

# The Interactive Path of Cultural Symbols in Ethnic Tourism Consumption

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**Abstract:** The process of tourism consumption in ethnic tourism destinations is the process of symbolization of national culture. National culture has become the capital to enter the operation of national tourism economy. The consumption of national cultural symbol products emphasizes interactive consumption. Tourists are no longer passive recipients of ethnic tourism products, but take the initiative to experience, interpret and even create ethnic tourism products by virtue of the situation of ethnic tourism destinations. Therefore, the consumption process of ethnic tourism is a process of consumption interaction, which reflects a kind of symbolic interaction. Symbolic interaction is represented by the "interpersonal" cultural interaction among tourists, tourism practitioners and local residents. Among them, the interpersonal interaction between tourists and tourism employees is the most frequent. Secondly, it also shows the cultural interaction between tourists and "characters" in ethnic tourism situations. The cultural interaction of "people" is mainly manifested in the situation created by tourists through cultural information such as words and images to realize the interpretation of national tourism cultural symbols.

**Keywords:** Ethnic Tourism Consumption, Cultural Symbols, The Interactive Path

## 1. The Theory and Significance of Symbolic Interaction

The theory of symbolic interaction comes directly from the efforts of American pragmatism philosophy and Chicago School scholars. Through the development of Kuli, Thomas, Meade, Blume and Goffman, it has become an important theory with a unique theoretical perspective and methodological basis. In 1934, Meade (George Herbert Mead, 1863- 1931), a professor at the University of Chicago, systematically discussed the theory of symbolic interaction for the first time. The basic viewpoint of symbolic interaction theory shows that symbols play an important intermediary role in the process of people's social interaction, and human-to-human interaction is carried out by using symbols. This is symbolic interaction. Human behavior is a meaningful behavior. To understand behavior, it is necessary to explain the meaning that the actor gives to his or her activities. In the process of interaction, people often explain their thoughts and intentions from the perspective of others by playing the role of others, and use it as a basis to guide their own behavior. In other words, people tend to know themselves from the attitudes and opinions of others towards themselves, and then form and modify their self-concepts.

## 2. The Interactive Path of Cultural Symbols in Ethnic Tourism Consumption

### 2.1 The "Intermediary Role" of Traditional Cultural Symbols of Ethnic Tourism in the Interaction

Human interaction depends on symbols. Symbols play an important intermediary role in the process of people's social interaction. Without symbols, there is no interaction between people. The interpersonal interaction between subjects and guests in ethnic tourism activities also depends on traditional cultural symbols. Semiotics believe that a symbol is something that reminds us of something other than a sensory impression. It means that a symbol is another thing that represents something, which is not only a material object, but also a psychological effect. The symbol in ethnic tourism activities is the symbol of national traditional culture. It includes language, words and pictures; gestures, postures and expressions; national folk behavior, cultural information and event media, etc. Subjects in ethnic tourism activities are all people. People give things meaning to create symbols, and act

according to the interpretation of meaning. First of all, the interaction of ethnic tourism is the exchange of concepts and thinking. The communication of concepts is abstract. It can only be carried out with the help of a certain carrier, and this carrier is the symbol of traditional culture. In the communication of ethnic tourism, the symbols with social attributes, such as identity, status, appearance, role, behavior and so on, provide clues for others to interpret themselves. At the same time, the self also knows others through these symbols. When we carry on the ethnic tourism communication with the help of the symbol of national culture and traditional culture, it will make the tourism interaction more efficient. Because through the exchange of cultural symbols in ethnic tourism destinations, imagination can be generated and extended. We can understand the meaning of constant change. The exchange of cultural symbols in ethnic tourism destinations can enable people in ethnic tourism to share information. The interaction of ethnic tourism is a process in which the interactors in tourism use symbols to convey feelings and carry out interpersonal communication and sharing of information meaning. If there is no ethnic cultural tourism symbol, there will be no ethnic tourism activities.

### ***2.2 The Interactive Path in Ethnic Tourism***

Professor Xie Yanjun describes the symbolic interaction in tourism communication. He believes that the communication between tourists and others is a process of transmitting symbols to each other. The enlightenment of symbolic interaction theory to ethnic tourism symbol consumption is that tourism consumption is completed in the tourism world. The symbolic characteristics of the tourism world determine that ethnic tourism consumption is a kind of symbolic interactive consumption. The interaction of tourism consumption symbols in ethnic tourism destinations is shown by the interaction between tourists and the "interpersonal" symbols of tourism destination residents and tourism employees, and the interaction between tourists and the "people" symbols attracted by tangible tourism. Because the "symbolic interaction theory" emphasizes that human behavior has a certain meaning, it is necessary to explain the meaning in order to understand the behavior. And in symbolic interaction, people are used to explaining their thoughts and intentions from the perspective of others, and use them as a basis to guide their own behavior. Therefore, in the interpersonal symbol interaction in ethnic tourism, tourism practitioners should pay close attention to the behavior of tourists. It is necessary to interpret their speech symbols and body language symbols to clarify their behavior intention, judge their service needs and their satisfaction with their own services, and then adjust and improve their own service behavior. At the same time, the determination of meaning depends on the background and situation of the interaction, and the meaning is modified and developed in the process of interaction. Therefore, ethnic tourism destinations should create a background and scene conducive to interaction. Tourists should change the concept of passive consumption and actively participate in the interactive process to achieve value-added tourism experience.

### **3. The "Interpersonal" Interaction in the Symbolic Consumption of Ethnic Tourist Destinations**

The "interpersonal" interaction in ethnic tourism consumption is the interaction between subject and object with the help of symbols. In the communication of ethnic tourism, the subject and object should send symbols to each other in order to express their intention and convey information. After receiving the symbol, the other party begins the scene setting process. That is, according to their own background, and then consider the situational factors of the system to interpret the symbol, understand the meaning and respond to the symbol. At this time, the symbol was passed on to the earliest sender. The sender redefines the situation according to the returned symbol. For example, when ethnic tourists watch ethnic song and dance performances (body language symbols) in ethnic tourism destinations, they will interpret national culture and judge whether the performance is good or bad according to their existing background knowledge and the specific environment at that time. When they are satisfied, they either applaud with language symbols or applaud with dynamic body signs. When they are not satisfied, they may hiss or laugh. At this point, the performer will accept the symbol and interpret its meaning. Then the performer will react. They either use language symbols to explain and improve the work of tourists, or use dynamic body language symbols to perform more assiduously and diligently. When tourists accept the performer symbols, they will respond positively with more enthusiastic applause (dynamic language symbols). From this we can see that the path of symbolic interaction is actually a reciprocating process. As shown below Figure 1:

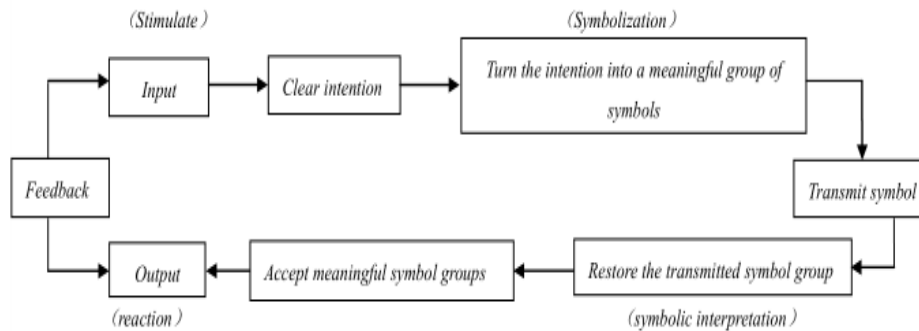


Figure 1. The interactive path of "interpersonal" symbol

In ethnic tourism consumption, ethnic tourism consumption is a part of the exchange of tourists' social identity. When tourists return to their place of residence for display and gifts in front of others, it is the self-presentation of tourists. Tourists use ethnic tourism consumption as props to look forward to other people's attitude towards themselves. In this sense, ethnic tourism consumption constructs the grade and taste of the class to which people belong. Ethnic tourism consumption has become a symbol of tourists' self-externalization, through which tourists confirm the existence of "I" to the outside world. Sometimes tourists consume ethnic tourism products just to keep them as a souvenir. So it allows tourists to determine and identify with the social identity of "guest" in the ethnic tourism scene, and obtain self-confirmation. Therefore, the "interpersonal" symbol interaction in the consumption of ethnic tourism destinations is mainly reflected in the process of ethnic tourists accepting tourism services and experiencing ethnic tourism and national traditional culture. The symbolic interaction of "interpersonal" is embodied in "subject-object interaction". "interpersonal" interaction is mainly realized through "role" symbols and "behavior" symbols. Specifically, let's take a look at the "interpersonal" symbol interaction of "subject-object interaction" in national food consumption.

Each party participating in the interaction often plays the roles of encoder (symbolization) and decoder (symbol interpretation) at different stages, and exchanges these roles with each other. Thus it can be seen that between the subject and the guest, each party and each person is not only the sender and receiver of the information, but also the encoder and decoder of the information. Information can be constantly decoded and then encoded according to one's own understanding. The key issue of symbol interaction is the determination of the meaning of symbols, that is, the interpretation of symbols. In fact, this is also the hub of symbolic interaction. People take actions to achieve interaction based on the understanding of the meaning given to things. The main factors that affect the interpretation of ethnic tourism symbols are the cultural background of both the host and the guest and the situation of ethnic tourism. The interaction in ethnic tourism activities depends on the consensus between the two sides on the symbolic meaning of the traditional culture of ethnic tourism. The situation in the theory of symbolic interaction refers to the situation of ethnic tourism, which is the situation or scene faced by the interaction between the subject and object of ethnic tourism. Any meaningful symbol can accurately express its meaning only in a certain situation.

#### 4. The Symbolic Interaction of "People" in Ethnic Tourism Consumption

The interaction of "people" symbols in ethnic tourism consumption is mainly manifested in the context created by tourists through symbols such as words, images, cultural information, etc., to realize the interpretation of national culture and to produce the interaction and communication between national tourism destination culture and tourists and their social culture. The interaction of "people" in ethnic tourism consumption is not for tourists to experience ethnic tourism culture passively, but for tourists to take the initiative to experience or even create the symbolic value of ethnic tourism. On the one hand, tourists are required to have high cultural literacy, on the other hand, ethnic tourism destinations are required to provide tourists with good ethnic tourism scenes. Therefore, in the interaction of "people" symbols, tourists should first understand the traditional culture and its uniqueness of ethnic tourism destinations and master certain aesthetic methods. When interpreting the tourism landscape, we can combine the senses with association and imagination to realize the value-added experience. Ethnic tourism destinations should provide tourists with tourism scenes with national traditional cultural symbols in order to stimulate their experience inspiration and help them explore the value of national cultural symbols. Let's take a look at the interaction between the pictures and photos

of the travel brochure and tourists.

Tourists in the ethnic tourism destination shooting process, through the lens to understand and understand the current image. They have a multi-dimensional communication with the culture and society of ethnic tourist destinations. So the pictures and photos in tourism have the space to interact with tourists. Photography in tourism activities is expressed through images. There is no doubt about the symbolic meaning of the picture. In a tourist activity, when you press the shutter at the tourist landscape you are interested in, the scenery stays behind. There is a relationship between the image (image) and the scene in the photo. Image is the interpretation and reproduction of the actual scene. This image symbol indicates that there is a "such" image in a tourism situation. Especially when these image symbols are used as promotional materials for tourism merchants, intermediaries and media, the images will retrieve and present the scenery in the tourism scene in a certain way. When tourists receive a series of tourism information, such as picture advertisements, postcards, tourism brochures and so on, these images have an attractive effect. So the tourists went to "there" in accordance with the instructions of the photo. Tourists use pictures to preserve the ethnic tourism scene at that time through the camera. Tourists get people's memory of the scenery or scenic spot in the ethnic tourism situation by repeatedly watching the on-the-spot photos at that time, and these photos are preserved for a long time. They left it in tourists' "photo albums" and "photo albums" as a souvenir. The photo confirmed that he was in the scene of ethnic tourism at that time. As the material evidence of "visit here", it creates a kind of "material symbol" (kinen). The photos represent the state of "guest and self" in tourism and its relationship with all kinds of things at that time. Every time you look at it, you will think of the time and the matter. So the photo became a souvenir for myself. In this case, it has become a prop for self-communication. It allows tourists to determine and identify with the social identity of "guest" in the tourism scene. It becomes the symbol of self-inner expression. When tourists bring the photos back to their place of residence as a "gift" (omiyage) to display in front of others, it is a presentation of the tourists themselves. In this case, photos are used as props for tourists to show off or communicate with the outside society in order to convey information and meaning to them. In this sense, tourism photography constructs the meaning of self-external expression. As Costa (Costa) said, "tourists display souvenirs as part of their self-presentation performances." In the course of this performance, he presents himself to others. The purpose of tourists' self-presentation is to show that they are not only a world traveler, but also a person who appreciates tradition and reality. " Because tourist souvenirs are not only the symbol of tourists' self-externalization, but also the symbol of self-internalization.

In the context of ethnic tourism, tourists are in different positions, standing from different angles, making use of different light, and living in different cultural backgrounds. They have different psychological states and use different photographic media (film, digital). They use different photography techniques and so on. All these determine that they can form unique images on the same "real scene". Peng Zhaorong called it "image invention". Because image symbols are "made" by human beings. The process of "manufacturing" is the process of solving the "code" of "real scenery". In the process of "code" narrating the "text", it not only forms its different "language" of color, artistic conception and emotion, but also constructs different "context" under the tourism situation. Under the "context" of the tourism scene, it is the communication between the "viewer" and the subject. It contains tourists' understanding of the culture of ethnic tourist destinations and their perception and understanding of national traditional culture. Cultural value and social culture construct this special "context". In the photos, it not only records the scenes of all kinds of ethnic tourist destinations in the process of tourism activities, but also records the people of ethnic tourist destinations or other events, behaviors, the status of local people and the relationship with ethnic tourist destinations. The photo is about the relationship between various things and factors in ethnic tourism destinations. It symbolizes the relationship between cultural value and society. This relationship lies in the multi-dimensional communication between tourists and ethnic tourist destinations. It describes the social reality in the ethnic tourism scene and expounds the accumulation process and experience process of tourists' tourism experience.

## 5. Conclusion

Modern society has entered a consumer society. The consumer society emphasizes the consumption of the symbolic value of the product. The era of symbolic economy has come. Tourism symbol economy is the product of the combination of tourism economy and symbol economy. It is an innovative economic form. It is a simulacra world with experience as the way to realize its value. Its consumption is from the result of consumption to the process of consumption, from product

consumption to meaningful consumption. In the consumption of ethnic tourism, ethnic tourists are not only the consumers of symbolic value but also the producers in the real sense. From the marketing point of view, the emphasis of ethnic tourism symbol economy has shifted from the promotion of product use value to the symbolic value orientation of customer demand. The marketing process attaches importance to the cultural representation and symbolic meaning of symbols. From the perspective of consumption, the consumption of tourism symbol economy is interactive consumption. Ethnic tourism destinations should create an interactive atmosphere and experience space for tourists, so as to realize the economic operation of ethnic tourism destinations in the interactive communication of consumption.

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