

Poetry Narration and Local Identity

A Study of the Construction of “Cultural IP” in Heyuan Hakka Homestays

Xi Zhang

School of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University

Author Note

The author declares no conflicts of interest to disclose. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Xi Zhang, School of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University, Guangzhou, Guangdong 510665, China. Email: zhangxi@gpnu.edu.cn

Abstract

Against the backdrop of digital media and policy-driven rural tourism, this study examines how Hakka homestays in the Heyuan region of Guangdong Province can transition from mere “space provision” to the construction of a poetry-narrative-based cultural IP, thereby fostering tourists’ sense of place identity. Grounded in the intersection of poetic narration, cultural heritage, and semiotic design, the research adopts a case study approach, focusing on: (1) how local symbols and emotions in poetry are transformed into narrative resources; (2) how these resources are narrativized in homestay spaces, experiences, and discourses; and (3) how such narrative-driven IP influences tourists’ place perception, emotional attachment, and sense of belonging. A three-stage model of “narrative resource extraction–narrative translation–identity generation” is proposed, showing that deep narrative integration is more effective than symbolic collage in building sustainable local identity. Theoretically, it extends poetic narration into a narratological framework for tourism and cultural IP construction. Practically, it proposes a “narrative-first” development model for homestays, offering strategic insights for sustainable cultural tourism.

Keywords: Poetry Narration; Local Identity; Cultural IP; Hakka Homestays; Place-making

1. Introduction: The Convergence of Poetry Narration, Local Identity, and Cultural IP

1.1 Research Background

Received 20 October 2025, Revised 25 October 2025, Accepted 4 November 2025.

Citation: Zhang, X. (2025). Poetry Narration and Local Identity: A Study of the Construction of “Cultural IP” in Heyuan Hakka Homestays. *Verse Version*, 14(2), 169-190.

<https://doi.org/10.64699/25GPLS5017>

The contemporary landscape of urban and rural development is increasingly mediated. On one hand, in the era of mobile internet, emerging “online celebrity cities” created through traffic and reputation have been gaining momentum, subtly altering the traditional characteristics of city images (Wu, 2025, p.101). These cities build their appeal through short videos, live streams, and social media, creating novel forms of human-place interaction. On the other hand, rural tourism development is often propelled by policy frameworks. However, in Heyuan, policy implementation faces challenges such as “lack of systematic planning in the policy system, low efficiency of executing bodies, low initiative of target groups, and an imperfect policy environment,” hindering the sustainable development of the rural tourism industry (Tan, 2023, p. 30). The core value of rural tourism lies in the synergistic experience of natural and human resources—allowing tourists to “understand local customs and rituals, appreciate seasonal rural products, fruits, streams, and ancient bridges, and engage in sightseeing, recreation, and experiencing rural lifestyles” (Tan, 2023, p. 9). Against this dual background of mediated urban narratives and policy-driven rural practice, Heyuan’s Hakka homestays encounter a critical juncture. They must evolve from simply providing accommodation (“spatial supply”) to becoming narrators of place, offering rich “cultural narratives” that can compete in an experience-driven economy and address policy implementation gaps.

1.2 Problem Statement

This study addresses a central puzzle: How can the dispersed and often abstract cultural resources of Heyuan—particularly its poetic texts and Hakka heritage—be coherently synthesized and transformed into a tangible, engaging, and marketable “Cultural IP” within homestays? Furthermore, how can this IP effectively shape a meaningful sense of “local identity” among visitors? Local identity, as defined in social psychology, refers to the “cognitive, emotional, and evaluative dimensions of the relationship between the individual

and a local place or community" (Li, 2021; Driel & Verkuyten, 2020). It is not automatically given but constructed through interaction and narrative. As Driel and Verkuyten (2020) argue, "The content of the local identity defines the norms, values and beliefs of the community that provide community members with a direction for how to think, feel and behave" (p. 615). Therefore, the core research question is: How can the scattered poetic texts and Hakka cultural resources of Heyuan be transformed through narrative construction into a unified, experiential "Cultural IP" within homestays, and how does this process effectively shape tourists' local identity?

1.3 Literature Review and Innovation

This research sits at the intersection of three distinct yet related academic strands.

Strand 1 (Theoretical): Poetry Narration and Local Writing. The study of "poetry narration" in China emerged from discussions on "narrativity" in 1990s poetry criticism and gained prominence after the "First Frontier Academic Forum on Poetic Narratology" in 2020 (Zhang, 2021, p. 53). Zhang Liqun (2021) advocates for a dynamic and open "poetics of poetry narration" grounded in Chinese poetic practice (p. 59). Li Guikui (2018) delves into the unique spatiotemporal mechanisms of traditional Chinese poetry narration, highlighting techniques like "goule" (outlining) and spatiotemporal jumps that create a "wanqu" (indirect, subtle) aesthetic (pp. 110-112). Parallel to this, the concept of "local characteristics in poetry" provides a lens for analyzing geographical elements in verse. Wang Lizeng (2025) argues that this concept, encompassing "local writing" (external identifier), "local identity" (emotional orientation), and "local traits" (internal factors like themes and style), is more accurate and richer than broader "regional literature" studies (p. 1). Han Ying's (2022) analysis of Tang dynasty poetry about the Yellow River source demonstrates how poets transform objective geographical space into a "literary geographical space" laden with political, military, and cultural meanings (p. 1).

Strand 2 (Subject): Hakka Cultural Inheritance and Homestay Design Practice. Heyuan, as a “Hakka Ancient Town,” possesses profound cultural resources. Its Hakka mountain songs are “not only treasures of musical art but also living fossils carrying history, emotion, and cultural memory” (Xie, 2025, p. 1). The inheritance of such intangible cultural heritage requires innovative pathways, such as integrating modern musical elements (Xie, 2025, p. 4). In terms of material culture and spatial design, He Yangmei (2025) emphasizes that the interior design of Heyuan rural homestays should integrate Hakka culture, proposing designs for family-style guest room combinations, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) feature spaces, and indoor-outdoor integrated spaces to create distinctive environments (p. 3). The principles of using local materials and traditional craftsmanship in furniture design are also crucial for fostering a sense of place (He, 2025, pp. 2-3).

Strand 3 (Pathway): Semiotic and Design-Based Construction of Cultural IP and Transnational Comparison of Local Narratives. The construction of Cultural IP has become a key strategy for revitalizing traditional culture. Tian Muzi’s (2025) research on the Yunnan Wamao (tile cat) demonstrates how semiotic theory (semantics, syntaxics, pragmatics) can guide the extraction and transformation of core cultural symbols for IP development (p. 2). Huang Yuzhu (2025) introduces Sensory Processing Sensitivity (SPS) theory into the IP design of Shan Hai Jing (Classic of Mountains and Seas), advocating for “synergistic design of perceptual pathways” (e.g., multi-sensory integration) to enhance emotional connection and cultural identity (pp. 23-24, 30). Furthermore, a transnational perspective reminds us that local identity is often constructed in relation to broader mobilities. Dhupelia-Mesthrie (2016) argues against isolating transnational memories from local journeys, emphasizing that “there is no necessary hierarchy in people’s experience of spatial mobility” (pp. 1068-1069), urging attention to both movement and fixity.

Positioning of This Study: While existing research offers valuable insights, a gap remains in systematically applying the literary mechanism of “poetry narration” to the practical field of “Cultural IP construction” within specific tourism contexts like homestays. This study aims to bridge this gap. It stitches together the theoretical tools of Strand 1 (poetry narration/local writing), the contextual subject of Strand 2 (Heyuan’s Hakka culture and homestays), and the methodological approaches of Strand 3 (IP semiotics/design and narrative comparison). By doing so, it examines how poetic narratives can be operationalized to build a Cultural IP that fosters local identity in Heyuan Hakka homestays.

1.4 Research Approach and Methods

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following sub-questions:

- a. What “local symbols” (e.g., “Wanlv Lake,” “Hakka mountains,” “migration”) and “emotional schemas” (e.g., nostalgia, tranquility, resilience) available for narrative transformation are contained in Heyuan-related poetic texts (both classical and modern)?
- b. How are these extracted poetic elements translated into concrete narrative practices across three layers of the homestay field: spatial solidification, experiential activation, and discursive communication?
- c. How does this “poetry-narration-driven” Cultural IP construction model influence the formation of tourists’ local identity at cognitive, emotional, and social belonging levels?

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative case study approach, focusing on selected Hakka homestays in Heyuan that explicitly engage with poetic or cultural narratives. Multiple methods are employed for triangulation:

Textual Analysis: Close reading of Heyuan-related poems from various periods (e.g., works by Zong Le, modern poetry) to identify recurring local symbols, imagery, emotional tones, and narrative structures.

In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with homestay operators, designers, and local cultural practitioners to understand their intentionality in using poetic narratives, their design choices, and their perceptions of tourist responses.

Participant Observation: Immersive observation within homestay spaces and during curated activities (e.g., poetry readings, tea ceremonies, storytelling sessions) to document how narratives are embodied and experienced.

Visual Material Analysis: Systematic analysis of homestay promotional materials, websites, social media content, interior décor, and architectural features to decode the visual and discursive construction of the poetic IP.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Narrative Transformation Chain from Poetic Text to Local Identity

2.1 Core Conceptual Definitions

“Poetry Narration”: Moving beyond simply denoting plot within a poem, this concept, drawing from Zhang Liqun and Li Guikui, emphasizes poetry’s function as a spatiotemporal organizing mechanism and a mode of affective expression. It is a way of structuring experience and giving meaning to place. Li Guikui (2018) explains that traditional Chinese poetry narration is based on the concept of “continuity through change” and forms unique spatiotemporal frameworks through “circulation, contrast, and leaps” (pp. 106-107). This narrative capability allows poetry to condense complex local experiences, histories, and emotions into potent symbolic forms.

“Cultural IP” (Intellectual Property): Combining insights from Tian Muzi (2025) and Huang Yuzhu (2025), this study defines Cultural IP as an intellectual property system with

recognizability, storability, and extensibility, formed through systematic symbolic design and narrative development based on specific cultural resources (here, poetry). It is not merely a logo or a character but a coherent narrative universe that can be experienced across multiple platforms and touchpoints. Effective Cultural IP construction involves the strategic translation of cultural symbols into engaging stories and sensorial experiences.

“Local Identity”: This concept integrates the literary perspective of “local identity” (Li, 2021) with the social psychological definition from Driel and Verkuyten (2020). It refers to the cognitive, affective, and evaluative sense of belonging an individual develops towards a place through narrative interaction. It encompasses knowing what a place is (“cognitive map”), feeling a connection to it (“emotional bond”), and potentially seeing oneself as part of its social fabric, even temporarily (“social belonging”). As Driel and Verkuyten (2020) note, a prosocial local identity content, such as one defined by hospitality, can incline community members and visitors alike to act in hospitable ways (p. 615).

2.2 Construction of the Analytical Framework: A Three-Stage Narrative Transformation Model

To analyze the process from text to identity, this study proposes a three-stage model:

Stage 1: Narrative Resource Layer (Extraction)

This involves mining Heyuan-related poetic texts for raw narrative material. Using the lens of “local characteristics in poetry” (Wang, 2025), analysis focuses on:

Local Symbols: Iconic geographical markers and cultural motifs (e.g., “Wanlv Lake” from its reputation as a green city, “Hakka mountains” from its topography, the “migration” motif central to Hakka history). As Zhao Zongfu’s (1982) study shows, poetic depictions of the river source evolved from a vague western extreme to a specific, explored geographical and cultural symbol (pp. 69-71).

Emotional Schemas: Recurrent affective patterns or atmospheres conveyed in the poems (e.g., the awe towards nature found in Shan Hai Jing descriptions, the tranquility of pastoral life, the resilience embedded in migration stories, the nostalgic longing in classical lyrics).

Stage 2: Narrative Translation Layer (Transformation)

This stage examines how the extracted symbols and schemas are translated into tangible experiences within the homestay field through three intertwined pathways:

Spatial Solidification: Following He Yangmei's (2025) design principles, this involves materializing poetic image into the built environment. Examples include architectural forms inspired by poetic imagery, interior layouts that mimic poetic spatiotemporal rhythms (e.g., "scenery changing with every step"), and the use of inscriptions, paintings, and object designs that quote or visualize poems.

Experiential Activation: This transforms passive viewing into active participation. It includes curated activities like poetry recitation workshops, cultural rituals (tea ceremony with stories), guided tours with poetic narration, and interactive installations that allow guests to engage with poetic themes.

Discursive communication: This involves weaving a coherent brand meta-narrative across various texts. It encompasses the homestay's name, promotional copy, social media storytelling, and the owner's personal narratives, all of which consistently employ poetic language and themes to construct a unique cultural identity. This process relates to Du Xin's (2026) observation on the "participatory" co-construction mechanism of city image in digital media, where user-generated content also shapes perception (pp. 4-5).

Stage 3: Identity Generation Layer (Outcome)

This final stage investigates how the translated narratives interact with tourists to potentially foster local identity. Drawing on the components of local identity, it asks:

Cognitive Dimension (“What is this place?”): Do the narratives provide a coherent “cultural script” that helps tourists understand Heyuan’s distinctive characteristics, history, and Hakka culture?

Affective Dimension (“How does this place feel?”): Do the poetic atmosphere and experiences evoke intended emotions like nostalgia, peace, resonance, or awe, creating an emotional bond with the place?

Social-Belonging Dimension (“Do I belong here, even briefly?”): Do the narratives and social practices within the homestay facilitate a role transition for the tourist from “outsider” to “temporary local” or “cultural participant,” enabling a symbolic act of place affiliation? This can be compared to Dhupelia-Mesthrie’s (2016) focus on how narratives of local and transnational journeys contribute to identity re-location.

3. Case Deep Description: The Triple Practice of Poetic Narration in Heyuan Hakka Homestays

3.1 Case Selection and Overview

This section would introduce 2-3 specific Hakka homestays in Heyuan chosen for study. Selection criteria would include: explicit use of poetic or literary themes in their branding/design; representation of different scales and styles (e.g., a boutique homestay in a renovated Hakka roundhouse, a modern design homestay referencing landscape poetry); and willingness to participate in the research. Brief profiles of each homestay would be provided, including location, history, owner’s philosophy, and target clientele.

3.2 Spatial Narration: The Material Embedding of Poetic Imagery

This section analyzes how poetic elements are fixed in the physical space of the homestays, creating an atmosphere of “poetic dwelling”.

Architectural Integration: From a narratological perspective, architectural forms function not merely as shelters but as primary narrative carriers that frame visitors’ first

encounter with place. The adoption or reinterpretation of Hakka vernacular forms (like the “round dragon house” or “enclosed village” mentioned by He Yangmei, 2025, p. 1) embeds poetic narration at the level of spatial ontology: the inward-facing courtyards, axial symmetry, and enclosure logic implicitly echo poetic themes of protection, rootedness, and collective memory associated with Hakka migration history. These architectural choices enable the homestay space itself to “tell a story” even before any textual explanation is offered, allowing guests to intuitively perceive the harmony between human settlement and surrounding landscape—a spatial logic long celebrated in classical Chinese poetry.

Interior Design and Décor: Rather than functioning as decorative add-ons, these interior elements operate as micro-narrative nodes distributed throughout the living environment. The selective inscription of poetic lines, often placed at transitional points such as doorways, corridors, or tea spaces, subtly guides guests’ emotional rhythm as they move through the homestay. In this sense, poetry becomes spatially performative: it does not merely describe nature or locality but actively structures perception, inviting moments of pause, reflection, and emotional attunement. The emphasis on handcrafted furniture and local materials further reinforces a poetic aesthetic of simplicity and restraint, aligning with the understated expressiveness characteristic of traditional poetic narration, as suggested by He Yangmei (2025, pp. 2-3).

Spatial Sequence and Rhythm: This sequential organization transforms spatial movement into a form of embodied narration. As guests transition from more public to increasingly private zones, the experience mirrors poetic spatiotemporal shifts—compression and expansion, concealment and revelation—described by Li Guikui (2018). Each spatial “leap” offers a new sensory and emotional register, producing a rhythm akin to poetic progression. Consequently, spatial narration enables guests to experience locality not as a static backdrop

but as a layered, unfolding story, thereby deepening the immersive quality of the homestay environment.

3.3 Experiential Narration: The Participatory Generation of Poetic Situations

Beyond static space, this section investigates how homestays activate poetic narratives through curated experiences.

Themed Activities: Such activities function as situated narrative enactments, allowing poetry to shift from textual representation to lived experience. By participating in recitation, singing, or writing, guests momentarily inhabit the affective positions traditionally occupied by poets or local performers (linking to Xie Shihua's, 2025, work on heritage). This performative engagement blurs the boundary between cultural consumption and cultural participation, enabling poetic narration to operate as a shared experiential script rather than a unidirectional display of heritage.

Daily Rituals and Storytelling: Through narrativization, everyday practices are elevated into symbolically charged moments that connect personal experience with collective memory. These rituals function as affective anchors, embedding poetic meaning within sensory routines. By linking taste, smell, and embodied action to poetic and historical narratives, the homestay experience cultivates emotional resonance that extends beyond visual appreciation, reinforcing the multisensory logic emphasized in narrative-driven Cultural IP construction.

Guided Interaction with Landscape: Documenting how homestay hosts or guides frame nature walks or visits to nearby sites. A walk along a riverbank might be framed through lines from a poem about the river source, consciously shaping the guests' perception of the landscape through a literary lens, much like the poets Han Ying (2022) discusses transformed the Yellow River source into a literary space (p. 1).

3.4 Discursive Narration: The Textual Communication of the Poetic IP

This section examines the narrative construction across various textual and media platforms.

Branding and Naming: Analyzing homestay names (e.g., “Wanlv Lake Poetry Lodge,” “Song of the Hakka Hills Homestay”) for their direct invocation of poetic or local symbols. These names function as condensed narrative signifiers, encapsulating core poetic themes while establishing immediate associations with locality. As entry points to the Cultural IP, they pre-frame visitors’ expectations and prime interpretive pathways even before arrival, reinforcing the narrative coherence of the homestay experience.

Promotional Materials: Examining website copy, brochures, and online listings to see how they weave a story about the place, often starting with Heyuan’s ancient history as “Qin Dynasty’s Longchuan County” and “Zhao Tuo’s rising place” (He Yangmei, 2025, p. 1), and integrating poetic phrases to describe the ambiance. These materials operate as meta-narratives that align historical discourse with poetic imagery, translating academic or historical knowledge into emotionally accessible language. By combining factual references with lyrical expression, promotional texts extend poetic narration beyond the physical site, sustaining narrative continuity across pre-visit imagination and post-visit memory.

Social Media Storytelling: Observing how homestays use platforms like WeChat, Xiaohongshu, or Douyin. This might involve posting photos with poetic captions, sharing short videos of poetic moments (e.g., morning mist on the lake) set to traditional music, or encouraging guests to share their own “poetic” experiences with specific hashtags. Here, poetic narration becomes co-produced through digital interaction. User-generated content amplifies and diversifies the narrative, allowing guests to reinterpret poetic themes through personal perspectives. This participatory circulation strengthens the Cultural IP’s adaptability while maintaining a shared narrative core, echoing Du Xin’s (2026) discussion of participatory image construction.

Owner's Narrative: Through interviews, capturing the homestay owner's personal story—their connection to Heyuan, their inspiration from poetry, their vision for sharing Hakka culture—which often serves as the foundational human story for the entire IP. The owner's narrative functions as a legitimizing anchor, grounding poetic narration in lived experience. By positioning themselves as both narrator and cultural mediator, owners humanize the IP, reinforcing authenticity and emotional trust. This personal storytelling bridges abstract poetic concepts and concrete social relations, enhancing the persuasive power of the homestay's overall narrative framework.

Overall, the case analysis shows that poetic narration in Heyuan Hakka homestays functions as an integrated narrative system rather than isolated design elements. Through spatial embedding, experiential activation, and discursive communication, poetic resources are transformed into an immersive narrative field that enables embodied and multisensory engagement. Based on these empirical insights, the following discussion synthesizes the construction mechanisms of narrative-driven Cultural IP and examines its effects on tourists' cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of local identity.

4. Discussion and Findings: The Construction Mechanism and Identity Effects of Narrative-Driven Cultural IP

4.1 Construction Mechanism: How Poetic Narrative Integrates into “Cultural IP”

The case analysis reveals that successful transformation of poetic resources into a cohesive Cultural IP relies on the mutual reinforcement of spatial, experiential, and discursive narratives, creating a unified “narrative field.” Isolated poetic elements in décor are not enough; they must be echoed in activities and consistently communicated in language. In other words, poetic narration becomes effective only when it is stabilized across multiple touchpoints, so that guests can repeatedly encounter the same symbolic cues in different forms (seeing, doing, hearing, and sharing), gradually forming a coherent interpretation of “what this place is about.”

This coherence also reduces the risk that poetry is perceived as mere ornamentation, and instead positions it as a meaningful script that organizes experience.

The key to successful IP construction lies in the leap from “element application” to “worldview construction”. The homestay must transcend being a container for poetic motifs to become an enterable “poetic realm”—a coherent, immersive storyworld where every touchpoint supports a central narrative theme (e.g., “the Hakka journey of resilience and home-making,” “the timeless tranquility of the Wanlv Lake landscape”). Such a “realm” is not built by adding more symbols, but by ensuring internal consistency between space, service encounters, and narrative language, so that visitors can move from fragmented impressions to an integrated sense of place. This aligns with the process Du Xin (2026) describes for internet-famous cities, where a mechanism of “civilization uploading—media roaming—recreating a sense of place” shapes image, emphasizing the role of mediated experience in forming place attachment (pp. 4-5).

This research engages with and extends the theories of Tian Muzi (2025) and Huang Yuzhu (2025). Tian’s semiotic approach provides a method for systematically deconstructing and recombining cultural symbols from poetry (like “lake,” “mountain,” “migration path”—a process evident in the extraction of narrative resources. Importantly, this semiotic translation also implies a hierarchy of symbols, where a limited set of “core signs” can anchor the IP while allowing peripheral signs to vary without diluting recognizability. Huang’s emphasis on “synergistic design of perceptual pathways” for sensitive audiences finds concrete application here. The poetic IP in homestays operates through a systematic, affective narrativization that engages multiple senses: the visual beauty of the space and calligraphy, the auditory experience of poems and songs, the tactile feel of handmade furniture and local textiles, the taste of food tied to stories, and even the olfactory sense of tea and mountain air. In this way, narration is not only “told” but continuously “felt,” enabling poetic meaning to be remembered as embodied

sensation rather than abstract knowledge. This multi-sensory narrative design aims to create the deep, emotionally resonant experience that both poetry and a strong Cultural IP seek to deliver.

4.2 Identity Effects: Pathways to Shaping Tourists' Local Identity

Based on observational and interview data, the narrative practices were found to operate on tourists' local identity formation through three interconnected pathways. Rather than acting independently, these pathways reinforce one another, allowing cognitive understanding, emotional response, and social positioning to gradually converge into a relatively stable sense of place-related identification.

Cognitive Pathway (Providing a Cultural Script):

The integrated narratives offer tourists a framework to “read” and understand Heyuan. Instead of perceiving it as a generic rural destination, they learn to see it through the lens of “Hakka Ancient Town,” “source of the Dong River,” and “land of green mountains and clear waters,” concepts rich with historical and poetic connotations. Through repeated narrative cues encountered across space, activities, and discourse, tourists acquire a shared interpretive script that organizes fragmented impressions into a meaningful whole. The narratives connect discrete sights (a roundhouse, a lake, a mountain) into a coherent story, fulfilling the cognitive dimension of local identity and enabling tourists to articulate “where they are” in cultural rather than purely geographical terms.

Affective Pathway (Fostering Emotional Connection):

The poetic atmosphere and participatory experiences are designed to evoke specific emotions that create a bond. The tranquility of a lakeside reading nook may induce peace; the spirited singing of a mountain song might evoke resonance or joy; the story of Hakka migration embedded in a meal might inspire respect and empathy. Importantly, these emotions are generated through embodied encounters rather than abstract interpretation, allowing visitors to

feel the locality before fully conceptualizing it. These emotions are not random but are often linked to the emotional schemas present in the source poetic texts (e.g., awe of nature, nostalgia, resilience). This process mirrors how, as Wang Lizeng (2025) notes, local identity in poetry is deeply tied to the poet's emotional experience and identification with a place (pp. 4–6).

Social-Belonging Pathway (Enabling Symbolic Affiliation):

The most profound effect observed was the facilitation of a temporary role shift. Through participatory activities (writing a poem, learning a song, cooking a dish), tourists move from passive consumers to active cultural participants. This role transition allows visitors to symbolically “try on” a local position, even if only briefly. They are not just “staying in a Hakka area” but momentarily “engaging in Hakka poetic life.” This allows them to perform a symbolic affiliation with the local community, answering “Could I belong here, in this moment, in this role?” This aligns with Driel and Verkuyten’s (2020) finding that a local identity defined by prosocial traits like hospitality can encourage inclusive behavior (p. 628). The homestay, through its narrative and social design, acts as a kind of “entrepreneur of identity” (Haslam et al., as cited in Driel & Verkuyten, 2020, pp. 616–617), crafting a welcoming “us” that includes the willing visitor. This can be fruitfully compared to Dhupelia-Mesthrie’s (2016) analysis of how narratives of re-location—whether local or transnational—help individuals re-situate their sense of self and belonging (p. 1076).

4.3 Reflections: Tensions between Authenticity, Commercialization, and Community

The construction of a poetic Cultural IP is not without tensions. While poetic narration offers a powerful means of cultural translation, it also inevitably involves choices, exclusions, and reinterpretations that require continuous reflexivity.

Selectivity and “Authenticity”:

The narrative is necessarily selective. Which poems are chosen? Which aspects of Hakka history are highlighted? Such choices are shaped not only by aesthetic preference but

also by market logic and communicative efficiency. The poetic IP often emphasizes aesthetic, harmonious, or heroic narratives, potentially smoothing over more complex, difficult, or mundane historical realities. While this selectivity can enhance narrative clarity and emotional appeal, it also raises questions about whose histories are foregrounded and whose are marginalized. The boundary between creative interpretation and misrepresentation is therefore a constant concern for operators aiming for “authenticity”, particularly when poetic abstraction risks detaching cultural symbols from their original social contexts.

Commercialization and Community Impact:

Turning poetry and culture into a sellable IP experience risks commodification. There is a danger of creating a “stage-managed” authenticity for tourist consumption, where living cultural practices are simplified into repeatable performances. Furthermore, the benefits of this commercial development must be scrutinized. Does it empower the local community, providing economic opportunities and reinforcing cultural pride, as the integration of ICH spaces suggested by He Yangmei (2025) intends? Or does it risk alienating community members or turning their everyday life into a spectacle? The success of the IP in fostering a prosocial local identity, as discussed by Driel and Verkuyten (2020), may hinge on inclusive community engagement in its development and benefits sharing, ensuring that poetic narration remains a shared cultural process rather than a purely market-driven strategy.

5. Conclusion: Towards a Narratological Paradigm for Homestay Development

5.1 Summary of Research Conclusions

This study demonstrates that “poetry narration” serves as an effective medium for connecting cultural heritage (the “poem”) with modern consumption (the “stay”). Rather than treating poetry as a symbolic embellishment, the findings show that poetic narration can function as a structuring logic that organizes space, experience, and discourse into a coherent whole. It systematically elaborates a “narrative resource → narrative translation → identity

generation” construction path for developing Cultural IP in the context of Heyuan Hakka homestays, clarifying how abstract cultural texts are transformed into lived, experiential realities.

The research argues that a deep, systematic, and affectively engaging narrative-driven Cultural IP is more potent than superficial symbolic collage in fostering a meaningful and sustainable local identity among tourists. Importantly, this identity formation does not occur through passive exposure but through repeated narrative encounters across cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. The study therefore moves beyond simply putting poetic phrases on walls to building an immersive, participatory storyworld that enables visitors to understand, feel, and temporarily inhabit the locality, highlighting the central role of narration in place-based tourism development.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

This study offers several theoretical implications for research on cultural tourism, place-making, and Cultural IP construction. First, it extends poetry narration from a primarily literary-analytical concept into a practical narratological framework applicable to tourism spaces. By demonstrating how poetic narration operates across spatial, experiential, and discursive layers, the study shows that narration can function as an organizing mechanism for cultural experience rather than merely a representational device.

Second, the proposed three-stage transformation model—narrative resource, narrative translation, and identity generation—contributes to Cultural IP theory by clarifying the internal logic through which cultural texts are operationalized into experiential value. This model helps bridge the gap between abstract cultural symbolism and concrete tourism practices, offering a process-oriented perspective that moves beyond static symbol extraction.

Third, the findings enrich local identity research by illustrating how temporary, visitor-based identity formation can be narratively induced. The study demonstrates that local identity

is not solely rooted in long-term residence or community membership but can be momentarily constructed through immersive narrative participation. In doing so, it positions homestays as micro-sites of identity negotiation, where narration mediates the relationship between mobility, locality, and belonging.

5.3 Practical Implications

For Homestay Operators:

Adopt a “Narrative-First” design and operation philosophy. Before physical design, invest time in excavating the local poetic and cultural texts to define a core narrative theme. Let this theme guide all subsequent decisions—from architectural style and interior décor to activity design and marketing copy. Prioritize creating multi-sensory, participatory experiences that allow guests to “live” the narrative, not just see it. Such an approach helps ensure internal consistency across touchpoints and strengthens the emotional and cognitive coherence of the homestay’s Cultural IP.

For Local Managers and Planners:

Facilitate the development of a regional “Poetic Narrative Database.” This repository could collate Heyuan-related poems from all eras, historical texts, folk songs, and stories. Making this resource accessible to homestay developers, designers, and tour guides would foster more informed and diverse narrative creation. Furthermore, support cross-entity narrative IP synergy by encouraging collaboration among homestays, local museums, cultural troupes, and ICH inheritors. Such coordination can reduce narrative fragmentation and contribute to a more integrated destination-level cultural ecosystem.

5.4 Research Limitations and Future Prospects

This study has limitations. As a qualitative case study, its findings, while rich in depth, may not be fully generalizable to all homestays in Heyuan or other regions. The reliance on

self-reported data from interviews and observations also has inherent constraints, particularly in capturing long-term identity effects.

Future research could:

Conduct comparative studies between Heyuan and other Hakka regions (e.g., Meizhou, Ganzhou) to examine how different local poetic traditions and narrative strategies lead to varied IP constructions and identity outcomes.

Employ quantitative methods to measure the identity effects proposed here. Surveys or scales could be used to assess changes in tourists' cognitive knowledge, emotional attachment, and sense of belonging before and after a narrative-rich homestay stay.

Explore the long-term impacts of such Cultural IP development on host communities themselves, focusing on changes in residents' local identity, cultural confidence, and socio-economic well-being.

By continuing to explore the nexus of narrative, place, and identity, future research can further illuminate pathways for sustainable cultural tourism that honors heritage while fostering meaningful connections between visitors and localities.

Funding

This work was supported by the Heyuan Philosophy and Social Sciences Planning Project for 2022 “Research on Hakka Homestay Tourism in Heyuan in the Post-Pandemic Era” (Project No. HYSK22P70).

References

Dhupelia-Mesthrie, U. (2016). Re-locating memories: Transnational and local narratives of Indian South Africans in Cape Town. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 52(8), 1065–1079. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909616642793>

Driel, E., & Verkuyten, M. (2020). Local identity and the reception of refugees: the example of Riace. *Identities*, 27(5), 614-632. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2019.1611075>

Han, Y. (2022). 空间视域下的唐代黄河河源诗歌书写[Spatial perspective on the poetic writing of the Yellow River source in the Tang Dynasty]. *新乡学院学报*[*Journal of Xinxiang University*], 39(11), 37-40.

He, Y. M. (2025). 浅析融入客家文化的河源乡村民宿室内设计[A brief analysis of the interior design of Heyuan rural homestays integrating Hakka culture]. *中国建筑装饰装修*[*China Building Decoration & Renovation*], (10), 50-52.

Huang, Y. Z. (2025). 基于感觉加工敏感性理论的《山海经》文化 IP 形象设计探究[*An exploration of cultural IP image design of Shan Hai Jing based on sensory processing sensitivity theory*] (Master's thesis), 鲁迅美术学院[Luxun Academy of Fine Arts]. <https://doi.org/10.27217/d.cnki.glxmc.2025.000151>

Li, G. K. (2018). 传统诗歌叙事的时空机制及其审美特质[The spatiotemporal mechanism and aesthetic characteristics of traditional poetic narration]. *福建论坛(人文社会科学版)*[*Fujian Tribune (The Humanities & Social Sciences Monthly)*], (06), 106-112.

Li, M. (2021). 地方认同与文学传统: 论高启的苏州书写[Local identity and literary tradition: On Gao Qi's writing of Suzhou]. *苏州大学学报(哲学社会科学版)*[*Journal of Soochow University (Philosophy & Social Science Edition)*], 42(06), 140-148. <https://doi.org/10.19563/j.cnki.sdzs.2021.06.015>

Tan, Q. D. (2023). 河源市乡村旅游发展政策执行与优化研究[*Research on the policy implementation and optimization of rural tourism development in Heyuan City*] (Master's thesis), 仲恺农业工程学院[Zhongkai University of Agriculture and Engineering]. <https://doi.org/10.27700/d.cnki.gzcny.2023.000337>

Tian, M. Z. (2025). 基于符号学理论的非遗文化 IP 设计策略研究[*Research on intangible cultural heritage IP design strategy based on semiotic theory*] (Master's thesis), [Jiangnan University]. <https://doi.org/10.27169/d.cnki.gwqgu.2025.002270>

Wang, L. Z. (2025). 论中国古代诗歌的地方性特征 [On the local characteristics of ancient Chinese poetry]. *江淮论坛*[*Jianghuai Tribune*], (03), 162-170. 170. <https://doi.org/10.16064/j.cnki.cn34-1003/g0.2025.03.009>

Wu, W. X. (2025). “人-媒-城”：网红城市发展模式集聚特征与分类治理策略——基于长红城市 Top30 的数据分析 [“Human-Media-City”: Agglomeration Features and Classification Governance Strategies——Based on the Analysis of Top30 Long-red Cities]. *江淮论坛*[*Jianghuai Tribune*], (03), 162-170. 170. <https://doi.org/10.16064/j.cnki.cn34-1003/g0.2025.03.009>

Categorical Governance Strategies for Social Media Sensation Cities — A Data Analysis Based on the Top 30 Sustained- Popularity Cities]. 电子政务 [*E-Government*], (05): 101-121. <https://doi.org/10.16582/j.cnki.dzzw.2025.05.008>

Xie, S. H. (2025). 核心素养视角下河源客家山歌的艺术传承之道 [The path of artistic inheritance of Heyuan Hakka mountain songs from the perspective of core literacy]. 黄河之声 [*Huanghe Zhi Sheng*], (06), 28-31.
<https://doi.org/10.19340/j.cnki.hhzs.2025.06.025>

Zhang, L.Q. (2021). “诗歌叙事”问题及其相关理论话语的历史建构——以 1990 年代以来的中国诗歌批评为线索 [The issue of “poetic narration” and the historical construction of its related theoretical discourse: Taking Chinese poetry criticism since the 1990s as a clue]. 山东社会科学 [*Shandong Social Sciences*], (08), 53-59.
<https://doi.org/10.14112/j.cnki.37-1053/c.2021.08.009>

Zhao, Z. F. (1982). 古诗话河源 [Ancient poems talking about the river source]. 青海社会科学 [*Qinghai Social Sciences*], (04), 69-72.
<https://doi.org/10.14154/j.cnki.qss.1982.04.016>