

Research on the Public Perception of Yangzhou Historical and Cultural Districts Based on Network Review Text Analysis

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Abstract The historical and cultural districts of a city serve as important cultural heritage and tourism resources. This paper focused on four such districts in Yangzhou and performed semantic analysis on online public comments using ROST CM6 software. According to the high frequency words, attention preference of district site elements, activities and feelings in Yangzhou historical and cultural districts were analyzed. Through the analysis of semantic network and public emotional tendency, the relationship between the protection and utilization of Yangzhou historical and cultural districts and the perception and demand of users were discussed, and some suggestions for the protection, utilization and renewal of historical and cultural districts were put forward.

Keywords Yangzhou historical and cultural districts, Text analysis, Public perception, Protection and renewal

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Historical and cultural districts serve as a reflection of a city's image and are a vital aspect of its heritage. Despite the cultural value these districts hold, they are under threat due to the rapid development of modern economies, which compresses traditional living spaces and landscapes. As a result, many historical districts that carry the memory of urban life have declined or vanished during the process of globalization, urbanization, and commercialization^[1]. Preserving the landscape of historical districts not only benefits their modernization but also safeguards their history, memories, and environment.

Tourism is the driving force of landscape protection and sustainable development. However, rapid tourism growth can negatively impact residents' lives, landscape and environment, tourist experience quality, and traditional culture^[2], resulting in excessive commercialization and cultural loss^[3]. Thus, for the sustainable development of historical and cultural districts, economic development, landscape protection, and cultural heritage must be mutually reinforcing. Moreover, cultural tourism can facilitate communication between economy and culture, contributing to the sustainable development of heritage sites^[4]. An essential step in promoting historical district protection and development is evaluating the current situation of public use perspectives.

Current researches on the evaluation of the use of historical and cultural districts are mainly in the form of questionnaires and interviews, such as the evaluation of tourist satisfaction

of Dongguan Street based on IPA analysis^[5]. However, data collection is limited due to time and manpower constraints, resulting in small sample size and restricted spatiotemporal coverage. With the emergence of internet technology and big data, analyzing massive online review data for public perception has become widespread in various fields, such as the landscape evaluation of urban parks^[6], the perception of cultural ecosystem of urban parks^[7], the public experience perception of national parks^[8], the tourism image perception of botanical gardens^[9], the perception of cultural heritage utilization of the Grand Canal, and the evaluation of Hangzhou Grand Canal historical and cultural district^[10-11]. In addition, an exploratory study of encounters with giant pandas in Chengdu and leisure sports tourism development strategy in coastal recreational areas were put forward based on tourism experiences^[12-13].

1 Research area

Yangzhou is one of the first national historical and cultural cities renowned for its rich cultural heritage and historical districts, which are concentrated in the ancient canal area. These districts, including Dongguan Street, Renfengli, Wanzi Street, and Nanhexia, feature a wealth of cultural relics and traditional buildings that reflect the city's historical significance and unique character. The historical urban area of Yangzhou in the Ming and Qing Dynasties spanned 5.09 km², making it one of the few well-preserved ancient cities in China (Fig.1). Among

its 1.47 km² of intact landscape, Nanhexia Historic District was the first to be recognized as a Chinese historical and cultural district in 2015 by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage. The three districts of Dongguan Street, Wanzi Street, and Renfengli were also designated as "Jiangsu Historical and Cultural Districts" by the Provincial Construction Department and the Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau in 2016.

Yangzhou historical and cultural districts have become an important attraction for cultural tourism, exemplified by the national 4A-level tourist attraction Dongguan Street, which has received over 100,000 visitors daily at its peak. Since 2012, more than 3,000 evaluation data have been collected from tourism and social networking sites, providing valuable insights for analysis of tourist perceptions. The introduction of four historical and cultural districts in Yangzhou is shown in Table 1 and Fig.2.

2 Data sources and methods

The data of this study were collected from the popular comment website (<https://www.dianping.com/>) and social media Sina Weibo. A web crawler tool was used to gather evaluation information related to the four historical and cultural districts in Yangzhou. By 2022, a total of 3,176 network evaluations were collected. Because there were few comments before 2016, and Yangzhou historical and cultural districts were only announced after 2016, the data from 2016 to 2022 were selected as the research

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object. Data cleaning was performed to eliminate duplication, official propaganda, meaningless text, and modify the review format. Finally, 2,394 reviews were obtained.

ROST CM6 software was used for semantic analysis, and proper nouns such as place names were added to the word list for word segmentation. The top 300 high-frequency words were extracted and analyzed. Based on these high-frequency words, this paper analyzed the attention preference of district site elements, activities, and feelings in Yangzhou's historical and cultural districts. Through the analysis of semantic network and public emotional tendency, the relationship between the protection and utilization of Yangzhou's historical and cultural districts and users' perception and demand was discussed.

3 Results and analysis

3.1 Frequency analysis

ROST CM6 software was used to analyze the word frequency of effective reviews, and the top 300 high-frequency words were counted. To remove synonyms, the top 80 high-frequency words were screened (Table 2). The high-frequency words include place names, scenic spots in and around the districts, and tourists' activities and feelings. Among the four historical and cultural districts in Yangzhou, Dongguan Street has the highest frequency of 1,334, followed by Renfengli (155), while Wanzi Street (41) and Nanhexia (23) are outside the top 80. As a representative of the historical and cultural districts, Dongguan Street is the most popular and mature scenic spot and is an important tourist attraction in Yangzhou. The other three districts are still under development and have not received sufficient publicity. Foreign tourists are not familiar with them, and the number of evaluations is significantly less than that of Dongguan Street.

After removing all place names and meaningless words, the high-frequency words in the evaluation texts were classified into three categories: district site elements, activities, and feelings. District site elements were further divided into three subcategories based on the characteristics of the keywords: architecture elements, food elements, and cultural elements (Table 3).

The district site elements directly reflect the landscape and supporting elements of Yangzhou's historical districts, which are the most intuitive focus of tourists. The high-frequency words in this category, such as "old streets", "store" and "alleys", represent the

most basic elements that make up the districts. Among them, the frequently mentioned "scenic spots" include the famous "Slender West Lake", "Merchant Wang's Residence", "He Garden" and "Daming Temple" within the districts and Yangzhou City. These scenic spots and historical districts evaluations appear together because most of them are included in the tourist route, making them an important part of Yangzhou's historical and cultural tour. "Architecture" and "ancient buildings" are also an important part of attracting tourists' attention, including the "former residences" of many celebrities in the four historical districts, as well as the "gate tower", "city gates" and "city walls" that reflect the ancient city of Yangzhou. "Ancient Canal" and "Grand Canal" are also high-frequency words, as they are an important part of the Grand Canal cultural belt, complementing the historical and cultural districts. Canal tours also mostly coincide with visits to historic districts, so "Wharf" is often mentioned in reviews.

In addition, "garden" and "ancient town" are also important elements. The characteristic gardens within the districts are very rich, and their popularity is even higher than that of the districts themselves. They are representative attractions in the districts tour. Yangzhou is also rich in ancient town resources, mostly distributed around the Grand Canal, which is one of the choices for tourists to visit. In terms of travel needs, tourists also show a high level of interest in service facilities such as "inn", "hotel" and "restaurant", while "library" and "memorial" are less frequently mentioned, but are also popular choices for many tourists.

The public evaluation of historical districts reveals that food, cultural, and activity elements are all crucial to the visitor experience. As the "Capital of Food", Yangzhou's rich food culture is a highlight for tourists, who seek out specialties like "large meatball", "lotus root starch", "sweet dumplings" and "steamed stuffed buns". The popularity of Huaiyang cuisine is a frequent topic, along with "morning tea" and other local experiences. Famous restaurants like "Cuchadanfan" are highly recommended.

Cultural elements, including tangible heritage like "cultural relics", "historical sites" and "heritage", as well as intangible cultural expressions like "Xiefuchun", "Ming and Qing Dynasties" and "Shuibaoqi, Pibaoshui" are also highly valued by visitors.

Among the high-frequency words in the district activities, "evening" is a very prominent time description, far higher than "daytime". Both tourists and local residents tend to come

to the districts for leisure and entertainment at night and participate in evening activities such as the Grand Canal night tour and night market. Walking activities like "shopping", "strolling" and "walking" are popular, as well as traditional tourist activities like "touring", "playing" and "visiting". Food-related activities like "eating", "tasting" and "beer and skittles" are also prominent, along with "shopping" and "taking photos".

Adjectives used to describe the districts show positive evaluations, with "worth", "beautiful", "fun" and "happy" reflecting visitors' moods. Terms like "lively", "bustling", "prosperous" and "have everything that one expects to find" indicate the popularity of the districts, while terms like "primitive simplicity", "lingering charm", "delicate", "antique" and "literary" convey the cultural heritage and historical significance of the districts. However, there are also some criticisms about homogenization in some areas, such as "almost", "similar", "much of a muchness".

3.2 Semantic network

In the network analysis map, "Yangzhou" and "Dongguan Street" are in the core position with the most connections, indicating that Dongguan Street is the representative of Yangzhou's historical and cultural districts (Fig.3). "Culture", "history" and "old street" in the sub-core position represent the district's types and functions. Around the core area, the peripheral vocabulary reflects the supplement to the historical and cultural districts, including "business", "store", "time-honored brand", "ancient canal", "fine food", "snack", "Slender West Lake", etc., which are representative elements of the historical and cultural districts and important scenic spots around them. From the connection intensity, it can be seen that the vocabulary of "Dongguan street", "old street" and "district" on behalf of historical districts and "Yangzhou", "fine food", "characteristics", "culture", "snack" and "evening" maintain a high degree of connection, reflecting the most direct impression of historical and cultural districts for the public.

3.3 Analysis of public sentiment tendency

Through the emotional analysis of ROST software, the percentages of positive emotion, neutral attitude and negative emotion of Yangzhou historical and cultural districts comments were 70.30%, 15.32% and 14.38%, respectively.

Positive emotions and negative emotions were segmented and counted, and the weights

Table 1 Introduction of four historical and cultural districts in Yangzhou

District	Basic information	Feature
Dongguan Street Historical and Cultural District	Located in the northeast of the ancient city of Yangzhou in Ming and Qing Dynasties, the district is adjacent to Taizhou Road in the east, Guoqing Road in the west, Wenchang Road in the south, and Yanfu Road in the north, covering an area of 32.47 hm ² . It is named after the Dongguan Street that spans the east and west of the district, and because there is a parallel Dongquanmen Street in the south of Dongguan Street, commonly known as Shuangdong	Formed in the Tang Dynasty, followed by the handicraft industry and commercial area in the city, which was particularly prosperous in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The traditional streets and alleys constitute the backbone road network of the district. Classical gardens such as Ge Garden reflect Yangzhou's superb gardening skills. Many historical celebrities have lived here
Wanzi Street Historical and Cultural District	Located in the middle and east of the ancient city in Ming and Qing Dynasties in Yangzhou, it covers an area of about 32.5 hm ² from Pishi Street in the east to Guoqing Road in the west, and from Guangling Road in the south to Guqi Pavilion and Lianhua Bridge East Lane in the north. It is named because there is Wanzi Street in the district from northeast to southwest	During the Tang and Song Dynasties, the area was a residential area in the city. After the construction of the new town in the middle of the Ming Dynasty, it integrated citizen life and marketplace. Among them, there are historical and cultural relics such as the old site of Yangzhou church, Dongyue Temple, Wei's salt merchants' residence, Weipu, Meihua Academy, etc.
Renfengli Historical and Cultural District	Located in the middle of the ancient city of Yangzhou in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, it covers an area of 12.07 hm ² from Xiaoqinhuai River in the east to Yingchun Lane and Shi Lane in the west, and from Ganquan Road in the south to Qixiang in the north	The street system continues the characteristics of the Lifang system in the Tang Dynasty and is distributed in a fishbone shape. It preserves historical and cultural relics such as Jingzhong Temple, Ruanyuanjia Temple, etc.
Nanhexia Historical and Cultural District	Located in the southeast of the Ming and Qing Dynasties ancient city of Yangzhou, it covers an area of 42.03 hm ² from Xuningmen Street in the east to Dujiang Road and Fujiadian in the west, and from the middle of Nanhexia Street and Garden Lane in the south to Guangling Road in the north. It is named for its proximity to the ancient canal	Formed in the middle of the Ming Dynasty, and the historical sites associated with salt are very rich. There are many salt merchants' houses, guildhalls, and classical gardens, including Di Garden, Ping Garden, He Garden, Xiaopangu, Bi Garden, etc.

Table 2 The top 80 high-frequency words of historical and cultural districts

Rank	High-frequency words	Frequency	Rank	High-frequency words	Frequency
1	Yangzhou	1,893	41	Breath	74
2	Dongguan street	1,334	42	Tickets	73
3	History	610	43	Traffic	73
4	Old street	573	44	Ancient city	73
5	Snack	432	45	Large meatball	72
6	Characteristic	401	46	Specialty	70
7	Store	318	47	Sweet dumplings	69
8	Place	276	48	Former residence	69
9	Worth	274	49	Overall length	69
10	Culture	258	50	March	67
11	Fine food	236	51	Gardens	67
12	Scenic spot	230	52	Time	66
13	Business	225	53	Handicraft	66
14	Evening	181	54	Suit	66
15	Delicious	177	55	East to	65
16	Dongguan	173	56	Gate tower	62
17	Alley	157	57	Xiefuchun	61
18	Renfengli	155	58	Hotcake	59
19	Architecture	148	59	Marketplace	59
20	Slender West Lake	128	60	Business street	58
21	Alive	125	61	China	58
22	Taste	121	62	Night scene	57
23	Various	121	63	Inn	57
24	Time-honored brand	121	64	Almost	57
25	Stroll	120	65	Fireworks	56
26	Tourist	116	66	Land and water	56
27	Prosperous	114	67	Scene	55
28	Tour	114	68	Play	53
29	Representativeness	110	69	Religion	53
30	Ancient canal	105	70	Nearby	53
31	The Grand Canal	105	71	Scenic area	52
32	In town	94	72	Well-known	52
33	Antique flavour	94	73	Tradition	51
34	Stand in great numbers	89	74	Gate	51
35	Guoqing	87	75	Regions south of the Yangtze River	51
36	Local	83	76	Lotus root starch	50
37	Many	82	77	Free of charge	49
38	Famous	80	78	Ancient town	48
39	Centre	77	79	Historical site	47
40	Feeling	75	80	Convenient	46

of emotional attitude words were divided into three intervals: general, moderate and high. The assignments of positive emotions are general (0-10), moderate (10-20) and high (above 20), respectively. The assignments of negative emotions are general (-10-0), moderate (-20-10) and high (below -20). The greater the positive value is, the stronger the public's positive emotions are. On the contrary, the greater the negative value is, the stronger the public's negative emotions are. At present, the positive attitude towards Yangzhou historical and cultural districts is much higher than the negative attitude (Fig.4).

Highly positive comments reveal the characteristics of the district, such as Dongguan Street, that attract the public. For instance, the architecture not only reflects the historical and cultural heritage of Yangzhou, but also sets it apart from other districts.

Comments like "Yangzhou's historical district buildings are quite ancient and distinctive", "Yangzhou's famous landmark buildings are very beautiful" and "There are many true ancient buildings in this commercial street" illustrate this point. The local cuisine is another important reason for people to visit the historic districts, with Huaiyang cuisine being a particular standout. Comments like "The boiled dried silk is the most favorite taste, tender and delicious" and "You can eat from one side of the street to the other, love the food best" highlight this aspect. The beautiful night view of the historical districts also draws people for leisure and entertainment. Comments like "the night view is very beautiful, it's crowded with visitors, and it is good to go at night" attest to this. Additionally, the living atmosphere of the residents in the historical districts is an important

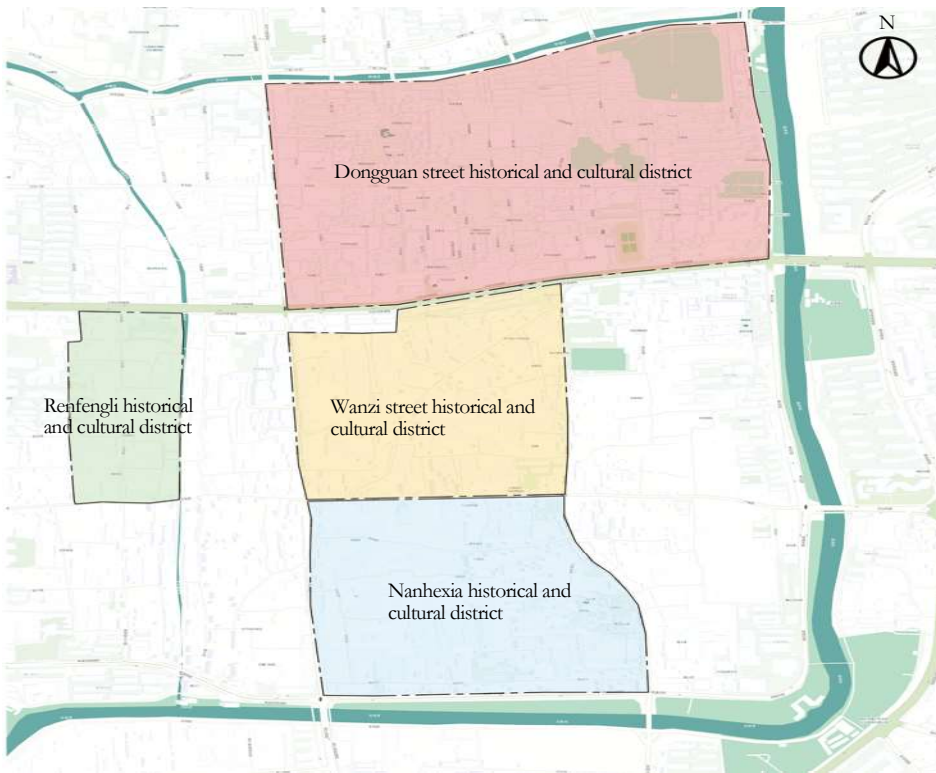
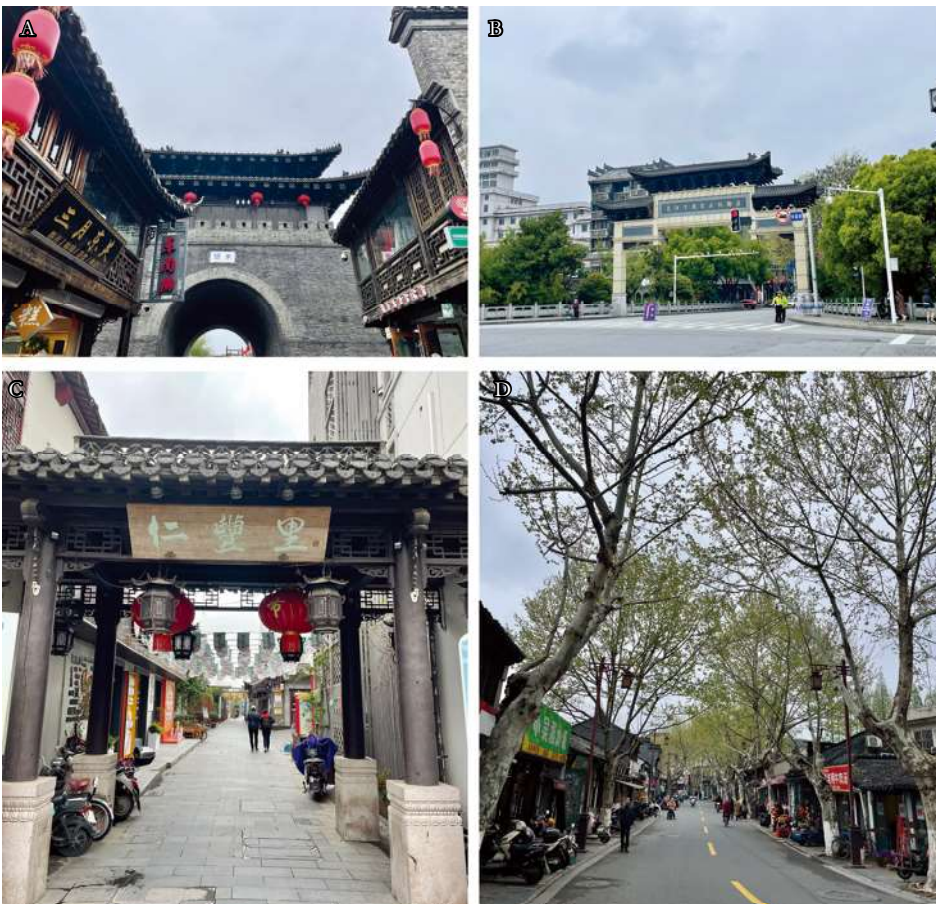


Fig. 1 Location map of Yangzhou historical and cultural districts



Note: A. Dongguan Street Historical and Cultural District; B. Wanzi Street Historical and Cultural District; C. Renfengli Historical and Cultural District; D. Nanhexia Historical and Cultural District.

Fig.2 Pictures of four historical and cultural districts in Yangzhou

factor for gaining praise, with comments like “there are always new elements on Dongguan Street; the old gentleman is playing the erhu, we all enjoy the quiet time” expressing this sentiment.

The highly negative evaluations also point to some issues that need attention. Firstly, some tourists reflect on the lack of unique characteristics in the historical districts, which they find to be similar to those in other cities. For example, one comment reads, “My personal feeling is that only a few attractions are worth experiencing, while others are similar to ancient streets in most cities.” Another points out, “The majority of them are already chain stores, which I don’t really like.”

The historical districts are located in the bustling old city, and traffic and management problems are also major reasons for the poor public experience. Comments mention that cars can’t get through easily and that Yangzhou lacks traffic police. One person writes, “It is particularly difficult to stop when going and pass through an alley.” There are also complaints about poor management, with annoying electromobiles, general food quality, high prices, and long queues being common issues.

Some comments also suggest that the history and culture of the districts are not prominent enough and that the commercial atmosphere overwhelms it. One person writes, “Yangzhou’s historical ancient street has a history of two thousand years, and there are still many old houses and former residences. The only problem is that the commercialization is too serious. It is suggested to go into the old alley to get close to the folk art such as Guqin, paper-cut and not to linger between the shops.” Another comment mentions, “The soul of Yangzhou alley is the aboriginal people. Dongguan Street has become a small commodity market now, and there are no aboriginal people. Pishi Street began to be occupied again, and recently began to build Renfengli.”

4 Conclusions

4.1 The development of four historical and cultural districts is uneven

Based on the number and content of evaluations, Dongguan Street has the highest popularity and tourist volume among the four historical and cultural districts. However, Renfengli and Wanzi Street have very little information available on major tourism websites and only a small presence on social platforms. Wanzi Street, Renfengli and Nanhexia are also the representatives of Yangzhou’s history and

culture, which are connected with each other and have their own characteristics. There are many cultural relics, celebrities' former residences, gardens and time-honored brands in the districts, which have great potential for cultural inheritance and tourism development. However, compared with Dongguan Street, the protection plan was formulated late, and only popular businesses were simply introduced, failing to fully take the advantages of the integration of residents' lives and cultural tourism. As a famous tourist city, Yangzhou has many scenic spots. The historical and cultural districts are located in the center of the old city and serve as an important settlement heritage on the ancient canal scenery belt. They are also a link to showcase the culture of Yangzhou. However, at present, only Dongguan Street has been highlighted, and the other districts have not been fully developed, leaving room for further growth and the formation of a more comprehensive network.

4.2 The format, historical sense, characteristics and consumption experience are the key factors affecting the evaluation

This study found that the overall evaluation of Yangzhou historical and cultural districts is high, and the key factors affecting the evaluation include the format, historical sense, characteristics and consumption experience of the districts. Both local citizens and foreign tourists visit these districts not only to see iconic scenic spots, but also to explore food, shopping, and experience the night scene and festival atmosphere. Therefore, service functions such as traffic, commodity types, food tastes, and prices are also important considerations, in addition to the historical heritage itself. The distinctive historical buildings often differentiate the districts from other similar scenic spots, encouraging visitors to choose them in the first place.

5 Strategy and suggestions
5.1 Grasping the individual style and overall unity

Based on the findings, it is evident that tourists prefer the historical and cultural districts with unique characteristics. In fact, the folk

customs and culture with regional differences are the embodiment of its authenticity and characteristics. The protection and inheritance of the real life of the aborigines in the districts is easy to arouse the resonance of tourists. The public's preference for "going to old

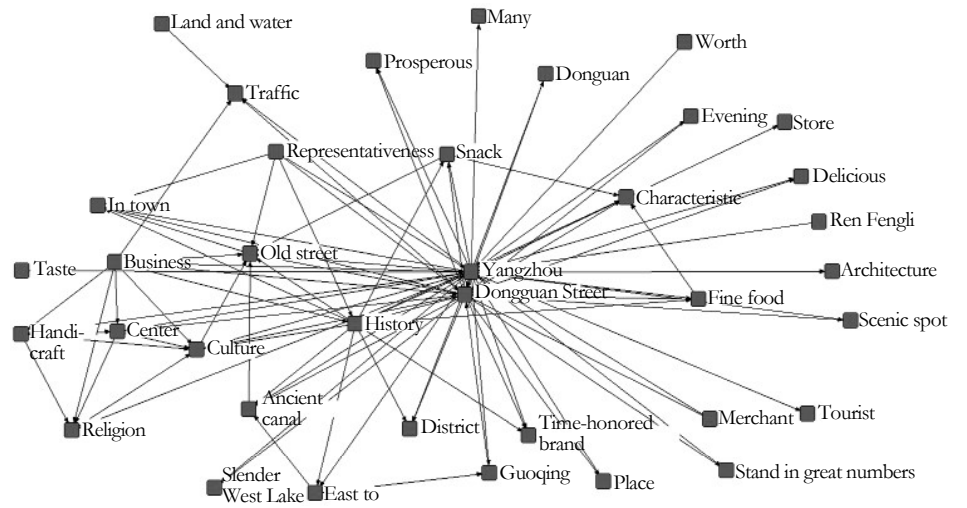


Fig.3 Semantic network maps of public evaluation

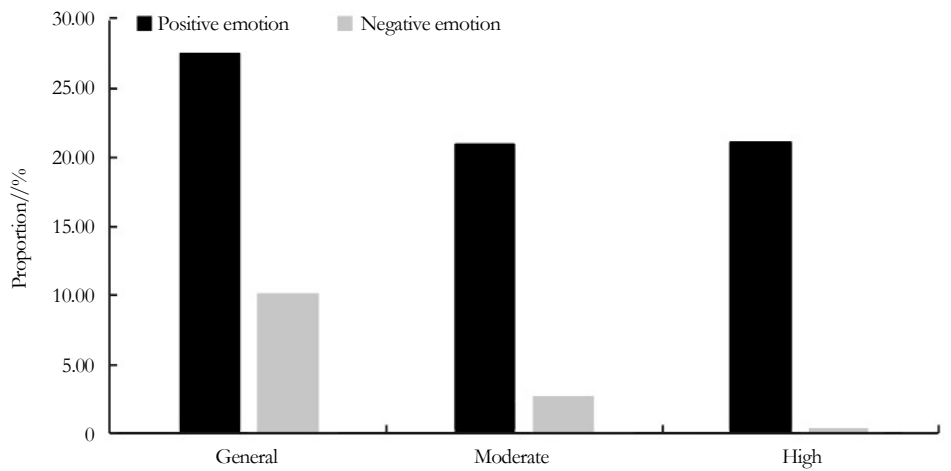


Fig.4 Statistical chart of public emotional disposition

Table 3 Classification of high-frequency words

Categories	Subcategories	Related high-frequency words
District elements	Architecture elements	Old street, alley, ancient town Scenic spot: Slender West Lake, Merchant Wang's Residence, He Garden, Daming Temple, ancient canal (The Grand Canal) Architecture (ancient building): former residence, gate tower, gate, city wall, wharf Gardens, library, memorial hall Store: time-honored brand, inn, restaurant
	Food elements	Specialty, large meatball, sweet dumplings, lotus root starch, steamed stuffed bun, baked wheaten cake, "Cuchadanfan", morning tea, crab, Huaiyang cuisine
	Cultural elements	Xiefuchun, religion, "Pibaoshui, Shuibaoji" Historical site, Ming and Qing Dynasties, cultural relic, heritage, celebrity
Activities		Evening, stroll (take a walk, go for a stroll, go window-shopping) Play (beer and skittles), tour (travel) Eat, visit, taste, shopping, photograph
Feelings		Worth, alive, crowded (bustling, jollification, crowded conditions) Prosperous, have everything that one expects to find, beautiful, interesting, fun Almost, similar, much of a muchness Primitive simplicity, lingering charm, delicate, antique, literary

streets” is actually a reflection of the demand for Yangzhou’s local lifestyle experience. To maintain the individuality of each district, it is recommended to adjust the proportion of local residents’ living space to business and other innovative formats. Moreover, the four districts should form a coherent tour system, unified with the overall style of Yangzhou and the Yangzhou section of the Grand Canal, to make “districts tour” one of the first choices for visitors.

5.2 Introducing innovative cultural activities

The research shows that the public’s perception of the types of activities relying on historical and cultural districts is limited, only visiting and eating. The deep-seated cultures such as settlements, gardens, and historical figures behind historical districts are missed. Because the attractiveness of cultural display forms to the public is lacking. The activities combined with holidays should be promoted and formed a tradition such as Dragon Boat Festival Folk Culture Festival in Renfengli.

Additionally, digital media can be used to disseminate the information of the heritage landscape, such as VR technology to introduce and reproduce the folk culture and traditional festival activities of the historical districts. A tourism brand including Dongguan Street with historical and cultural characteristics, Nanhexia with salt business culture, Wanzi Street with market folk characteristics and Renfengli with riverside activities can be built, instead of only walking through Dongguan Street.

5.3 Improving the district format and paying attention to the needs of indigenous and surrounding residents

To improve the public’s tour and consumption experience, district managers should

continuously enhance the district format and public space positioning. It is crucial to consider the needs of both tourists and indigenous and surrounding residents^[4]. The protection of the authenticity of life should be maintained, and public life should become a part of the district cultural rather than being overshadowed by business. This way, the historical and cultural districts can become the best carrier for the renewal of the ancient city.

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