulture and handmade cultural creativity accounts for 21.0%. However, tourists present a weak perception of folk stories and historical context. The cognitive proportion of folk dwellings is only 37.9%, and the in-depth cultural identity merely stands at 9.0%, revealing inadequate expression of cultural dissemination.

In terms of atmospheric perception, more than half of the tourists perceive the environment as quiet, elegant, peaceful and leisurely, while a small number sense diverse emotional tones and nostalgic atmosphere. Meanwhile, some tourists feedback that the landscape creation appears slightly stiff and the consumption pricing is relatively high. It is essential to further explore cultural connotations, optimize landscape construction and consumption supporting facilities, so as to comprehensively enhance tourism experience and cultural tourism quality (such as Table 2).

Table 2. Perception of Scenic Spot Thematic Impression.

Category	Theme Description Vocabulary	Frequency (N=330)	Frequency
Narrative Theme	Pastoral Culture: Duck Farm / Sericulture / Rice Farming Culture	125	37.9%
	Folk Story Themes: Folk Customs / Folk Dwellings / Dyeing Workshop / Craft Workshop / Performances (Cross-talk / Acrobatics) / Bamboo Weaving	30	9.0%
Environmental Elements	Nature Category: Water source / Trees and shrubs / Farmland / Plants	197	59.7%
	Culture Category: Jiangnan folk dwellings / Chinese style / Retro / Simple and quaint / Ancient / Alley / Courtyard / Ancient charm	72	21.0%
Overall Atmosphere		123	37.3%
	Modern Fashion: Diversified / Ambiance / Slow Life / Nostalgia	197	59.7%
	Beautiful Environment: Elegant / Distant / Secluded / Clean / Fresh / Serene	185	56.1%
	omfortable Sensation: Quiet / Tranquil / Easy / Leisurely / Comfortable / Relaxed	72	21.8%
		121	36.7%

3.2. Plot Perception

There are significant differences in the narrative experience between functional spaces and pastoral landscapes in Henggang Village.

In terms of functional spaces, Xiaoyan Post Station achieves the highest evaluation score of 3.70 due to its unique renovated architectural form. Henggang Academy boasts a strong cultural atmosphere with a score of 3.63. The Shadow Puppet Museum scores 3.54 for integrating performance appreciation and hands-on experience. Henggang Restaurant

gains 3.39 points, and its experience is susceptible to environmental and weather conditions. The Artist Studio ranks the lowest among all functional spaces with only 2.97 points, owing to its weak narrative sense and lack of memorable spatial features.

Regarding the narrative perception of pastoral landscapes, Henggang Grid (3.46 points), Cultural and Creative Bridge & Zhoumu Bridge (3.45 points), and Time Corridor (3.36 points) gain high recognition for their artistic design and light-and-shadow creation. By contrast, Waterside Dream attains merely 2.98 points with an overall unsatisfactory experience, caused by its complicated visiting circulation and insufficient interpretation of water town culture (such as Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3. Evaluation of Functional Spatial Narrative Experience in Henggang Village.

Option	Project Description	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Little Duck Station	Duck Station: Henggang Village's visitor center rebuilt from an old shed.	4.1	3.0	19.9	25.8	39.5	3.70
Shadow Puppetry Museum	Rural old houses regain new vitality via traditional elements.	3.3	4.1	19.9	27.3	34.7	3.54
Henggang Academy	Once a Qing private school, now a venue for culture and education.	2.6	5.9	17.0	26.6	38.4	3.63
Artist Studio	Scattered in the village, each studio boasts unique design and vibe.	1.8	10.3	20.7	10.3	34.3	2.97
Henggang Restaurant	Rural and modern styles merge in the restaurant's dining space.	3.0	5.9	26.9	20.3	32.5	3.39

Note a: The values 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in the table represent the percentage of respondents who selected each item.

Table 4. Evaluation of Spatial Narrative Experience of Outdoor Landscape in Henggang Village.

Option	Descriptive item	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Dream-seeking in Water Town	The design combines steel and stone to create layered mountain-like forms and undulating steps.	2.3	4.7	20.7	21.5	27.7	2.98
Henggang Grid	Extract Mondrian's line-plane composition and blend it with Henggang Village's story to forge a new artistic structure.	4.5	5.8	17.8	29.2	32.0	3.46
Corridor of Time	Combine roadside blue bricks with glass blocks for layered light and shadow space.	0.7	6.8	23.1	21.2	33.5	3.36
Cultural and Creative Bridge, Zhoumu Bridge	Windmills and acrylic refraction endow the bridge with vivid light, shadow and sound.	0.9	5.2	24.3	20.9	35.5	3.45

Note a: Values of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in the table represent the percentage of respondents

3.3. Cause Analysis Based on Narrative Expression Experience

To further explore the underlying causes of visitors' perceptions of narrative themes and plots, this section investigates tourist experience from three perspectives: scenic narrative, environmental narrative, and activity narrative.

In terms of landscape narrative, there are prominent differences in the experience scores of the three major thematic types in Henggang Village. Monet Garden (3.83), performance activities (3.80), and rural custom DIY experiences (3.73) obtain relatively high scores with favorable visual and cultural perception. By contrast, the Bamboo Weaving Culture Museum achieves only 3.23 points due to its static exhibition mode and insufficient interactive design, resulting in a weak overall experience.

From the perspective of environmental narrative, more than half of the tourists take photos and check in at scenic spots,

among which homestays, pastoral scenery and landscape sketches are the most popular, while only 23.6% of tourists have obvious perception of light and shadow aesthetics. Tourists show strong preference for parent-child activities (86.4%), nature education and farming experience. Natural environment (4.52) and architectural courtyards (4.32) rank high in satisfaction scores, whereas the cultural atmosphere (3.53) is regarded as inadequate. Correlation analysis indicates that educational background and income level are significantly negatively correlated with environmental evaluation.

In terms of activity narrative, fruit picking (83.3%) and art workshops (76.4%) record the highest participation rate, while night tour activities and public welfare schools see relatively low engagement. In the activity satisfaction evaluation, nostalgic space ranks the highest with a score of 4.01, while interactive DIY sessions and cultural performances gain lower scores. Tourists with higher educational attainment and income tend to hold higher requirements for activity content and quality, thus presenting relatively lower satisfaction (such as Table 5, Table 6, Table 7 and Table 8).

Table 5. Environmental Experience Evaluation.

Environmental Experience and Benefit Items	Mean
01—Exquisitely laid-out buildings and courtyards are ideal for photography.	4.32
02—Superior farmland and water landscapes with diverse plants bring aesthetic enjoyment.	4.52
03—Distinct spatial decoration creates a strong cultural atmosphere.	3.53
04—Rustic countryside lacks cultural depth and historical vibe.	4.01

Table 6. Correlation between Environmental Evaluation and Participants' Characteristics.

Activity Experience Items	Mean
01 – Visiting Xiaoyang Station and Henggang Bookstore arouses nostalgia for the past.	4.01
02 – Rich interactive DIY activities are fun and enrich folk experience.	3.01
03 – Excellent shows delight people and enrich cultural cognition.	3.11
04 – Leisure relaxation via reading, tea break and foot bath.	3.87

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 7. Evaluation of Activity Experience.

Item	Educational background	Monthly income
01 – Evaluation of Commercial Space and Workshop Cultural Activities	-.280	-.197
03 – Performance & DIY Cultural Activity Evaluation	-.210	-.170

Table 8. Correlation Analysis between Activity Evaluation and Visitors' Characteristics.

Item	Educational Background	Monthly income
01 – Architectural Style Environment Evaluation	-.280	-.197
02 – Pastoral Natural Environment Evaluation	-.301	-.120

Note: indicates correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; indicates correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

3.4. Feedback on Visitors' Experience

The overall tourism satisfaction of tourists in Henggang Village reaches 80%. Post-visit feedback shows that visitors' core gains are mainly reflected in leisure relaxation and emotional social interaction. Among them, 87.9% of tourists reported effective recovery of physical strength and energy, 64.2% gained spiritual relaxation and tranquility, and 74.2% believed the tour enhanced emotional bonds with family and relatives. In terms of cultural perception, 57.3% of tourists perceived local rural cultural customs, and 56.7% acquired further understanding of folk culture. Nevertheless, the survey also reveals prominent shortcomings: only 37.9% of tourists achieved self-value improvement during the visit. It indicates that the scenic area is still deficient in the depth of cultural experience, connotation transmission and competency cultivation, and tourists' perception of folk culture fails to match the cultural heritage of the village. Subsequently, it is necessary to design immersive rural cultural activities, strengthen interactive experience and cultural narrative communication, so as to further enhance tourists' sense of cultural acquisition and self-value realization.

Survey results indicate that tourists are mainly young and middle-aged residents with high educational attainment and middle income. Their core demands focus on parent-child activities, nature education and farming experience, and they show a preference for visiting and photographing pastoral landscapes, homestays, and handmade craft sites. Tourists report the highest satisfaction with the natural environment (4.52) and architectural courtyards (4.32). Landscape nodes including Xiaoyan Post Station, Henggang Grid and Time Corridor deliver favorable visitor experience. The survey also identifies existing problems: weak historical and cultural atmosphere, inadequate folk custom narration, low scores for interactive activities and performances, and underperforming spaces such as the Artist Studio and Waterside Dream. The findings provide empirical support for subsequent landscape teaching, and offer data reference for Henggang Village to optimize visiting circulation, strengthen cultural narration, enhance interactive experience and improve industrial layout. It also helps rural landscape design better conform to human-oriented needs and cultural inheritance.

4. Characteristic Innovation and Practical Value

Targeting the pain points of the rural landscape course, this study constructs a teaching chain of narrative theory – case analysis – investigation analysis – design optimization. Tourists' feedback is integrated throughout the whole teaching process, realizing the in-depth integration of theory and practice. Based on the regional characteristics of the Jiangnan water town, it inherits local cultural elements and cultivates students' ability in poetic rural design and local cultural translation. A closed-loop teaching system of theory–case–data–practice is established to make up for four major deficiencies in cultural translation and spatial narrative. Meanwhile, it guides students to face up to research limitations and develop rigorous scientific research thinking [16].

Relying on the intangible cultural heritage resources of Henggang Village, such as sericulture, bamboo weaving and folk opera, the teaching strengthens the instruction and translational training of cultural symbols. It further deepens the teaching of street and lane narrative, draws on the experience of village layout, and enhances spatial appeal through art installations. Meanwhile, it optimizes the teaching of tourist route and wayfinding design by connecting core landscape nodes and adding narrative storylines to improve touring coherence. In line with the demand of parent-child cultural tourism, the teaching strengthens the training of interactive experience project design. Furthermore, a data-driven teaching system is constructed by integrating questionnaire surveys and data analysis, so as to cultivate students' capabilities in data application and design iteration and form a complete closed-loop teaching mechanism.

5. Conclusion

Based on the research on the landscape narrative experience of Henggang Art Village in Jiaxing, this study fully integrates the research findings into the curriculum teaching reform system. It constructs a teaching mode supported by empirical data, centered on landscape narrative, and implemented through field practice. The proposed model effectively improves students' core professional competence, provides a practical path for talent cultivation in the context of rural revitalization, and realizes the in-depth integration of academic research and curriculum teaching. It can serve as an important reference for the teaching reform of rural landscape-related courses in design majors.

Abbreviations

AESB	The Activity-setting-Experience-Benefit
PEAR	The Plot-Experience-Assessment-Reflection

Author Contributions

Qi Yancheng: Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Resources, Software, Supervision, Writing – original draft

Ma Mengyun: Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Validation, Writing – review & editing

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Data Availability Statement

The data is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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