

# A Study of the Impact of the Aesthetic Experience of Travel Photography on the Attractiveness of Female Travelers: Take Xishuangbanna Starlight Night Market as an Example

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**Abstract:** In the development of "her economy", women's economy has become an indispensable force. By exploring the attractiveness of the characteristic travel photography in the Xishuangbanna Starlight Night Market, we can understand the psychology of female consumers who are engaged in aesthetic consumption, digging into the deeper purpose of female consumption, and provide a theoretical basis for promoting female tourism and aesthetic consumption. Using MEC theory, we constructed four value chains: "A attribute - C consequence - V value". The results of the study show that: becoming the ideal self and deeply pleasing oneself (the aesthetic emotional level of emotional feedback) are the core values pursued by female consumers when they first consume travel photography; perceiving "I am beautiful" and becoming more confident (the aesthetic spiritual level of subject-object integration) are the core values of female consumers when they consume travel photography again; experiencing the ethnic characteristics and local flavor of Xishuangbanna (the aesthetic-spiritual level of subject-object integration) is the core value of female consumers when they consume travel photography again. Experiencing Xishuangbanna's ethnic characteristics and local flavor (aesthetic sensory level of physiological stimulation) is an important reason for female consumers to travel to the Starlight Night Market for photography.

**Keywords:** Female Consumer Psychology; Aesthetic Experience; Travel Photo Shooting

## 1. Introduction

"Her Economy" refers to a unique economic circle and economic phenomenon formed around women's financial management and consumption, as women's economic and social status improves, they have stronger consumption power and the effect of promoting economic activity is obvious<sup>[1]</sup>. The economic circle and the economic phenomenon around women's financial management and consumption have formed a unique economic circle. Therefore, understanding women's consumption psychology and aesthetic psychology is important for improving women's economic development. Unlike other economies, "her economy" has the obvious characteristic of "pleasing oneself", i.e., women will pay money for the things they like and love in order to pleasure themselves<sup>[2]</sup>. The "she-economy" has the obvious characteristic of "pleasing oneself", that is, women will pay money for things they like and love in order to pleasure themselves.

With the steady growth of Chinese residents' income, the power of smartphone photography technology and the rise of short-video socialization, as well as the enhancement of personalization and self-consciousness, the demand for images that record beauty and convey emotion through the lens continues to rise, prompting the demand for China's travel photography industry to continue to rise, and prompting China's travel photography industry to expand its market size<sup>[3]</sup>. The market size of China's travel photography industry is expanding.

In 2023, travel photography in Xishuangbanna exploded on China's social media platforms, with the number of posts, likes, comments, and shares on social media platforms ranking first steadily<sup>[3]</sup>. Most girls travel to Xishuangbanna Starlight Night Market, and travel photography

has become one of the items that must be consumed during the trip; therefore, Xishuangbanna Starlight Night Market was used as a case study to collect data for this study.

This paper adopts MEC theory to study the female consumption of travel photography in Xishuangbanna from the perspective of female aesthetic psychology, exploring the three levels of attributes, outcomes and values, and through the understanding of female aesthetic psychology, it puts forward corresponding suggestions for the travel photography store as well as the process of travel photography. Through the study, we can understand the real needs of female consumers for travel photography, strengthen the attention to the aesthetic psychology of female consumers, and then promote the travel photography industry in Xishuangbanna to introduce travel photography products that make women more satisfied, so as to promote the development of the local economy.

## 2. Definition of the Concepts

### 2.1. MEC Theory

In this study, we use MEC theory, the Means-End Chain theory, which consists of three hierarchies: Attributes, Consequences and Values. Psychologist Rokeach first introduced the MEC theory in 1973<sup>[4]</sup>. This theory suggests that consumers usually view the attributes of a product or service as a means of achieving the ultimate goal of consumption through the benefits generated by the attributes<sup>[5]</sup>. The core idea of MEC: "Values are the intrinsic drivers of consumer behavior<sup>[6]</sup>. MEC's core belief: "Values are intrinsic drivers of consumer behavior. To explore the attractiveness of travel photography for female travelers, the three dimensions of MEC theory were used to establish the elements of each dimension. Attributes are dimensions that represent the specific characteristics of a product that consumers are concerned about. Travel photo shoots include exotic, beautiful makeup, self-traffic, and other elemental layers, Consequences is the effect on consumers when products are used or consumed by consumers, mainly including relaxation, become good-looking and other elemental layers; values are an enduring belief that makes

consumers prefer a particular product. MEC has been used by many scholars in the field of tourism to study the behavior of tourists, and it has been shown that the consumption of female tourists has been affected by MEC, and it has also been shown that the consumption of female tourists has been affected by MEC<sup>[7]</sup>. and demonstrates the feasibility of research on the consumer behavior of female tourists.

### 2.2. Esthetic Experience

There are three levels of aesthetic experience from shallow to deep, namely the aesthetic sensory level of physiological stimulation, the aesthetic emotional level of emotional feedback, and the aesthetic spiritual level of subject-object integration<sup>[8]</sup>. The aesthetic experience has three levels.

The aesthetic sensory level of physiological stimulation refers to the pleasure produced in the heart of the aesthetic subject's sense organs when they are in contact with the stimulation of various external elements such as colors, shapes, sounds, etc.; the aesthetic emotional level of emotional feedback refers to the emotional resonance that occurs with the aesthetic subject through the aesthetic object reflecting and evoking the emotional demands of the aesthetic subject and the aesthetic subject, which is a kind of profound emotional contact; and the aesthetic spiritual level of subject-object integration refers to the aesthetic spiritual level of the aesthetic subject through the aesthetic object triggering a kind of creative experience by stimulating, inducing, and creating a sense of wonder. The aesthetic subject, through the aesthetic object triggered by a creative experience, through the stimulation, evocation, and creation of a sense of surprise, may ultimately change the aesthetic subject's original mode of thinking, give it a new cognition of things, and even reshape its spiritual world<sup>[8]</sup>. The aesthetic subject's original mode of thinking may eventually be changed, giving him a new perception of things and even reshaping his spiritual world.

## 3. Questionnaire Design and Collection

The questionnaire had five main parts: a survey on basic demographic information, a survey on the willingness to travel photography, the core issues of the MEC theory, a survey on the respondents'

willingness to travel photography again, and suggestions and opinions on scenic travel photography.

Data collection was mainly through online questionnaire distribution and field scenic survey, a total of 260 questionnaires were collected, excluding the male questionnaires and only collecting questionnaire information from female respondents, a total of 243 valid questionnaires were received. Details of the questionnaires are provided in the Appendix.

## 4. Data Analysis and Key Findings

### 4.1. Travel Photography Consumer Demographic Sample Analysis

**Table 1. Population Sample Information**

sports event	variant	quorum	percentage
distinguishing between the sexes	male	0	0%
	daughter	243	100%
(a person's) age	Under 18	6	2.5%
	18-24 years	161	66.3%
	25-35 years	32	13.2%
	36-55 years	36	14.8%
	56+	8	3.3%
education attainment	High school and below	28	11.5%
	specialized training school	63	25.9%
	undergraduate (adjective)	130	53.5%
	Graduate students and above	22	9.1%
incomes	Less than 2,000	95	39.1%
	2000-3500	63	25.9%
	3500-5000	46	18.9%
	5000-8000	27	11.1%
	8000 or more	12	4.9%
careers	Government and institutional personnel	22	9.1%
	Service workers	25	10.3%
	workers	22	9.1%
	Corporate Career	37	15.2%
	profession	31	12.8%
	a private firm (PRC usage)	25	10.3%
	schoolchildren	68	28.0%
	(sth. or sb) else	13	5.3%

As can be seen from the data in Table 1, survey respondents aged 18-24 accounted for more than 66%, indicating that the main

consumer group of Xishuangbanna travel photography is dominated by young women. The rate of income below 3500 is also the highest, accounting for 65%, and travel photography products have a relatively small economic burden during the journey of travel consumer goods. Occupation options accounted for 28% of the students, indicating that the main consumer of Xishuangbanna Starlight Night Market travel photography accounted for one-third.

### 4.2 Travelers' Willingness to Take Specialty Portraits

Among the 243 questionnaires, a total of 231 respondents were willing to answer the question, accounting for 95%. From the data in Table 2, it can be concluded that the psychological price of female travel photography consumption is below 600 yuan, the consumption level is diversified, and the number of consumers at each level is relatively close to each other, with little difference; therefore, Xishuangbanna Starlight Night Market can launch travel photography products with different consumption prices to meet the needs of women with different consumption levels.

**Table 2. Price Willingness Scale**

prices	number of people	percentage
99-199	57	24.68%
199-299	54	23.38%
399-599	50	21.65%
299-399	48	20.78%
599+	22	9.52%

### 4.3. MEC Data Analysis

Based on MEC theory, the data of attributes, outcomes, and values were analyzed by multiple response analysis, and the results are as follows:

#### 4.3.1 Attributes

Attributes are specific dimensions that represent the specific characteristics of the product that consumers are interested in, and this data reflects the specific reasons why female consumers are initially the ones who choose to travel to the Starlight Night Market for photography. Visual appeal is the first two primary reasons (i.e. The costumes are ethnic in character and you can experience the local flavor. It's got beautiful makeup.). Followed by its three high percentage reasons are

"transformed into the image of "Hani Princess" or "Dai Princess"; "There are a lot of people who shoot; and I want to shoot, too."; "A souvenir".

**Table 3. Attribute Frequency Response Table**

frequency response			
		Number of cases	percentage
Why did you choose to have your portrait taken?	The costumes are ethnic in character and you can experience the local flavor.	129	21.2%
	It's got beautiful makeup.	126	20.7%
	You can be transformed into the image of "Hani Princess" or "Dai Princess".	83	13.7%
	There are a lot of people who shoot; and I want to shoot, too.	83	13.7%
	A souvenir.	73	12.0%
	Reasonable price	59	9.7%
	The traffic that comes with travel photography attracts the envy of others	54	8.9%
	(grand) total	608	100.0%

#### 4.3.2 Consequences

**Table 4. Consequences Frequency Response Table**

frequency response			
		Number of cases	percentage
What did you get out of the ethnic photo shoot?	Experience a different kind of ethnic flavor	116	20.2%
	Experience a beautiful make-up	98	17.1%
	Can be posted on social networking platforms	95	16.6%
	Getting good looking photos	80	14.0%
	Catching up with the trend, these types of photos are hot on the internet	64	11.2%
	Relax and get pleasure	59	10.3%
	You can get compliments from people around you	32	5.6%
	Eye-catching enough to get a passerby's glance	28	4.9%
	(sth. or sb) else	1	0.2%
	(grand) total	573	100.0%

Consequences are the effects on consumers when a product is used or consumed by them, and this data reflects what female consumers gained after experiencing travel photography at Starlight Night Market. First of all,

experiencing a different ethnic flavor ranked first; followed by experiencing a beautiful makeup creation; followed by respectively can be posted on social networking platforms, getting good looking photos, catching up with the trend, these types of photos are hot on the internet.

#### 4.3.3 Values

**Table 5. Value Frequency Response Table**

frequency response			
		Number of cases	percentage
How will you feel after your portrait session?	Become a better looking version of your ideal self	109	17.6%
	Immersion in local aesthetics	96	15.5%
	Enjoy your travel time at a slower pace	86	13.8%
	Gaining self-fulfillment	79	12.7%
	Become confident with beautiful makeup photos	64	10.3%
	Learn some shooting techniques and dare to face the camera	51	8.2%
	Netflix same model, have face	48	7.7%
	Leaving behind good memories	47	7.6%
	Increase the conversation with others	41	6.6%
	(grand) total	621	100.0%

Value is an enduring belief that causes consumers to prefer a particular product. The data reflects the deeper reasons behind female consumers taking travel photography. The core reason is the ability to become their ideal self, followed by immersion in local aesthetics, and then experiencing the slower pace of travel life and gaining self-fulfillment.

#### 4.3.4 MEC value chain and aesthetic experience

By analyzing each elemental-level option of specific attributes, outcomes, and values in Tables 3, 4, and 5, the relationship between cause and effect between attributes and values was identified by applying cause and effect analysis in the logical analysis method, and the following four value chains were organized:

(1) The costumes have national characteristics (Attributes) - Experience different ethnic customs (Consequences) - Immersion in local

aesthetics (Values).

The value chain of the attribute level, shooting portraits can wear beautiful ethnic clothing, clothing on the ethnic elements can also quickly catch the eye of tourists, and then make tourists interested in the photo; consumers intuitively from the visual and tactile can feel the characteristics of ethnic minorities, and tourists to minority areas are usually more willing to understand the local ethnic culture and feel the customs and habits of different cultures<sup>[9]</sup>. Tourists are usually more willing to learn about the local ethnic culture and understand the customs and habits of different cultures. Thus, the result of "experiencing different ethnic customs" is obtained. By wearing ethnic costumes and taking photos of ethnic minority scenic spots, an immersive experience of local culture and aesthetics is carried out. This value chain belongs to the aesthetic sensory level of the physiological stimulation.

(2) There are beautiful makeups that allow you to transform yourself (Attributes) - to experience the makeups that make you beautiful (Consequences) - into a better looking version of your ideal self (Values).

The attribute level of this value chain is that pretty make-up can be transformed, thus allowing female consumers to experience the result of becoming pretty and showing them a different version of themselves. The value level is that women become their ideal better selves. This value chain belongs to the aesthetic emotional level of the emotional feedback.

(3) Becoming the image of women with initiative and power, such as "Hani Princess" and "Dai Princess" (Attributes) - Photos can be posted on social media platforms (Consequences) --To obtain self-satisfaction (Values).

The attribute level of this value chain is to become the image of women with initiative and power, such as "Hani Princess" and "Dai Princess", and post the photos of the image of women with power on the Internet, so as to ultimately obtain psychological and spiritual self-satisfaction. With the awakening of many young women's sense of independence, the concept of consumption is gradually driven by self-esteem.<sup>[10]</sup> By beautifying the image of women, it hits the psychology of women who want to be the ideal women with power and

initiative, and thus guides women to consume. In addition, social media is recognized as a stage of self-expression and individuality<sup>[11]</sup>. Publishing online platforms can fulfill female consumers' needs for self-expression. Therefore, this value chain belongs to the aesthetic emotional level of the emotional feedback.

(4) There are a lot of people who shoot; and I want to shoot, too. (Attributes) - Get good photos (Consequences) - Enjoy your travel time at a slow pace (Values).

The attribute level of this value chain is that one is infected by the atmosphere of the photo shoot at that time and follows the trend to do the photo shoot as well. With the services of a professional photographer and make-up artist, the finished photos are better, thus getting good looking photos and eventually slowing down the pace of traveling and enjoying the time spent on tour. The psychology of love of beauty is a common psychological state among female consumers, who want to maintain their own natural beauty through consumer activities and record their own beauty<sup>[12]</sup>. Female consumers enjoy the beauty recording process. Therefore, this value chain belongs to the aesthetic emotional level of the emotional feedback.

#### 4.4. Survey on the Willingness to Take Travel Photo Again

Through Table 6 can be analyzed, the highest proportion is "short and beautiful makeup photos can make themselves happy" 21.9%, from the data can be seen that "to please themselves" is the first element of female travelers to choose tourism products, tourism is to be happy, consumption is also to make themselves happy. The second most important factor is "to make oneself more confident by taking makeup photos", because women love beauty, they are more willing to change their own image and get energy from it. This shows that, compared with other factors, women prefer the psychological changes brought about by travel photography, become confident and happy, and pay more attention to emotional value and psychological satisfaction. Therefore, the reason women are willing to consume again is not the photos themselves, but the psychological value that this tourism product can bring to female travelers, and it is the value that promotes consumption.

Women perceive that "I am beautiful", pursue their own happiness, become more self-confident, and dare to show themselves on social media platforms. Therefore, female consumers spend money on travel photography again because of the aesthetic spiritual level of subject-object integration.

**Table 6. Response Table for Filming Reason Rating Rates**

frequency response			
		Number of cases	percentage
Your reason for filming if you choose to do so?	A short, beautiful makeup photo can make you happy and joyful	116	21.9%
	You can become more confident with makeup photos.	100	18.9%
	You can get attention from others online	93	17.6%
	You can "restore beauty."	90	17.0%
	Become a better version of yourself	85	16.1%
	More professional photographers, higher quality photos	44	8.3%
	(sth. or sb) else	1	0.2%
(grand) total		529	100.0%

## 5. Summary

- 1). Becoming the ideal self and deeply pleasing yourself (the aesthetic emotional level of emotional feedback) are the core values pursued by female consumers who consume travel photographs for the first time.
- 2). Feeling "I am beautiful" and becoming more confident (aesthetic spiritual level of subject-object integration) are the core values for women to re-consume travel photography.
- 3). Experiencing the ethnic characteristics and local flavor of Xishuangbanna (aesthetic sensory level of physiological stimulation) is an important reason for female consumers to travel to the Starlight Night Market for photography.

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