



## Testing the structural relationships of tourism authenticities

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### ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to examine the structural relationships of authenticities in the cultural heritage tourism context. This paper deconstructs authenticity into objective, constructive, existential, and postmodern types, and proposes a relationship model for them. The results suggest that objective authenticity positively affects constructive authenticity and existential authenticity, constructive authenticity positively affects existential authenticity, and postmodern authenticity negatively moderates the relationships between objective authenticity and constructive authenticity, and between constructive authenticity and existential authenticity. The main conclusion is that each type of authenticity has limited explanatory power, and a combined application of the different types of authenticity is more conducive to the sustainable development of cultural heritage tourism. The key focus of this study is how to maintain a balance between the types of authenticity. Practical development, management and marketing implications are discussed.

### 1. Introduction

Authenticity has been one of the core themes in tourism research (Belhassen, Caton, & Stewart, 2008; Cohen & Cohen, 2012b; Kontogorgopoulos, 2017; Olsen, 2002; Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Robinson & Clifford, 2012; Robinson, Heitmann, & Dieke, 2011; Taylor, 2001; Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Xiao, Jafari, Cloke, & Tribe, 2013) since MacCannell (1973) proposed the concept of 'staged authenticity'. Authenticity is an attribute, a projection of attributes, or an existing state of being (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999) and is a traditional representation, a product produced by traditional crafts, genuineness, a negotiation process, a fantasy, or a connection with the past (Chhabra, 2005). Defining authenticity often introduces terms such as genuine, real, true, accurate, actual, pristine, primitive, original, pure, negotiated, symbolic and local (Chhabra, 2012; Cohen, 1988, 2015; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). However, the definition of authenticity is still inconsistent. Controversy remains around who can arbitrate authenticity, who has the power to endow a destination is authenticity (Chhabra, 2005), the function of authenticity, and how is it applied. The controversial issues are significant in the application of authenticity in the fields of tourism destination development, protection, management, marketing, design, and the tourist experience (Asplet & Cooper, 2000; Halewood & Hanam, 2001; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Olsen, 2002; Wang, 1999; Xu, Wan, & Fan, 2014; Yi, Fu, Yu, & Jiang, 2018). All of the issues noted above have been focuses of the debate on the authenticity of tourism over the past

several decades.

Without a doubt, authenticity is a dynamic (Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Waitt, 2000), complex (Castéran & Roederer, 2013; Mkono, 2012b) and contradictory (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006) concept. Some scholars believe that object authenticity is enough (Lau, 2010), while others insist on abandoning it, leaving existential authenticity only (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). However, if a type of authenticity is ignored, it will cause more problems because the explanatory power of each type of authenticity is not sufficient in itself. Understanding of the concept of authenticity lacks consensus and has not even reached the basic concept status (Mkono, 2012a), thus leading to the coexistence of multiple theoretical perspectives (Cohen & Cohen, 2012a; Rickly-Boyd, 2012). It is difficult to fully explain authenticity from a single perspective, so multiple perspectives (Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Robinson & Clifford, 2012) and comprehensive analysis (Belhassen et al., 2008; Yi et al., 2018) should be used. Unlike nature-based tourism, which involves existential authenticity rather than object-based and postmodern authenticity (Jiang, Ramkissoon, Mavondo, & Feng, 2017; Wang, 1999), cultural heritage-based tourism can involve various types of authenticity, including objective, constructive, existential and performance authenticity, as well as postmodern authenticity (Fu, Liu, Wang, & Chao, 2018; Lin & Liu, 2018; Park, Choi, & Lee, 2019; Yi et al., 2018), which means that different types of tourism authenticity can coexist in a cultural-heritage context. Meanwhile, seeking authenticity in heritage tourism is a prominent trend in contemporary tourism (Apostolakis,

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2003; Chhabra, 2012; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Park et al., 2019; Yeoman, Brass, & McMahon-Beattie, 2007). Cultural heritage sites therefore provide a suitable objective for tourism authenticity research.

In the empirical research related to authenticity, many tourism scholars have begun to deconstruct authenticity and explore the relationship between different types of authenticity in the context of cultural heritage tourism (Domínguez-Quintero, González-Rodríguez, & Paddison, 2018; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Lin & Liu, 2018; Park et al., 2019; Taheri, Farrington, Curran, & O’Gorman, 2017; Taheri, Gannon, Cordina, & Lochrie, 2018; Yi et al., 2018; Zhou, Zhang, & Edelman, 2013). The relationship between object-related authenticity (i.e. objective and constructive authenticity) and existential authenticity is the focus of these studies (Bryce, Curran, O’Gorman, & Taheri, 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Lee, Phau, Hughes, Li, & Quintal, 2016; Lin & Liu, 2018; Taheri et al., 2017; Taheri et al., 2018), and the moderation effect of postmodern authenticity has also begun to be introduced in empirical research (Yi et al., 2018); however, no study has explored the structural relationships between the four types of authenticity in the same context. This research gap hence needs to be studied to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. According to Wang (1999) and Rickly-Boyd (2012), tourism authenticity can be deconstructed into four types: objective authenticity, constructive authenticity, existential authenticity, and postmodern authenticity. These types of authenticity correspond to objectivism, constructivism, existentialism and post-modernism respectively. This division is widely recognized by mainstream research (e.g. Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Lin & Liu, 2018; Yi et al., 2018). The purpose of this study is to clarify and test the structural relationships between different types of authenticity in cultural heritage tourism context, and to further explore how to apply authenticity which is the most critical issue in the field of authenticity research.

## 2. Theoretical review

This section provides a review of objective, constructive, existential and postmodern authenticity from a theoretical perspective and aims to clarify the concept, connotation and viewpoint of each type of authenticity. Research on authenticity in the cultural heritage tourism field is then reviewed to further identify the suitability of the context and the research gap.

### 2.1. Objective authenticity

Objective authenticity can be traced back to Boorstin’s (1964) ‘pseudo-events’ and MacCannell’s (1973) ‘staged authenticity’. Boorstin (1964) suggested that tourism is a pseudo-event because modern life is full of inauthenticity, so tourists have accepted inauthenticity. However, MacCannell (1973) believed that the lack of authenticity in modern life motivates people to seek authentic tourism experiences. Due to staged settings in tourism supply, however, tourists can only encounter staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973). It is worth noting that staged authenticity is not authenticity, and MacCannell (2008) does not believe in authenticity: In social life, real and show, and authentic and inauthentic, are not ultimate positions (MacCannell, 2008). Nevertheless, people are more willing to believe that the back regions of others’ lives are more real; therefore they can be transformed into staged authenticity, providing a stage for people’s dreams and desires that cannot be realized in daily life, an opportunity for people to enter the world of myths and fantasy (MacCannell, 2008). Tourism experiences are rarely authentic: they are just illusions or staged representations of the authentic life of others (MacCannell, 1973).

It needs to be noted that MacCannell (1973) categorized all tourists into one group and directly labeled them as authenticity pursuers. It has been argued that this is too simplistic and even somewhat farfetched (Cohen, 1979; Mkono, 2013). In terms of the nature and meanings of a modern tourism experience, therefore, Boorstin (1964) argued that tourism is an unimportant, superficial activity, and tourists pursue

contrived experiences. MacCannell (1973), meanwhile, believed that tourism is a meaningful modern ritual, that tourists seek authentic experiences (Uriely, 1997), and that this perceived authenticity is similar to a religious pilgrimage experience (MacCannell, 1973). Both Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1973), however, as representative scholars of objectivism, portrayed tourists as a whole class, and neither fully recognized the great diversity in tourism activities (Uriely, 1997).

The starting point for understanding objective authenticity is that modern everyday life experiences do not provide sufficient authenticity (Fawcett & Cormack, 2001), and the past and others’ lives are considered superior (Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003). People therefore seek authenticity through tourism. Objective authenticity refers to the authenticity of tourism objects (Wang, 1999). It is an objective attribute of tourism objects (Chhabra, 2012; Lau, 2010; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999), referring to the genuineness, accuracy or truth of physical objects, which can include life processes, activities, artifacts, and so on (Lau, 2010). Objective authenticity comes from the originality of the tourism object (Belhassen et al., 2008) or the historical accuracy of the event and original location where certain events occurred (Chronis & Hampton, 2008). Additionally, some attractions are staged, but they still contain elements of an original tradition (Chhabra et al., 2003) or are authoritatively certified, original references, perfect imitations (Robinson & Clifford, 2012), still considered to have objective authenticity. However, a general copy cannot be considered authentic because it does not yield an authentic experience (Rickly-Boyd, 2012).

As an attribute, objective authenticity can be measured by absolute and objective criteria, and these criteria for judging whether a tourism object is authentic or not is usually whether it is original or made by local people in accordance with traditional customs (Chhabra, 2012; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999). Since tourists often lack expertise to identify authenticity and inauthenticity, objective authenticity is usually judged by experts rather than tourists (Olsen, 2002; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Rickly-Boyd, 2012), which shows that even if tourists think they have experienced authentic tourism objects, the objects still may be fakes or encountered in staged settings (Wang, 1999). Although who authorized (Mkono, 2013) and who authenticated (Cohen & Cohen, 2012a) the objects are both important considerations for determining objective authenticity, this does not deny the subjective role of tourists (Wang, 1999). It is a failed supply if the authenticity of tourist objects cannot be perceived or recognized by tourists.

The objectivist view holds that authenticity is an intrinsic property of things, assuming that everything is eternal and unchanged, and this view faces serious challenges in today’s ever-changing world (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Because different tourism modes have different motivations and pursue different types of authenticity, some tourism models do not assume that tourists seek authenticity (Cohen, 1979; Waitt, 2000). Experiencing objective authenticity is therefore not universally considered to be the primary pursuit of tourists (Mkono, 2013) and cannot fully explain tourist motivations and experiences. In addition, the expression of objective authenticity is vague, ranging from the original to the genuinely fake, to the realistic replica (Cohen, 1988). All of these issues cause objective authenticity to suffer from various criticisms. However, these issues cannot hide the fact that most of the theories and concepts of tourism authenticity are derived from the staged-authenticity concept (Mkono, 2013). Meanwhile, although the complexity and controversy of objective authenticity are not well understood, the role of objective authenticity in the development of heritage tourism is widely recognized (Chhabra, 2012; Wang, 1999).

### 2.2. Constructive authenticity

Constructivists believe that tourists are pursuing authenticity, but what they are pursuing is not objective authenticity but symbolic authenticity constructed by society (Wang, 1999). This view suggests that tourism objects are considered to be authentic not because they are originals or reality but because they are used as symbols of authenticity

(Culler, 1981) or as a result of a social construction (Cohen, 1988). This view assumes that reality is a social construction based on socially accepted norms and ideologies (Chronis & Hampton, 2008). Constructive authenticity may not necessarily be connected with reality (Wang, 1999) but may be the result of a joint interpretation and construction by stakeholders (Bruner, 1994; Fawcett & Cormack, 2001; Robinson & Clifford, 2012; Waitt, 2000). Constructive authenticity therefore refers to the projection of the authenticity of tourism objects by tourists or tourism producers due to their imaginations, expectations, preferences, beliefs and powers (Wang, 1999). This projection is not a reflection of the quality of the tourism objects (Belhassen et al., 2008) but a cultural value that is constantly being created and transformed in the social process (Olsen, 2002).

Constructivists believe that the basis of authenticity is social or personal (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006) and is no longer a fixed value but is relative (Cohen, 1988), subjective (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006), multiple (Robinson & Clifford, 2012), dynamic (Cohen, 1988), negotiated (Cohen, 1988), compromised (Cohen, 1988; Fawcett & Cormack, 2001), time-based (Cohen, 1988; Kim & Jamal, 2007), ideological (Silver, 1993), explanatory (Bruner, 1994), imagined (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006), and/or contextual (Robinson & Clifford, 2012). Whether tourism objects are authentic or not is essentially a matter of individual perception (Mkono, 2012b). Things are authentic not because they are created to be a certain way but because they are constructed by beliefs, opinions, or power (Wang, 1999). The evaluation of constructive authenticity is based not only on the attributes of tourism objects but also on the subjective experience and individual differences of tourism subjects (Belhassen et al., 2008; Wang, 1999). The same thing has multiple meanings, and tourists with different backgrounds can have different versions of authenticity, which also leads to the lack of objective evaluation criteria for constructive authenticity (Wang, 1999). Because constructive authenticity is not based on a precise original object, tourists are allowed to decide what is authentic by themselves (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). The authenticity of a tourist object is, however, to a certain extent not related to tourists (Robinson & Clifford, 2012).

Constructivism does not emphasize the originality of tourist objects, and authenticity and inauthenticity are no longer dualistic opposites (Belhassen et al., 2008; Wang, 1999). Constructivists no longer believe that authenticity is consistent with the original in time and that the modification, creation, or that alteration of originals are inauthentic (Wang, 1999). Instead, constructivists believe that authenticity is a fluid, continuous and unified concept, ranging from complete authenticity to partial authenticity at all stages and then to complete fake: tourists can thus change their perception of the authenticity of things over time (Cohen, 1979, 1988). Constructive authenticity does not deny time but places a greater emphasis on the importance of time for the formation of authenticity. Inauthentic things can become authentic over time, and this process is called 'emergent authenticity' (Cohen, 1988). Artificial tourism products will eventually be integrated into the local culture and become an integral part of the local traditional culture, such as Disneyland and Disney World in the USA (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Constructive authenticity no longer completely negates the positive significance of commodification, and commodification becomes a key factor in the negotiation of authenticity (Halewood & Hannam, 2001). This is because tourism preserves and revitalizes traditional culture, craftsmanship and customs, and tourists generally believe that as long as the commodities are traditionally designed and made by locals, they are authentic (Cohen, 1988). Therefore, tourism commodities sold at tourist destinations can often be used as markers for an authentication process (Halewood & Hannam, 2001).

In addition, constructivists believe that authenticity is the result of the mutual construction of tourists and hosts through their interactive activities (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). In the construction process, tourists are eager for authenticity, and the host tries to meet the needs of tourists. More importantly, constructivists, like objectivists, also believe that authenticity is closely related to the local or context (Reisinger &

Steiner, 2006; Shepherd, 2002; Swanson & Timothy, 2012; Wang, 1999), and that tourists construct their own meanings based on various environmental factors (Robinson & Clifford, 2012). Constructive authenticity cannot therefore be separated from local cultural situation or context.

### 2.3. Existential authenticity

Objective authenticity and constructive authenticity can explain cultural-related tourist motivation and experiences well. They cannot, however, explain activity-related tourist motivations and experiences (Wang, 1999), and the significance of this deficiency is growing. Because some tourists do not pay attention to the authenticity of a tourist object, they only seek their true self through tourism activities or objects. Wang (1999) thus proposed the concept of 'existential authenticity'. He divided authenticity into object-related authenticity and activity-related authenticity. Unlike object-related authenticity, which comes from the attributes or the projection of the attributes of the object, existential authenticity is a potential state of being stimulated by tourism activities and may have little or no relationship with the tourism object (Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Wang, 1999). In this way, the concept of object authenticity is transferred to the authenticity of the person, and the self is regarded as an authentic or inauthentic object (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). The self is thus the testing criterion of authenticity (Robinson & Clifford, 2012). Existential authenticity therefore only focuses on the perception of the tourist subject and is not concerned about the situation of the tourist object (Belhassen et al., 2008; Rickly-Boyd, 2013). Even if the tourist object is completely unreal, the tourist is still likely to have an authentic experience (Wang, 1999).

Existential authenticity comes from people's own philosophical questions about what is being, what is happiness, and what is authenticity (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Existential authenticity supports the hypothesis that the daily life of modern society is empty and tourism experiences make people more authentic (Shepherd, 2015) and explain how the emic experience of authenticity is awakened by tourism activities (Olsen, 2002). As a special state of existence, people can shed their existing social roles, discover themselves and touch their real self in this state (Chhabra, 2012; Mkono, 2013). To realize one's real self, a person needs to be what they want to be inside (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006) and be loyal only to their own values and beliefs (Yi et al., 2018). Existential authenticity is a higher-level pursuit of human authenticity (Kim & Jamal, 2007), and tourism is often its catalyst (Brown, 2013). Increasingly more tourists are participating in destination performances, gaining authentic experiences by temporarily integrating themselves into collectives and activities (Olsen, 2002). Therefore, existential authenticity can be understood as the subjective feelings formed by tourists in the tourism process, and it emphasizes the participation, subjectivity and freedom of tourists.

Wang (1999) divided existential authenticity into intrapersonal authenticity and interpersonal authenticity, stating that both can be obtained through tourism experiences. Intrapersonal authenticity includes body feelings and self-making, and interpersonal authenticity includes family ties and touristic *communitas* (Wang, 1999). Intrapersonal authenticity holds that people can physically and spiritually escape from their daily life and routine work through tourism, which enhances their self-identity, self-creation, self-realization, and so on (Wang, 1999; Yi et al., 2018). Interpersonal authenticity suggests that people can not only enjoy a pleasant experience from tourism but can also strengthen emotional bonds, authenticity and intimacy in family relationships and social equality in interpersonal relationships (Wang, 1999). Tourist *communitas* means that tourists set aside the labels of identity, class, status, prejudice, and wealth, in an equal, pure, modest, and self-forgotten state. In this state, all institutional social labels will disappear (Wang, 1999).

Existential authenticity is the result of desire, empathy and experience (Gnoth & Wang, 2015), and is short-lived and uncertain (Steiner &



Reisinger, 2006). Existential authenticity is a mental state (Di Betta, 2014) or fantasy (Knudsen, Rickly, & Vidon, 2016) that can only be obtained during liminal moments in tourist experiences (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Knudsen et al., 2016). In this limited time, people feel that they are more real and free to express themselves without being bound by their daily lives (Wang, 1999). However, this kind of authenticity cannot be fully integrated into daily life (Knudsen et al., 2016). Therefore, existential authenticity, which is similar to a 'tourist moment' (Cary, 2004), is not of universal significance to all tourists. In addition, existential authenticity cannot be separated from the attraction settings and located environment (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Yi et al., 2018; Yi, Lin, Jin, & Luo, 2017).

It should be noted that since it is an induced result, this experience is not necessarily pleasant and positive: it may be negative, sad (Daniel, 1996), unforgettable but forgotten as soon as possible, such as a tsunami disaster experience (Cohen, 2015).

#### 2.4. Postmodern authenticity

Postmodernity originated in different fields of art, architecture, film and tourism after World War II. It is therefore a new cultural paradigm and social consciousness (Uriely, 2005). Postmodernism is a critique of modernity that is no longer centered on absolute authenticity and the universality of modernism (D'Urso, Disegna, Massari, & Osti, 2016) but holds a compromise view of 'both-and' rather than 'either-or' (Uriely, 1997). Opposing, denying, and transcending the past dualism, essentialism, rationalism, and mechanical materialism are characterized by uncertainty, diversity, and noncentrality (Wang, Niu, Lu, & Qian, 2015). This lack of authority, conclusiveness and unity (Uriely, 1997; Zerva, 2015), making it so that postmodernism cannot be simply regarded as a single, unified, and complete school of thought (Wang, 1999).

Compared with modern tourists, postmodern tourists can be described as people who enjoy a variety of experiences, they have different and even opposing values than modern tourists and seek real tourist attractions while accepting hyperreal things (D'Urso et al., 2016). The diversity of their tourist motivations and experiences has exceeded the explanatory power of traditional authenticity theory (Uriely, 1997). Inauthenticity is no longer a problem for them (Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Wang, 1999; Yi et al., 2018), because it often provides a better and more exciting tourism experience (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). Therefore, whether things are authentic or inauthentic has become irrelevant: tourists either do not care about authenticity or realize that it is just a means of tourism marketing (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006), which makes the evaluation of postmodern authenticity extremely subjective (Belhassen et al., 2008; Yi et al., 2018). The evaluation not only accepts the deconstruction of the authenticity of the originals but also accepts the introduction of hyperreal and fantasy structures (Yi et al., 2018). Postmodern authenticity should therefore be assessed through a multiple and disjointed perspective (D'Urso et al., 2016).

Postmodern authenticity considers the unreal hyperreality and simulacra to be more attractive (Rickly-Boyd, 2012) rather than the original being better than the replica (Olsen, 2002; Waitt, 2000). For example, Disneyland and Disney World are products of fantasy and imagination (Eco, 1986), which are simulations of real without original references (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). On the one hand, they cannot be repeated; on the other hand, they cannot really be true. The boundaries between real and unreal and between authentic and contrived things are ambiguous (Cohen, 2015; D'Urso et al., 2016; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999), which provides a reasonable explanation for the existence of fantasy, imitation, simulated and hyperreal man-made tourist attractions.

Postmodern authenticity tends to be an illusion of authenticity rather than a certain reality (Waitt, 2000). Even the so-called 'back regions' may be imaginary settings (MacCannell, 2008). However, it is not only a fantasy landscape, it is also an attitude, a way of life, and an ideology (Tamagni, 1988). Postmodern tourists have realized the sociocultural

and environmental impact of tourism development on the host and are willing to accept alternatives to man-made tourism products or originals (Cohen, 2004; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). In addition, postmodern tourists are also pleased to accept the tourism convenience provided by modernization, even though this modernization violates the historical or cultural accuracy (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). Additionally, imitations or simulations created by modern technology and convincing presentations can make everything look and sound real (Kim & Jamal, 2007; Lau, 2010; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999), and even unreal replicas are more authentic than the origin. The key to the evaluation is therefore the tourists (Cohen, 2015), and depends on whether their travel experiences meet or exceed their pretour expectations (Martin, 2010).

#### 2.5. Authenticity research in cultural heritage tourism

Heritage tourism refers to "tourism centered on what we have inherited, which can mean anything from historic buildings, to art works, to beautiful scenery" (Yale, 1991, quoted in Garrod & Fyall, 2000, p. 683). It is usually divided into natural and cultural heritage tourism. As the foundation of cultural heritage tourism development, cultural heritage occupies a large proportion and an important position in the whole high-level heritage (Gao & Su, 2019). Heritage tourism ranges from visiting monuments, buildings and sites, to cultural landscapes and intangible heritage (Landorf, 2009). Cultural heritage sites are popular tourist destinations worldwide (Chung, Lee, Kim, & Koo, 2018), and authenticity is closely related to them (Farrelly, Kock, & Josiassen, 2019; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010) since authenticity is considered to be a 'motivational force' for cultural heritage tourists (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010).

Most empirical studies related to tourism authenticity in the past decade have been conducted in the context of cultural heritage (e.g. Akhoondnejad, 2016; Bryce et al., 2015; Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2018; X.; Fu, 2019; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Lee et al., 2016; Lin & Liu, 2018; Lu, Chi, & Liu, 2015; Nguyen & Cheung, 2016; Park et al., 2019; Scarpi, Mason, & Raggiotto, 2019; Shen, Guo, & Wu, 2014; Yi et al., 2018; Yi et al., 2017; Zhou et al., 2013). These studies, however, tend to focus more on the structural relationship between authenticity and other variables, mainly including the correlations among motivation, authenticities and loyalty (Bryce et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Lin & Liu, 2018; Zhou et al., 2013); attitude, authenticities and loyalty (Shen et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2013); authenticities, perceived value/quality and satisfaction (Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2016); authenticities, satisfaction and loyalty (Park et al., 2019); authenticity, image and satisfaction (Lu et al., 2015); motivation, authenticity and satisfaction (Nguyen & Cheung, 2016) and the impact of authenticity on loyalty (Fu, 2019; Yi et al., 2017, 2018).

Among these empirical studies, although, some studies have explored the influence relationship between different authenticities, such as object-based authenticity to existential authenticity (Bryce et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Lin & Liu, 2018), objective authenticity to existential authenticity (Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2018; Park et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2013), and constructive authenticity to existential authenticity (Park et al., 2019; Shen et al., 2014), and the moderating effect of postmodern authenticity on the relationship between perceived authenticity and existential authenticity (Yi et al., 2018), no research has clarified the relationship among the four tourism authenticities.

### 3. Hypotheses

Kolar and Zabkar's (2010) seminal research showed that object-based authenticity has a positive impact on existential authenticity in heritage context. This result was also confirmed in the study of Japanese heritage tourism sites by Bryce et al. (2015) and Taheri et al. (2017). Lin and Liu (2018) deconstructed existential authenticity into intrapersonal authenticity and interpersonal authenticity. The results of Taiwan's cultural heritage research show that object-related

authenticity has a positive impact on both.

Object-based authenticity includes objective authenticity and constructive authenticity (Wang, 1999). Some scholars have studied the relationship between objective authenticity or constructive authenticity and existential authenticity. The studies of both Zhou et al. (2013) on the Chinese calligraphic landscape and Domínguez-Quintero et al. (2018) on British churches and museums suggested that objective authenticity has a positive impact on existential authenticity. Meanwhile, the research on the Ming Xiaoling Mausoleum (Tomb of Zhu Yuanzhang, the founding emperor of China's Ming Dynasty, A.D. 1368–1644) indicated that constructive authenticity has a significant positive impact on existential authenticity (Shen et al., 2014). The research of Park et al. (2019) on a Korean historical village shows that constructive authenticity has a positive impact on existential authenticity while objective authenticity has no positive impact on it. However, the study by Yi et al. (2018) on the Kaiping Diaolou and Villages in Guangdong and the Yongding Earth Building in Fujian, China, shows that the authenticity of architectural heritage (i.e. objective authenticity) and the authenticity of folk culture (i.e. constructive authenticity) have positive influences on existential authenticity. Therefore, the following two hypotheses are proposed:

**H1:** Objective authenticity has a positive effect on existential authenticity.

**H2:** Constructive authenticity has a positive effect on existential authenticity.

Regarding the relationship between objective authenticity and constructive authenticity, no empirical research could be found on the topic. However, both objective authenticity and constructive authenticity are object-based authenticity, and they are closely related. From the tourist perspective, objective authenticity is a tourist's perception of the attributes of toured objects, while constructive authenticity is a tourist's projection to the attributes of toured objects (Wang, 1999). Constructive authenticity cannot therefore be constructed without originals. Without original references, the imagined and fantasized tourist objects finally form postmodern authenticity (Wang, 1999). Although objective authenticity may not be successfully perceived by tourists, once it is, it will be a failed tourism development. For heritage tourism sites, the vast majority of tourism development efforts seek to enhance their aura of authenticity. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

**H3:** Objective authenticity has a positive effect on constructive authenticity.

In the tourism literature, there is very little empirical research on postmodern authenticity (Scarpi et al., 2019; Yi et al., 2018). The study of Yi et al. (2018) introduced the moderating effect of postmodern authenticity. The results suggest that postmodern authenticity has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between the authenticity of architectural heritage and existential authenticity as well as on the relationship between the authenticity of folk culture and existential authenticity. Postmodernism, meanwhile, believes that due to the differences in tourists' experiences, intelligence and imaginations, different tourists may have different perceptions or recognitions of the authenticity of the same tourist destination (Gao, Zhang, & Decosta, 2012; Yi et al., 2018). Therefore, postmodern authenticity is likely to have a moderating influence on the relationship between objective authenticity and constructive authenticity. The following hypotheses are therefore proposed:

**H4:** Postmodern authenticity has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between objective authenticity and existential authenticity.

**H5:** Postmodern authenticity has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between constructive authenticity and existential authenticity.

**H6:** Postmodern authenticity has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between objective authenticity and constructive authenticity.

Based on the above research hypotheses, the conceptual model of

this study is shown in Fig. 1. Postmodern authenticity is the moderating construct of hypothesis paths H1, H2 and H3.

## 4. Methods

### 4.1. Study site

Langzhong Ancient City is located in northern Sichuan Province, southwestern China. The ancient city was built in the Tang Dynasty (A. D. 618–907), and the oldest surviving building is approximately 600 years old. Langzhong Ancient City has many honorary titles, including one of the birthplaces of original Chinese culture, the birthplace of the Chinese Spring Festival, a historical and cultural city of the Three Kingdoms, Feng Shui Ancient City, one of the four best preserved ancient cities in China, and so on. Langzhong Ancient City is an important heritage tourist destination but has not yet received the research attention it deserves.

The formal survey population of this research was tourists who were visiting Langzhong Ancient City. The data collection applied purposive sampling at the core attractions in the ancient city from June 13 to 19, 2019. The investigators were the research initiators and trained students from a local tourism school. Before the questionnaire was issued, the participant was asked if he/she was a tourist. If the answer was 'yes', the questionnaire would be issued; otherwise, the questionnaire would not be issued, and the next subject would be sought. A total of 670 questionnaires were distributed, and 618 valid questionnaires were finally identified. Whether using power analyses, the 10 times rule, or threshold observations, the sample size fully met the empirical research requirements of variance-based structural equation modeling (VB-SEM or PLS-SEM) or covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017; Reinartz, Haenlein, & Henseler, 2009).

### 4.2. Measurement scale

The design of the measurement items for objective authenticity and constructive authenticity referred to the studies of Lu et al. (2015), Nguyen and Cheung (2016) and Zatori, Smith, and Puczko (2018). The measurement items of existential authenticity came from the study by Yi et al. (2018), and the measurement items of postmodern authenticity were adopted from Yi et al. (2018) and Wang (1999). Each construct had five items (Table 1).

Before the formal investigation, the items were discussed one by one, and the questionnaire was pretested to students in Beijing to improve its content validity and accuracy. Then, several items were modified according to the feedback results.

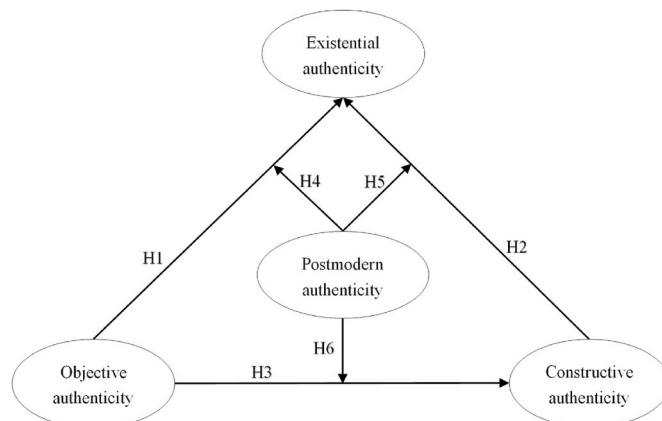


Fig. 1. Conceptual model.

**Table 1**  
Data normality, reliability and convergent validity of the measurement model.

Construct/item	Mean	SD	Skew.	Kurt.	Loading	$\alpha$	CR	AVE
<b>Objective authenticity</b>	5.30					0.767	0.842	0.517
OA1. Historic buildings are well preserved.	5.05	1.64	-0.781	-0.061	0.777			
OA2. Layout and furnishings retain their original appearances.	5.33	1.37	-0.834	0.536	0.779			
OA3. Recognized by authoritative departments and experts.	5.60	1.05	-0.500	-0.035	0.705			
OA4. History clearly documented.	5.67	1.05	-0.721	0.771	0.681			
OA5. Attractions are mostly genuine.	4.87	1.66	-0.637	-0.291	0.646			
<b>Constructive authenticity</b>	5.48					0.777	0.854	0.547
CA1. Reflects the local ancient living environment.	5.37	1.22	-0.855	0.768	0.750			
CA2. Represents the local past history.	5.65	1.10	-0.737	0.259	0.799			
CA3. Represents the local past culture.	5.65	1.14	-0.900	1.038	0.836			
CA4. Represents local past traditions.	5.72	1.17	-0.941	0.848	0.790			
CA5. Many attractions look like they are real.	5.04	1.62	-0.864	0.238	0.460			
<b>Existential authenticity</b>	5.36					0.756	0.837	0.507
EA1. Traveling here can free my body from my daily work and life and make me more relaxed and myself.	5.42	1.36	-0.877	0.810	0.738			
EA2. Traveling here can improve me, help me realize my dreams and even result in a sense of achievement.	4.98	1.49	-0.746	0.366	0.764			
EA3. Traveling here can promote family relationships and intimacy.	5.54	1.17	-0.768	0.484	0.720			
EA4. By traveling here I am in contact with local people in an authentic and friendly way.	5.58	1.17	-0.865	1.033	0.695			
EA5. By traveling here I am in contact with other tourists in an authentic and natural way without considering the status or class differences.	5.27	1.28	-0.707	0.594	0.638			
<b>Postmodern authenticity</b>	5.01					0.769	0.852	0.589
PA1. The buildings I saw here may be contrived, reproductions or simulations of the originals and could be formed from one's imagination without reference.	4.94	1.39	-0.646	0.310	0.744			
PA2. The local people I met here could just be acting, imitating, or even imagined indigenous people.	4.94	1.48	-0.815	0.243	0.790			
PA3. There is no absolute line between the real and the fake since sometimes it is impossible to find the original as a reference.	5.02	1.27	-0.736	0.524	0.754			
PA4. Modern technology can make the inauthentic look more authentic.	5.15	1.27	-0.710	0.318	0.783			
PA5. I just want to have a good time and enjoy it, I do not care whether it is authentic or not.	-	-	-	-	-			

Note: SD = Standard Deviation; Skew. = Skewness; Kurt. = Kurtosis; - mean deleted.

### 4.3. Data analysis

Before conducting the hypothesis testing, several analytical methods were used to evaluate the quality of the data using the SPSS 21.0 software. First, skewness and kurtosis were used to test the normality of the measurement variables (i.e. the indicators). As shown in Table 1, almost all the absolute values of the skewness and kurtosis were less than 1, indicating that the data basically satisfied a normal distribution (Hair et al., 2017). Second, Harman's single-factor test was used to evaluate common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). An exploratory factor analysis of 20 measurement variables using the principal component method showed that the explained variance of the first factor was 28.357%, which was below 50%, indicating that the data collection method did not cause a systematic bias (Fuller, Simmering, Atinc, Atinc, & Babin, 2016). Third, correlation analysis was used to test whether the measurement variables for each construct were positively correlated. The tests showed that the measurement variables of each construct were positively correlated.

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to evaluate the conceptual model because the objective of this study was theory development (Ali, Rasoolimanesh, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Ryu, 2018; Hair et al., 2017). A two-step evaluation method from measurement models to structural model (including moderating effect) was adopted (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Hair et al., 2017) using the SmartPLS 3 software (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015). All measurement models are reflective. Their evaluation criteria are the internal consistency reliability (composite reliability and Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ), the convergent validity (indicator reliability and average variance extracted), and the discriminant validity (heterotrait-monotrait ratio). The structural model evaluation criteria include the coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ), the predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), the path coefficient ( $\beta$ ) and its significance ( $t$ ), and the effect sizes  $f^2$ .

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Measurement model evaluation

According to the results of the PLS algorithm, the outer loading of indicator PA5 is only 0.356, which is below 0.4; therefore, it is deleted (Hair et al., 2017). Then, the outer loadings of the remaining indicators are greater than 0.6 except for CA5, which has a value of only 0.476. However, the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values of all the constructs are larger than the corresponding critical values of 0.7 and 0.5, respectively, meeting the requirements for exploratory research (Hair et al., 2017).

The same procedure was repeated. As Table 1 shows, all CR and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values are greater than 0.7, indicating that the measurement models have acceptable internal consistency reliability (Ali et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2017). The AVE values are above 0.5, suggesting that the convergent validity of each construct is reliable (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2017).

The discriminant validity of the measurement model is tested using the recommended heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of the correlations method rather than the traditional Fornell-Larcker criterion (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). As seen from Table 2, all the HTMT ratios are below the critical value of 0.85, indicating that the discriminant validity is reliable.

**Table 2**  
Discriminant validity of the measurement model (HTMT<sub>0.85</sub> criterion).

	OA	CA	EA	PA
Objective authenticity (OA)	-			
Constructive authenticity (CA)	0.681	-		
Existential authenticity (EA)	0.623	0.603	-	
Postmodern authenticity (PA)	0.185	0.460	0.318	-

5.2. Structural model evaluation

The evaluation of the structural model with a moderator uses the two-stage approach because the research objective is to reveal the significance of the moderating effect (Hair et al., 2017). The main effect model is evaluated first, and then, the overall model containing the interactions is tested (Henseler & Chin, 2010; Hosany, Buzova, & Sanz-Blas, 2019).

The evaluation results of the main effect model show that the R<sup>2</sup> values of the endogenous constructs of constructive authenticity and existential authenticity are 0.377 and 0.302, respectively, both of which exceed the recommended threshold of 0.25 (Ali et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2017). For the running blindfolding procedure (D = 7), the corresponding Q<sup>2</sup> values (cross-validated redundancy approach) of constructive authenticity and existential authenticity are 0.191 and 0.149, respectively, both of which are above 0 (Hair et al., 2017). The results of the R<sup>2</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup> values indicate that the path model has reliable predictive power and predictive relevance. The significance of the standardized path coefficients is evaluated using the bootstrapping procedure, where 10,000 subsamples as recommended (Ali et al., 2018; Streukens & Leroi-Werelds, 2016). The results show that all three paths of objective authenticity to existential authenticity (H1: β = 0.345, p < 0.001), constructive authenticity to existential authenticity (H2: β = 0.230, p < 0.001), and objective authenticity to constructive authenticity (H3: β = 0.510, p < 0.001) have significantly positive effect relationships (Table 3). Correspondingly, the f<sup>2</sup> effect sizes are 0.119, 0.047, and 0.412, respectively. The values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent a small, medium, and large effect, respectively (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2017). Hence, the f<sup>2</sup> values of paths H1, H2 and H3 have medium, small, and large effects, respectively (also see Table 3).

When introducing the interaction effects of postmodern authenticity, the results of the analysis (Table 3) show that postmodern authenticity has negative moderating effects on the relationship between constructive authenticity and existential authenticity (H5: β = -0.109, p < 0.05) and the relationship between objective authenticity and constructive authenticity (H6: β = -0.151, p < 0.001), but it has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between objective authenticity and existential authenticity (H4: β = 0.082, p > 0.05). Correspondingly, the R<sup>2</sup> values of constructive authenticity and existential authenticity increase from 0.377 to 0.302 to 0.404 and 0.315, respectively, while the Q<sup>2</sup> values increase from 0.191 to 0.149 to 0.208 and 0.153, respectively. However, the f<sup>2</sup> values of H1 and H3 increase slightly, and that of H2 decreases. Meanwhile, the effect size f<sup>2</sup> of the interaction term between objective authenticity and postmodern authenticity on existential authenticity is only 0.008. An effect size f<sup>2</sup> less than 0.02 means that there is no effect (Hair et al., 2017). Therefore, hypotheses H5 and H6 are supported, but hypothesis H4 is rejected.

6. Conclusion and implications

This study explains how to apply authenticity theory in cultural heritage tourism development, management, and marketing by deconstructing tourism authenticity and examining the relationships between

different types of authenticity from the tourist perspective. This further deepens recent cutting-edge research and promote the integration of authenticity theory and tourism practice.

First, objective authenticity positively affects constructive authenticity and existential authenticity. Constructive authenticity comes from the construct based on object authenticity. The positive relationship between objective authenticity and constructive authenticity supports the hypothesis that objective authenticity and constructive authenticity are object-based or object-related authenticity, and the two are closely related theoretically. Meanwhile, the positive impact of objective authenticity on existential authenticity supports recent related research results (Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2018; Yi et al., 2018; Zhou et al., 2013). The objective authenticity of the core attractions is the main source of attractiveness for heritage destinations. Although the complexity and controversy of objective authenticity has not been well resolved in academic research (Chhabra, 2012), this does not deny the fact that objective authenticity is the foundation for the development of heritage tourism. Therefore, the development of cultural heritage tourism must always adhere to the basic principle of protecting authenticity. Under the premise of protecting the originality, reality and continuity of the core attractions, moderate tourism development and utilization can be carried out. Following these results, as the direct manager or supervisor of a heritage site (Xu et al., 2014), the key task of the local government is to protect the objective authenticity of the attributes and the quality of the core heritage attractions. This protection is necessary because the authenticity of heritage is not only a tourist attraction but also a historical legacy, a cultural memory and a traditional representation, which, to some extent, represents the cultural context of a place.

People generally have nostalgia (Chhabra et al., 2003; Halewood & Hannam, 2001; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999). They want to know how people lived in the past or elsewhere and their true social appearance. Therefore, seeking objective authenticity is an important push factor for heritage tourists to travel (Chhabra, 2012). ‘Authentic’ and ‘original’ have become catchwords of heritage sites and attractions that catch the eyes of tourists (Olsen, 2002). Therefore, heritage tourism marketing seeks to let the markers such as those that are ancient, old, traditional, real and genuine that represent the original attributes of the heritage site penetrate the hearts of tourists and potential tourists. Specifically, authoritative and influential TV media can be used to publicize the heritage site with the purpose of strengthening its authoritative, recognized, high-class authenticities and unique value and integrating heritage tourism marketing into a city’s integrated marketing system to enhance the heritage site’s reputation and create a competitive local heritage tourism brand.

Second, constructive authenticity positively affects existential authenticity. This result supports studies by Shen et al. (2014), Yi et al. (2018) and Park et al. (2019). From the perspective of constructivism, heritage site is the result of social construction (Xu et al., 2014), authenticity is no longer the essential attribute of the tourist object but the projection of its inherent quality (Belhassen et al., 2008; Wang, 1999). Constructive authenticity is the result of stakeholder negotiation (Watt, 2000), which is influenced by tourism commercialization

Table 3 Results of hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Main effects model			Interaction model			Supported?
	B	t	f <sup>2</sup>	β	t	f <sup>2</sup>	
H1: Objective authenticity → Existential authenticity	0.345	6.996**	0.119	0.357↑	7.709**	0.128↑	Yes
H2: Constructive authenticity → Existential authenticity	0.230	4.359**	0.047	0.190↓	3.712**	0.029↓	Yes
H3: Objective authenticity → Constructive authenticity	0.510	14.783**	0.412	0.505↓	14.896**	0.421↑	Yes
H4: Objective authenticity × Postmodern authenticity → Existential authenticity				0.082	1.617	0.008	No
H5: Constructive authenticity × Postmodern authenticity → Existential authenticity				-0.109	2.140*	0.019	Yes
H6: Objective authenticity × Postmodern authenticity → Constructive authenticity				-0.151	4.497**	0.044	Yes

Note: \* < 0.05, \*\* < 0.001.



(Chhabra, 2012; Cohen, 1988). Nevertheless, the purpose of authenticity being staged and commercialized is to better meet the needs of tourists (Chhabra, 2005) and to restore and protect culture and traditions that have been interrupted or forgotten. Constructive authenticity can negotiate the negative impact of tourism commercialization. Although commercialization is increasing, tourists can experience the authenticity of heritage as long as the structure of authentic attractions remains unchanged (MacCannell, 1999; Olsen, 2002).

Authenticity cannot, however, be separated from a specific local environment (MacCannell, 1973; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Taylor, 2001). Perceived authenticity is the result of the interaction among the tourism objects, destination environments, other people, and the tourist's own experience (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Yi et al., 2018). The perceived authenticity of tourists is more important than the real authenticity (MacCannell, 2008). Aura is closely related to authenticity (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). Constructive authenticity is a necessary way to develop heritage tourism. The point is to construct an authentic social-space field and create an aura of authenticity which helps to improve the total authenticity of the heritage site (Chronis & Hampton, 2008). The design, structure, layout and materials of heritage tourism development should always therefore maintain harmony and unity with the original appearance, the necessary repairs and reconstruction should follow the principle of restoring the old as the old, and attention should be paid to the lived intangible cultural heritage. In addition, the process of the symbolic construction of a heritage site should move from the image level to the overall atmosphere shaping. As a result of coconstruction, the management of a heritage site requires the local government, scenic spots, tour operators, heritage community, and even tourists to participate to keep the authentic aura of the site unchanged or enhanced rather than faded.

In addition, objective authenticity positively affects constructive authenticity, and constructive authenticity positively affects existential authenticity. Therefore, constructive authenticity is a complementary mediator of objective authenticity and existential authenticity, which further highlights the function of constructive authenticity in the practice of heritage tourism development. The high-quality construction of authenticity can enhance the tourist experience, can stimulate tourists' existential authenticity and be more conducive to the protection of the heritage destination. Thus, commercial attractions can also evoke existential authenticity (Kim & Jamal, 2007), and commercialization does not have to destroy local authenticity, which is exactly the opposite of MacCannell (1999). Therefore, the developmental level and management mode of a heritage tourism destination can be strengthened by means of reconstructing verisimilitude and creating a patina of age, impression management and total authenticity (Chronis & Hampton, 2008). Whether the past has been accurately recreated has become less important, and it is important to give tourists a sense of authenticity (Chhabra et al., 2003).

These results of course face the problem of deception and sincerity. Nevertheless, the demand of tourists is more a symbol of authenticity. Due to the lack of professional knowledge, even if they are provided with real attraction objects, tourists may not be able to distinguish between real and unreal. Original is not always better than constructive. Usually, heritage has many versions of authenticity. The authenticity of a heritage tourism experience is only a one-sided, selective interpretation of the past by tourism experts, enterprises, marketers, and guides (Waitt, 2000). Tourists' perception of authenticity is more controlled by the media, and a small part depends on oneself (Chhabra et al., 2003). This perception has also resulted in the overcrowding of world-class and national-level scenic spots. Heritage tourism marketing should therefore shift from originality to symbols that represent the level of authenticity, features, and word of mouth; maximize the use of media in disseminating and shaping authenticity; and widely use traditional media, networking, and social media to expand the popularity of heritage sites.

Third, existential authenticity is usually a state of existence of a result. In the structural model of this study, existential authenticity is a

consequence. Both objective authenticity and constructive authenticity positively influence existential authenticity (Yi et al., 2018), consistent with mainstream research findings that object-related authenticity positively affects existential authenticity (Bryce et al., 2015; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Lin & Liu, 2018; Taheri et al., 2017). Existential authenticity includes self-authenticity and relationship authenticity. A tourist can find himself or herself while discovering others during a tour (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2017). Existential authenticity is usually a state of being that is inspired by tourism activities and represents a 'good time' (Mkono, 2013; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Wang, 1999). In addition to tourism activities, the authentic environment (Chronis & Hampton, 2008) and the authentic social-spatial aura (Szmigin, Bengry-Howell, Morey, Griffin, & Riley, 2017) can also inspire existential authenticity. That is to say, both objective authenticity and constructive authenticity can motivate existential authenticity since they can arouse people's nostalgic emotions (Chhabra et al., 2003). The development of heritage tourism should therefore not only pay attention to the protection and development of material attractions but should also develop more intangible projects and activities related to local history, culture, and folklore to increase the opportunities for tourists to get involved and deeply experience the heritage site, which will be more conducive to them to breaking their psychological liminal zone and obtaining existential authenticity. Furthermore, local residents' tourism participation, heritage development identity and local pride should be promoted, aiming to enhance their hospitality, enthusiasm and the willingness of host-guest co-creation.

Heritage is closely related to existential authenticity (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006), since tourist constructs an authentic imagined past with a personal meaning (Bryce, Murdy, & Alexander, 2017) in the process of a heritage experience. This process is often accompanied by the strengthening of assimilation, cognitive perception, and retrospective association (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999). Existential authenticity may be just a fantasy that shows things that are missing in people's lives, but it is therefore important in tourism marketing and tourists' motivations and experiences (Knudsen et al., 2016). It has become a commodity, a commoditized experience, and an implicit selling point of tourism products (Wang, 2000). Endogenous marketing and online virtual community marketing including the participation of stakeholders at the heritage site are arguably more conducive to the publicity of existential authenticity and are more conducive to generating the word-of-mouth effect and stimulating the public effect.

Fourth, postmodern authenticity has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between objective authenticity and constructive authenticity and on the relationship between constructive authenticity and existential authenticity but has no significant moderating effect on the relationship between objective authenticity and existential authenticity. Postmodern authenticity negatively moderating the relationship between constructive authenticity and existential authenticity partially supports the research result of Yi et al. (2018), who stated that postmodern authenticity had a negative moderating impact of the relationship between the authenticity of folk culture and existential authenticity. Furthermore, postmodern authenticity has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between objective authenticity and constructive authenticity, which shows that even if heritage tourists accept the existence of postmodern authenticity, the authenticity of the heritage is their main pursuit.

Postmodern authenticity does not, however, significantly moderate the relationship between objective authenticity and existential authenticity, and the coefficient is positive, which is contrary to the result of Yi et al. (2018). This relationship may be related to the characteristics of the research sites. The research sites of Yi et al.'s (2018) study were ancient villages and their buildings are somewhat discrete. The object of this study is an ancient city. The buildings are closely connected and more integrated, and there is a more ancient atmosphere. Therefore, due to its own uniqueness, the tourism development of a cultural heritage site should reduce the postmodern elements as much as possible, even



new or imitation construction, if necessary, should conform to local authenticity.

The above discussion shows that although introspective heritage tourists have begun to accept inauthentic contrived attractions (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006) and even appreciate them (Mkono, 2013), the authenticity of heritage is still their main motivation. Therefore, in the development of heritage tourism, it is necessary to highlight authenticity, weaken the influence of postmodern authenticity, and let heritage tourists enjoy the convenience brought by postmodern authenticity without realizing its existence or that it is not true, which requires transforming the objects of postmodern authenticity into the objects of constructive authenticity, adding local symbols and features, and integrating contrived factual things into the ambience of local authenticity.

In sum, objective authenticity is the foundation of heritage tourism and is committed to protecting the core attractions of heritage tourism. Constructive authenticity is an important facilitator and mediator of heritage tourism and can negotiate the impact of tourism commercialization. Existential authenticity, as a state of being activated by the progress of a tourist experience, is the lubricant of heritage tourism. Postmodern authenticity, which explains the rationality of the existence of man-made attractions, is the moderator of heritage tourism. Each type only has a limited explanatory power, and a combined approach will be more conducive to the sustainable development of heritage tourism. The key point is how to maintain a balance between the different types of authenticity. Like the theoretical model of the pyramid shape in this paper, the stability of the overall model depends on the stability of each construct.

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