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Study on the Influence of Cultural Communication on the Development of the Visitor Economy

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Abstract: This study includes China and 197 countries from 1995 to 2019 as the research subjects. It considers trade in cultural products and inbound tourism as proxy variables of cultural communication and the visitor economy to analyze cultural communication's impact on the visitor economy's development and finds that cultural communication significantly promotes the visitor economy's development. A robustness test of the benchmark regression results was conducted using the shrinktail treatment, substitute variable, and subsample selection methods. Cultural products were divided into three types, and the influence of trade in different cultural products on inbound tourism varies. Forty-nine categories had the largest promoting effect on inbound tourism, followed by thirty-seven categories and ninety-seven categories. There are significant differences in the influence of cultural product exports on inbound tourism in different cultural circles and continents. The influence effect within each circle was in the following order: Indian cultural circles (0.49), Islamic cultural circles (0.42), East Asian cultural circles (0.40), Western cultural circles (0.39), and Eastern European cultural circles (0.33). From the aspect continents, the export of cultural products to Europe significantly impacted China's inbound tourism, followed by Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Finally, countermeasures and suggestions are proven to promote the visitor economy's development. This study provides a reference for the cultural inheritance and development of the global tourism economy.

Keywords: cultural communication; trade in cultural products; inbound tourism; visitor economy; cultural sphere

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1. Introduction

China has always attached great importance to the external communication of culture and cultural exchanges with other countries in the world. Especially in the 21st century, the strategy of "going global" with Chinese culture has been continuously strengthened. The General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized on many important diplomatic occasions that "exchanges among civilizations should transcend estrangement, mutual learning over clash of civilizations, and coexistence over superiority of civilizations and promote mutual understanding, mutual respect and mutual trust among all countries" [1]. As an important embodiment of the upgrading of the development strategy of "going global" in the new era, transnational cultural communication has gradually developed after capital exports and is expected to become a driving force for China's new round of economic growth [2].

In recent years, with the continuous enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength, the importance of cultural development and exchange in opening to the outside world has become increasingly apparent. Trade in cultural products has become an important part of China's foreign trade. Since 2010, China has been the world's largest exporter of cultural products for many years. In 2019, the total import and export volume of China's cultural products reached 111.45 billion US dollars, up 8.9% year to year. Among them, the export was USD 99.89 billion, up by 7.9%, and the trade surplus was USD 88.32 billion,

up by 6.8%. With the deepening of cooperation in the trade of cultural products between China and other countries, tourism cooperation between China and other countries has also been strengthened. Cultural products are essential carriers of cultural inheritance and significant tourism resources and attractions. The number of inbound Chinese tourists increased from 46 million in 1995 to 145 million in 2019. Cultural product trade has become essential for enhancing tourism attractions and promoting visitor economic growth [3].

Developing trade in cultural products plays a vital role in improving the quality of foreign trade, expanding reform and opening up, and accelerating economic transformation and upgrading [4]. In particular, with the digital economy's rapid development, cultural communication has the characteristics of rapid speed, high efficiency, broad scope, and varied forms [5]. It has become a meaningful way to promote mutual understanding between countries, improve a nation's international reputation and enhance image, augment residents' sense of national cultural identity, and promote people flows. With the support of national policies and the joint efforts of tourism practitioners, China has transformed from a substantial tourism country to an influential tourism force; in particular, the scale of inbound tourism has maintained steady growth. In addition to its inherent economic value, the trade of cultural products plays a unique role in cultural communication [6]. As an important carrier of cultural information such as a country's values, religious beliefs, ways of thinking, and habits of behavior, cultural products not only play an important role in promoting economic development among trading countries but also serve as an essential driving force for people-to-people connectivity and personnel exchanges among countries [7]. Then, in the context of the increasing scale of cultural product trade, will cultural product trade become a driving force for the growth of China's inbound tourism? Do specific types of cultural products have differing promotional effects on inbound tourism? Do effects vary by cultural circles and continents? Based on the perspective of cultural communication, this paper takes the trade of cultural products and inbound tourism between China and 197 countries as the main research objects to deeply analyze the influence of trade of cultural products on the visitor economy. This study will help clarify the relationship between cultural product trade and inbound tourism, measure the influence of cultural product exports on inbound tourism, and have important reference significance for the policy formulation of cultural trade and tourism development in China and other countries.

2. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

2.1. Literature Review

Trade in cultural products has greatly expanded the boundaries of service trade. It has proven to be a strong driver of the cross-border flow of global cultural elements [8]. Cultural products trade, as the spread and exchange of culture in the world, has laid an important foundation for tourism cooperation between countries. The interaction between tourism and culture trade has aroused the attention and interest of scholars, mainly with a focus on the following aspects.

2.1.1. Cultural Product Trade Influence Effect

In the context of sluggish global trade, strengthening cultural communication with other countries can further grow mutual trust between countries and may have a creative effect on international economic cooperation. These facts have also proven that trade in Chinese cultural products has greatly encouraged the world to have a deeper understanding of China and a more comprehensive understanding of China. It has also greatly enhanced the attraction of China's tourism. Although international cultural communication is so important to international economic cooperation, there is relatively little research literature in this field. Many studies have discussed the influence of culture on international economic cooperation from the perspective of cultural distance and found that the trade of cultural products helps to narrow the cultural distance between countries [9]. Cross-cultural communication is an important way to weaken cultural barriers, enhance cultural

identity, and reduce transaction costs. Cultural barriers originate from cultural differences and can be weakened or even eliminated through the trade of cultural products [10]. If a country introduces cultural products from another country or spreads its own culture to another country and eventually makes the culture of two countries similar, the cost of cultural barriers will be reduced. Rossel and Schroedter (2015) also pointed out that trade in cultural products helps to narrow cultural differences and enhance similar consumption preferences [11], and it also reduces the information asymmetry and trust crisis in bilateral cooperation caused by language communication barriers and mutual lack of trust [12]. Fan and Huang (2017) also drew a similar conclusion when studying the impact of cultural distance on the trade of cultural products, believing that if the cultural distance is small, it will promote the bilateral trade of cultural products. However, when the cultural distance is higher than a certain threshold value, the cultural distance will hinder the bilateral trade of cultural products in turn [13]. The trade of cultural products, as a transnational cultural communication, is an effective means to weaken the cultural distance. On the one hand, cultural exchange can enhance cultural identity, build bilateral trust, and create trade effect. On the other hand, bilateral cultural differences in the expansion of trade markets force the strengthening of transnational cultural communication and further reduce the hindrance effect of cultural differences on export trade [14]. At present, the trade of cultural products has become an important way of transnational cultural transmission, which plays a critical role in weakening bilateral cultural barriers and enhancing economic cooperation between countries [15,16]. The previous literature has conducted in-depth analyses on the effect of cultural product trade from many perspectives but rarely involved the research on the effect of Chinese cultural product export trade on inbound tourism and its influencing factors.

2.1.2. Influencing Factors of Inbound Tourism

A large number of studies show that the factors affecting inbound tourism mainly focus on economy, geography, culture, system, and so on. For example, Schulze (1999) measured cultural factors by whether two countries use the same language, and his research showed that the use of the same language has a positive impact on the scale of inbound tourism [17]. Guiso et al. (2008) used the bilateral trust variable as the proxy variable of cultural discount, and the results showed that the lower the trust level of the country, the smaller the scale of inbound tourists [18]. Vietze (2012) addressed the effects of cultural, particularly religious, factors on tourist flows into the USA, one of the world's most popular tourist destinations [19]. Wan et al. (2013) used the multiple linear regression method to study and found that factors such as the popularity of tourism products, location conditions, and foreign economy have a significant promoting effect on the development of inbound tourism in Chinese cities [20]. Qiao and Chen (2013) tested the impact of macroeconomic fluctuations, exchange rate fluctuations, and inflation on inbound tourism [21]. Azimi and Hanser (2018) found that cultural values and the cultural distance between origins and destinations were antecedents of tourists' behaviors [22]. Zhang and Zhao (2019) found that the departure tax rebate policy significantly promoted the increase of inbound tourists in Hainan Province, while the geographical distance and cultural distance significantly restricted the increase of inbound tourists [23]. Li and Liu (2019) built a panel data model based on the air quality index and the number of inbound tourists and found that air pollution has an obvious negative externality on the scale of inbound tourism [24]. Peng et al. (2022) found that cultural distance has a significantly negative impact on inbound tourism [25]. He and Wen (2022) determined that international tourism expenditure, exchange rate, GDP growth rate, and per capita GDP growth had a high correlation with the total number of inbound tourists in China [26]. In addition, some scholars have studied the influence of non-economic factors on inbound tourism, such as visits by political celebrities [27], the "Belt and Road" Initiative [28,29], honorary titles of civilized cities [30], and so on. On the whole, with the rapid development of information communication technology and the increasing diversification of people's tourism needs, cultural factors such as ideology and values have an increasing impact on inbound tourism.

2.1.3. The Impact of Trade Cultural Products on Inbound Tourism

Many studies focus on the impact, duration, and processes of trade on tourism. Kulendran and Wilson (2000) explained the interaction of the two and verified the stable causal relationship between international tourism and international trade [31]. Prideaux (2005) pointed out that in-depth cooperation in import and export trade between two countries is conducive to the relaxation of visas, lengths of stay, and tourism cooperation [32]. Sun (2012) found that the interaction between tourism and trade presents three stages: tourism causes trade, and trade promotes tourism, preference, and capacity restriction [33]. However, there is still a lack of academic research on the impact of cultural trade on China's inbound tourism. The influence of cultural product trade on tourism is mainly reflected in the following three aspects.

First, cultural product trade has a consumption preference effect on inbound tourism. Cultural communication is crucial to enhance interpersonal exchanges between countries, eliminate cultural differences, enhance destination attractiveness, and promote international tourism [34]. Culture influences interpersonal interaction and communication, and there is a "similarity attraction" preference in interpersonal communication [35]. Trade in cultural products is an important form of people-to-people exchange. The trade of cultural products spreads Chinese culture to all countries in the world, enhances people's sense of identity and affinity for Chinese culture [36], and then forms a consumption preference effect for China's inbound tourism.

Second, cultural product trade has a reducing effect on inbound tourism cost. On the one hand, cultural product trade is conducive to reducing the cost of communication and information asymmetry and significantly improving the information transparency and matching degree between China and the source countries. Interpersonal exchanges enhance mutual cultural identity, help reduce communication and transaction costs, and promote international tourism between countries [37]. On the other hand, the trade of cultural products in the form of books, music, film, and works of art is conducive to promoting bilateral cultural integration, forming good cultural adaptability, reducing the risk of bilateral tourism cooperation, and thus promoting the development of inbound tourism [38,39]. Two countries' similar language, religious beliefs, and values promote inbound and outbound tourism and import and export trade.

Third, cultural products trade gives "priority" to bilateral international tourism cooperation. According to the theory of rational choice institutionalism, institution is an important factor to reduce transaction costs and also an important guarantee to maintain the operation of cooperative relations. Trade cooperation in cultural products, to a certain extent [40], gives "priority treatment" to the tourism cooperation of trade partner countries.

In general, although international cultural communication is so important for international economic cooperation, there are relatively few research studies in related fields, and existing research mainly focuses on goods trade and tourism, so there are some gaps in the research on the impact of cultural product trade on inbound tourism, including the following: (1) from the perspective of cultural communication, few studies exist on the impact of cultural product trade on visitor economy development; (2) the variety and lag effects of different types of cultural products on the visitor economy require further study; and (3) there is a lack of research on cultural communication's influence on the visitor economy in different cultural circles and continents.

Therefore, this research takes the cultural product trade and inbound tourism between China and 197 countries as the research focus, analyzes the influence of cultural trade on the economic development of inbound tourism, makes clear the relationship between cultural product trade and inbound tourism, and measures the influence of cultural communication on the visitor economy's development to provide abundant and powerful empirical evidence and decision-making support for cultural trade development.

2.2. Research Hypotheses

The cultural industry has become a symbol of a country's "soft power". Culture is the sum of the material and spiritual wealth formed by humans in the long process of social and historical development [41]. It covers values, behavior and thought patterns, and other characteristics and is relatively stable and not easily changed. Cultural communication refers to the flow, sharing, and interaction of cultural information in time and space [42]. It relates to information transmission and interpersonal communication among members of different cultures and involves the diffusion, penetration, and migration of cultural elements in human society [43]. It has far-reaching influence on inbound tourism between countries.

(1) From the perspective of tourism consumer behavior theory, cultural products themselves are the carriers of tourism resources. Coupled with developed modern information communication technology, cultural products may enhance the cultural identity of tourism consumers [44] and thus affect China's inbound tourism demand. The UNWTO report "Synergy of Culture and Tourism" points out that with the increasing importance of cultural products to tourism, people are increasingly attracted by destination culture, and cultural tourism is becoming the largest and fastest growing global tourism market [45]. Tourism consumer behavior has always regarded cultural products as one of the most important factors affecting the demand and behavior of tourism consumers [46]. As an important means of cultural transmission, cultural product trade has built political mutual trust and information exchange between China and other countries and enhanced China's tourism attractivity.

(2) From the theory of push-and-pull tourism motivation, the attraction of the destination culture to tourism consumers is an important external "pull" factor to stimulate their motivation. To a certain extent, it depends on the cultural identity of the tourist source to the destination. Cultural resources create a sense of mystery and novelty for consumers [47], stimulate the potential tourism demand, and are an important source of tourism development and driving force [48]. Bunja and Klapan (2022) pointed out that cultural exchanges can dissolve the hostility among people between countries and lay the foundation for the development of tourism [49]. If the tourist source lacks cultural identity to China, it is difficult for Chinese culture to attract the tourist source. On the contrary, if the tourist area has a high recognition of Chinese culture, consumers from that origin are more likely to be attracted to travel by Chinese culture. Cultural identity is based on cultural affinity. People are more likely to identify with cultures that are similar to their own in terms of language, religion, institutions, and values [50]. They have prejudices, conflict, and confrontations against cultures with great differences. Therefore, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H1. *The growth of export trade promotes the development of inbound tourism.*

Trade in cultural products promotes cultural exchange and enhances the sense of cultural identity among countries. Cultural products bear the national culture of a country, and trade is essentially the external communication of a country's cultural connotations [51]. The unique cultural exchange function of trade in cultural products is essential in weakening the cultural differences between countries [52,53]. The consumption of the cultural products of the importing country is a pursuit of the culture of the source country and an expression of the cultural identity of the exporting country. Trade in cultural products promotes exchanges among people from one country to another through film, books, CDs, calligraphy, and painting [54]. The trade of cultural products spreads high-quality Chinese culture, enhances familiarity with the Chinese culture, and increases the number of tourists entering China. Therefore, enhancing international visitor identification with Chinese culture promotes the development of China's visitor economy. Therefore, the second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H2. *Different types of cultural products trade have different effects on inbound tourism.*

Furthermore, trade in cultural products promotes cultural communication and attracts tourism resources. Cultural products are significant tourism resources, and their trade is essential for the external publicity of tourism [55]. The trade of cultural products is conducive to promoting the communication of high-quality Chinese culture and enhancing the attractiveness of China's tourism [56]. In addition, trade in cultural products reduces communication costs and information asymmetry barriers, promoting the development of international tourism. Therefore, the third hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H3. *The promotion effect of cultural product trade on inbound tourism in different cultural circles has significant heterogeneity*.

Finally, the trade in cultural products generates publicity about traditional culture and enhances China's international influence. Language similarity in international tourism often reduces agency costs during information transmission and the risk of information loss caused by poor language communication [57,58]. Simultaneously, language similarity facilitates the formation of identity and emotional trust and effectively establishes loyal partnerships [59]. With cultural communication as tourism's primary means of publicity, increasing attention has been paid to cultural exchanges and attractions [60]. Through publicity about traditional culture, an increasing number of foreigners learn Chinese, which significantly enhances China's international influence, strengthens the sense of identity of Chinese culture, and, to a certain extent, reduces the cost of language communication in tourism and promotes the visitor economy's development.

3. Research Design

3.1. Model Setting

Based on the trade gravity model applied by Tinbergen (1962) [61] and Poyhonen (1963) [62] in the theory of international trade, this research considered the trade volume of cultural products as the independent variable and the number of inbound tourists as the dependent variable. The gravity model was applied for this investigation. Logarithmic processing was performed for each variable in the model to weaken the influence of heteroscedasticity and outliers on data stability.

$$LNTOU_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LNTRA_{it} + \beta_2 LNPGD_{it} + \beta_3 LNRAT_{it} + \beta_4 LNDIS_{it} + \beta_5 LNOPE_{it} + \beta_6 LNEDU_{it} + \beta_7 LNNET_{it} + F_{it} + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where i represents the importing country, and t represents the year; TOU_{it} represents the number of tourists from country i entering China in year t; TRA_{it} is the total export value of cultural products; PGD_{it} is the gross domestic product per capita of each country; RAT_{it} is the real effective exchange rate index; DIS_{ij} is the geographical distance between the two countries; OPE_{it} is the amount of foreign direct investment; EDU_{it} is the education level of the country of entry; NET_{it} is the degree of network information in the country of entry; F_{it} represents the fixed effect controlled for the country and year; and ε_{it} represents the random error term.

3.2. Data Sources

Cultural products generally refer to consumer goods that spread ideas, symbols, and lifestyles [63]. According to the Harmonized System classification standard, three cultural products with HS code 37, 49, and 97 were selected as research objects in this study to represent core cultural products. Among them, HS code 37 represents camera and film supplies; 49 represents books, newspapers, printed pictures, and other printed matter as well as manuscripts, typescripts, and design drawings; 97 stands for art, collectibles, and antiquities. Data on China's export value of cultural products (TRA_{it}) were from the *UN Comtrade* database (https://comtradeplus.un.org/TradeFlow accessed on 30 May 2021.). The data on the number of inbound Chinese tourists (TOU_{it}) were obtained from the UNWTO database. The geographical distance between the two countries (DIS_{it}) was based on the CEPII database. The data sources of China's per capita GDP (PGD_{it}),

real effective exchange rate index (TRA_{it}), amount of foreign direct investment in China (OPE_{it}), education level of residents in entering countries (EDU_{it}), and degree of Internet informatization in entering countries (NET_{it}) were from the World Bank (World Bank Open Data) database.

3.3. Description of Variables

In this research, the scale of China's inbound tourist flows and export volume of cultural products were the primary data. Combined with the availability and completeness of data, 197 source countries from 1995 to 2019, with China as the tourism destination country, were selected as the research samples. The selection and explanation of the main variable indicators are as follows:

(1) Explained variable: China's inbound tourist number refers to the number of tourists from all countries to China and is essential for measuring the development of China's tourism industry. It not only indicates recognition of China by the countries of origin but also reflects the stronger attraction of China's tourism resources and better tourism infrastructure;

(2) Core explanatory variable: The export volume of China's cultural products refers to these products' trade volume exported to countries worldwide. Import and export trade are important manifestations of the close economic relationships between China and the rest of the world. Simultaneously, to test the influences of different cultural products on the tourism service trade, they were divided into 37, 49, and 97 according to the Harmonized System (HS) classification standard;

(3) Control variables: Per capita gross domestic product (PGD_{it}) embodies the level of national economic development. Economically developed countries can increase tourism attractions and positively impact the tourism industry. For exchange rate (RAT_{it}), the higher the value indicates devaluation of the origin country's currency, and the appreciation of the destination country's currency will increase tourism costs. The geographical distance between the two countries (DIS_{it}) measures the cost of the export of cultural products. The more distant the geographical location, the more unfavorable international trade and tourism development. The closer the geographical location, the more favorable the import and export trade and entry–exit tourism between the two countries. China's foreign direct investment (OPE_{it}) reflects a country's absorption of foreign investment; more significant foreign investment indicates a country's higher degree of openness, which is more conducive to inbound tourism development. For level of education (EDU_{it}), the higher the education level, the stronger the curiosity and receptivity to new things, the higher the income level, and the stronger the motivation to travel. Secure Internet servers (per 1 million people) are used to represent the degree of network information of the country of entry (NET_{it}). It reflects the convenience of obtaining information regarding tourist attractions, booking hotels, and settling accounts.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Results of Baseline Regression

There are explanatory variables in the model that do not change with time, and there may be individual and time effects. For this reason, the bidirectional panel fixed-effects model (LSDV) was first used to conduct a regression analysis of the population sample for Equation (1). To eliminate the influence of inter-group heteroscedasticity and inter-group correlation problems on the estimation results, a panel correction standard error (PCSE) was used to estimate the model. In addition, considering the possibility of zero trade or Jansen inequality in the model [64], Poisson regression, which reflects marginal effects, was used for further estimations.

As shown in Model (2) in Table 1, the cultural product trade variables all passed the 1% significance test, and the regression coefficient was 0.16; that is, when the export value of cultural products increases by 1%, the number of inbound tourists increases by 0.16%,

indicating that the export of cultural goods promotes growth in the number of inbound tourists to China, which supported Hypothesis 1.

Table 1. Baseline regression: The impact of the export of cultural products on the number of inbound tourists.

Variable	$LNTOU_{it}$				
	LSDV (1)		FGLS (2)	FE (3)	POISSON (4)
$LNTRA_{it}$	0.41 ***	0.16 ***	0.08 ***	0.16 ***	0.25 ***
	(43.64)	(4.40)	(5.43)	(6.61)	(9.80)
$LNDIS_{it}$		−1.31 ***	−20.25 ***	–	−0.13
		(−4.00)	(−6.59)	–	(−0.81)
$LNPGD_{it}$		0.36 **	0.09	0.36 ***	−0.00
		(2.19)	(1.03)	(2.81)	(−0.05)
$LNEDU_{it}$		1.05 **	0.44 **	1.05 ***	0.77 ***
		(2.24)	(2.29)	(3.57)	(2.66)
$LNNET_{it}$		0.22 **	0.22 ***	0.22 ***	0.25 ***
		(2.46)	(4.99)	(3.84)	(4.56)
$LNRAT_{it}$		−1.23 ***	−0.63 ***	−1.23 ***	−0.58 **
		(−2.91)	(−3.10)	(−3.88)	(−2.00)
$LNOPE_{it}$		0.10 **	−0.02	0.10 *	0.14 **
		(2.11)	(−0.52)	(1.89)	(2.42)
C	7.01 ***	5.74 **	0.00 **	−0.82	6.64 ***
	(29.54)	(2.28)	(2.21)	(−0.31)	(3.20)
Year	Control	Control	Control	Control	Control
Country	Control	Control	Control	Control	Control
N	3255	312	301	312	312
R^2	0.95	0.98	——	0.64	0.65

Note: T value in parentheses; ***, **, and * indicate significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

The possible reasons are as follows: cultural products are not abstract but concrete goods, which can be directly appreciated and felt as exciting and unique; therefore, foreign tourists will be curious about Chinese culture. This stimulates potential tourists to travel to China. Cultural products have noticeable advertising effects, which attract foreign tourists and play a significant role in promoting inbound tourism, thus enhancing visitor economy development.

Regarding other control variables, the regression coefficient of $LNDIS_{it}$ was −0.31; the significance test at the 1% level showed that the geographical distance between the two countries and the number of inbound tourists were negatively correlated. The regression coefficient of $LNPGD_{it}$ was 0.36, and the significance test at the 5% level indicated that the higher China's economic development level, the more it attracted international inbound tourists. The regression coefficient of $LNEDU_{it}$ was 1.05, and significance verification at the 5% level showed that education level significantly impacted demand for outbound tourism. The regression coefficient of $LNNET_{it}$ was 0.22, and the significance test at the 5% level showed that the degree of origin-country network informatization positively correlated with the number of inbound Chinese tourists. The regression coefficient of $LNOPE_{it}$ was 0.10, and the significance test at the 5% level indicated that an increase in the level of foreign direct investment improved tourist reception. The greater the foreign direct investment, the higher the country's openness level. The regression coefficient of $LNTRA_{it}$ was −1.23 and passed the significance test at the 1% level, indicating that an increase in the exchange rate inhibited inbound tourism.

4.2. Robustness Test

To verify the reliability of the benchmark regression results and better reveal the impact of cultural communication on the visitor economy, the robustness of the benchmark regression results was tested using tail reduction treatment, alternative variables, and the selection of subsamples. The specific results were as follows.

First, the tail was used to delete outliers (Table 2). The first and last 5% samples of the data were deleted, and the panel mixed LSDV estimation was performed again. Second, the explained variable was replaced. Using the proportion of inbound Chinese tourists to the country's total population, the model was re-estimated instead of the initially interpreted variation. Third, the quantile regression method was used to select 25%, 50%, and 75% for regression analysis. As shown in Table 3, after data processing in the above three ways, cultural product trade still passed the significance verification at the 1% level, and the regression coefficients were 0.161, 0.009, 0.129, 0.099, and 0.092, respectively. The results showed that the sign and significance level of the model estimation coefficients did not change fundamentally whether the tail reduction treatment removed the outliers, the explained variables were replaced, or the quantile regression was adopted, which further verified the previous benchmark regression results' robustness and reliability.

Table 2. Robustness test.

Variable	$LNTOU_{it}$				
	Winsorize	Variable of Substitution	Quantile Regression		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
$LNTRA_{it}$	0.161 ***	0.009 ***	0.129 ***	0.099 ***	0.092 ***
	(4.472)	(4.576)	(4.643)	(3.719)	(4.989)
$LNDIS_{it}$	−1.319 ***	−0.067 ***	−1.106 ***	−1.044 ***	−0.793 ***
	(−4.033)	(−3.835)	(−3.332)	(−3.291)	(−3.575)
$LNPGD_{it}$	0.363 **	0.013	0.411 ***	0.209	0.080
	(2.186)	(1.490)	(2.765)	(1.469)	(0.809)
$LNEDU_{it}$	1.058 **	0.051 **	0.513	0.959 ***	0.762 ***
	(2.251)	(2.033)	(1.513)	(2.957)	(3.361)
$LNNET_{it}$	0.221 **	0.016 ***	0.286 ***	0.244 ***	0.268 ***
	(2.477)	(3.724)	(4.360)	(3.894)	(6.118)
$LNRAT_{it}$	−1.227 ***	−0.060 ***	−1.371 ***	−0.893 **	−0.666 ***
	(−2.909)	(−2.675)	(−3.743)	(−2.552)	(−2.724)
$LNOPE_{it}$	0.100 **	0.006 **	0.099	0.045	0.097 **
	(2.121)	(2.069)	(1.640)	(0.776)	(2.386)
C	5.695 **	0.518 ***	6.416 ***	7.632 ***	9.540 ***
	(2.253)	(3.865)	(2.997)	(3.731)	(6.671)
Year	Control	Control	Control	Control	Control
Country	Control	Control	Control	Control	Control
N	312	312	312	312	312
R^2	0.980	0.987	0.873	0.887	0.908

Note: T value in parentheses; ***, ** indicate significance at 1%, 5% levels, respectively.

4.3. Analysis of the Lag Effect of Cultural Communication

The lag analysis analyzed cultural communication's impact on the visitor economy's development, whether it had a long-term effect, and how the strength of the influence changed with each period of lag. Considering the time delay of cultural communication in the visitor economy, cultural product trade was included in the model for investigation in the first, second, and third lag stages.

As shown in Table 3, the regression coefficients of the cultural product trade lag periods 1, 2, and 3 were all positive. The significance test showed that cultural products had a significant lag effect on inbound tourism. The influence coefficients of the first, second, and third phases of cultural products on inbound tourism were 0.13, 0.11, and 0.09, respectively. Overall, cultural product exports had a significant lag effect on inbound tourism's impact. In the current period, the export of cultural products significantly impacts the volume of inbound tourism, and with time, the impact becomes increasingly less.

Table 3. Lag effect of cultural communication on inbound tourism.

Variable	$LNTOU_{it}$			
	Baseline Regression (1)	**Lag Phase 1(2)**	**Lag Phase 2(3)**	**Lag Phase 3(4)**
$LNTRA_{it}$	0.16 ***	0.13 ***	0.11 ***	0.09 ***
	(4.40)	(3.64)	(3.12)	(3.34)
$LNDIS_{it}$	−1.31 ***	−1.32 ***	−1.29 ***	−1.23 ***
	(−4.00)	(−4.06)	(−3.90)	(−3.74)
$LNPGD_{it}$	0.36 **	0.26	0.33 *	0.27
	(2.19)	(1.34)	(1.93)	(1.40)
$LNEDU_{it}$	1.05 **	1.29 ***	0.99 **	1.00 **
	(2.24)	(2.93)	(2.08)	(2.22)
$LNNET_{it}$	0.22 **	0.25 **	0.26 ***	0.33 **
	(2.46)	(2.16)	(3.08)	(2.55)
$LNRAT_{it}$	−1.23 ***	−1.38 ***	−1.24 ***	−1.32 ***
	(−2.91)	(−3.22)	(−2.85)	(−3.08)
$LNOPE_{it}$	0.10 **	0.01	0.07	0.04
	(2.11)	(0.13)	(1.28)	(0.71)
C	5.74 **	8.18 ***	6.84 ***	8.48 ***
	(2.28)	(2.88)	(2.76)	(2.83)
Year	Control	Control	Control	Control
Country	Control	Control	Control	Control
N	312	305	312	306
R^2	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98

Note: T value in parentheses; ***, **, and * indicate significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

5. Heterogeneity of Cultural Communication to the Development of the Visitor Economy

5.1. Heterogeneity Analysis of Different Cultural Products the Tourism Economy's Development

Customs codes are the HS classification standards: Cultural products can be divided into three main categories (Table 4): photography and film supplies (37 categories); books, newspapers, and periodicals; other printed matter, etc. (49 categories); and works of art, collectibles, and antiquities (97 categories). This study investigated the varying effects of cultural products on the visitor economy's development.

Table 4. Grouping regression: Influences of different types of cultural products on inbound tourism.

Variable	$LNTOU_{it}$		
	37 Categories (1)	**49 Categories (2)**	**97 Categories (3)**
$LNTRA_{it}$	0.07 ***	0.13 ***	0.07 ***
	(2.63)	(3.67)	(3.09)
C	5.54 **	6.46 ***	6.80 **
	(2.45)	(2.60)	(1.97)
Control variables	Control	Control	Control
Year	Control	Control	Control
Country	Control	Control	Control
N	291	310	261
R^2	0.98	0.98	0.98

Note: T value in parentheses; ***, ** indicate significance at 1%, 5% levels, respectively.

First, the trade in cultural products, such as photography and film supplies (37 categories), promotes inbound tourism growth. The 37 categories of cultural trade are mainly audio-visual media, including teaching slides, microfilms, motion picture films, photographic hard films, photographic films, and photographic papers. Such cultural products are attractive to young people and have the characteristics of rapid dissemination and wide range of influence. According to Model (1), the regression coefficient of $LNTRA_{it}$ was 0.07,

indicating a positive correlation between the export of 37 categories of cultural products and the number of inbound tourists to China.

Second, the trade of cultural products such as books, newspapers, periodicals, and other printed matter (49 categories) promotes the growth of inbound tourism. The 49 categories of cultural trade products mainly include picture books, newspapers, magazines, globes, map volumes, design drawings and photos, calendars, postcards, music manuscripts or printed copies, hand-drawn books, and commercial advertisements. Those cultural products are mainly spread through commercial activities to attract potential tourists. According to Model (2), the regression coefficient of $LNTRA_{it}$ was 0.13, indicating that the export of 49 categories of cultural products positively correlated with the number of inbound tourists.

Third, the trade of cultural products such as art, collectibles, and antiquities (97 categories) promotes inbound tourism growth. The 97 cultural trade products mainly include archaeology and other meaningful collections, engravings, sculptural products, hand-painted oil paintings and other original paintings, collages and other reproductions of paintings, and antiquities over 100 years of age. The value of 97 categories of cultural trade products are relatively higher, which has a great impact on the inbound tourism of high-income groups. According to Model (3), the regression coefficient of $LNTRA_{it}$ was 0.07, indicating that the export of 97 categories of cultural products was positively correlated with the number of inbound tourists in China, and every 1% increase in the logarithm of export value led to a 0.07% increase in the logarithm of inbound tourist numbers.

The regression coefficients of cultural trade 37, cultural trade 49, and cultural trade 97 were all positive. They passed the significance tests, indicating that these three types of cultural products enhanced inbound tourism to China, which supported Hypothesis 2. In addition, cultural products such as books, newspapers, periodicals, and other printed materials had the largest promotion effect on inbound tourism, followed by photography and movie supplies (37 categories) and art, collectibles, and antiquities (97 categories). The main reason is that the 49 cultural product categories, such as newspapers, periodicals, magazines, postcards, commercial advertisements, and design drawings, are more widely understood and appreciated. They have the characteristics of wide popularization, low price, strong communication, and great attraction, which give such products a more substantial advertising effect and a positive impact on the visitor economy. Cultural products such as photography and film supplies (37 categories) and artworks, collectibles, and antiquities (97 categories) require higher consumer income and education levels. Therefore, the audiences are more restricted, which makes their influence coefficient on China's inbound tourism smaller.

5.2. Influence of Cultural Communication in Different Cultural Circles

A cultural circle refers to a culture as the main feature. Each cultural circle has a core area that expands on four sides, so the surrounding areas in the culture have common characteristics. In human developmental history, the world formed five major circles of civilization: Western, East Asian, Islamic, Indian, and Eastern European cultures [65,66]. In different cultural circles, does the export of Chinese cultural products impact inbound tourism? What is the extent of this impact?

As shown in Table 5, the cultural product trade variables of the five cultural circles all passed the 1% significance tests, and the regression coefficients were all positive; that is, the cultural product trade within each cultural circle had a significant positive impact on inbound tourism. In addition, the Indian culture circle (0.49), Islamic culture circle (0.42), East Asian culture circle (0.40), Western culture circle (0.39), and Eastern Europe culture circle (0.33) indicated that the promotion effect of cultural product trade on Chinese inbound tourism in the Indian culture circle was more substantial than that in other cultural circles. A possible reason is that the Indian cultural circle mainly includes South Asia and all Southeast Asian countries except Vietnam. Currently, South and Southeast Asian countries are the leading exporters of cultural products to China, so the trade of cultural

products in the Indian cultural circle has a greater promotional effect on inbound tourism to China.

Table 5. Heterogeneity of different cultural circles.

Variable	$LNTOU_{it}$				
	Western Cultural Circle	**East Asian Cultural Circle**	**Islamic Cultural Circle**	**Indian Cultural Circle**	**Eastern European Cultural Circle**
$LNTRA_{it}$	0.39 ***	0.40 ***	0.42 ***	0.49 ***	0.33 ***
	(27.21)	(7.83)	(28.82)	(15.01)	(9.86)
C	3.91 ***	5.48 ***	6.92 ***	8.02 ***	5.95 ***
	(7.74)	(18.74)	(27.64)	(28.45)	(25.56)
Control variables	Control	Control	Control	Control	Control
Year	Control	Control	Control	Control	Control
Country	Control	Control	Control	Control	Control
N	1534	193	1159	156	213
R^2	0.94	0.96	0.91	0.87	0.84

Note: T value in parentheses; *** indicate significance at 1%.

5.3. Influences of Different Inter-Continental Cultural Communication

China's trade network of cultural products covers 197 countries on five continents. However, the scale of trade in cultural products is highly uneven, with significant differences in economic development and cultural inclusiveness. Therefore, the impact of cultural communication on the visitor economy may differ across continents.

As shown in Table 6, the trade of cultural products passed the significance tests of 1% in all five continents, which supported Hypothesis 3, and all regression coefficients were positive, indicating that cultural communication significantly promoted the development of the visitor economy in all five continents. From the perspective of regression coefficients, China's export of cultural products to Europe had the largest effect on inbound tourism (0.49), followed by Africa (0.48), Asia (0.40), the Americas (0.29), and Oceania (0.21), indicating that the effect of China's trade of cultural products on inbound tourism featured an intercontinental imbalance. The possible reasons are the following: (1) European countries have a good economic foundation, travel frequently, and are naturally curious about Eastern culture. Moreover, the export of Chinese cultural products is mainly concentrated in European countries with large scale and wide varieties; (2) although the overall scale of China's cultural product exports to African countries is small, the spatial distribution is more concentrated, so the effect is more obvious; and (3) most countries in Oceania are island countries with dispersed geography, and relatively few countries are involved. Therefore, the trade in cultural products has a more negligible impact on inbound tourism.

Table 6. Heterogeneity of different intercontinental.

Variable	$LNTOU_{it}$				
	Asia	**European**	**Africa**	**Americas**	**Oceania**
$LNTRA_{it}$	0.40 ***	0.49 ***	0.48 ***	0.29 ***	0.21 ***
	(25.42)	(23.13)	(27.64)	(14.90)	(5.07)
C	7.06 ***	5.15 ***	6.24 ***	4.49 ***	10.45 ***
	(29.79)	(20.86)	(44.45)	(35.20)	(20.93)
Control variables	Control	Control	Control	Control	Control
Year	Control	Control	Control	Control	Control
Country	Control	Control	Control	Control	Control
N	999	740	739	651	126
R^2	0.95	0.95	0.85	0.93	0.98

Note: T value in parentheses; *** indicate significance at 1% levels.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study considered China and 197 other countries from 1995 to 2019 as research subjects to explore the impact of cultural communication on the visitor economy. The main conclusions were as follows:

(1) Cultural communication significantly promotes the visitor economy's development. The export of cultural products affects cultural communication, and the trade of cultural products has a significant promotional effect on inbound tourism. In addition, the results of the tail reduction treatment, substitute variable, and selected subsample tests showed that the benchmark regression results were robust and reliable. (2) Cultural communication has a lag effect on the development of the visitor economy. The influence coefficients of the first, second, and third periods of the delayed export of cultural products on inbound tourism were 0.13, 0.11, and 0.09, respectively; that is, the export of cultural products has a more significant impact on the number of inbound tourists in the current period, and the impact becomes increasingly smaller with time. (3) The influence of trade in different cultural products on inbound tourism varies. The trade in cultural products such as books, newspapers, periodicals, and other printed materials (49 categories) has the largest promoting effect on inbound tourism, followed by photography and film supplies (37 categories) and art, collectibles, and antiquities (97 categories). (4) There are significant differences in the influence of cultural product exports on inbound tourism in different cultural circles and continents. From the cultural circles perspective, the trade of cultural products within each circle significantly and positively influences inbound tourism. The influence effect was in the following order: Indian cultural circles (0.49), Islamic cultural circles (0.42), East Asian cultural circles (0.40), Western cultural circles (0.39), and Eastern European cultural circles (0.33). Regarding different continents, the effect of Chinese cultural product trade on inbound tourism was characterized by intercontinental imbalance. The export of cultural products to Europe significantly impacts China's inbound tourism, followed by Africa, Asia, and the Americas. In contrast, the impact on Oceania is relatively small.

Based on these conclusions, to further enhance cultural communication's promotion of the visitor economy's development, this paper proposes the following measures:

(1) Optimize cultural products' trade structure and enhance the driving effect of such trade on tourism: Cultural trade can promote trade in tourism services and China's economic development. However, there is an unbalanced structure in the export of Chinese cultural products, focusing on mass cultural products such as books, newspapers, periodicals, and other printed matter. In contrast, exporting high-end cultural products (such as 97 and 37 categories) is insufficient. Therefore, China should not only accelerate the trade of cultural products such as books, newspapers, periodicals, and other printed matters (49 categories) but also optimize the structure of cultural products, increase the export of core cultural products, and enhance the attractiveness of cultural resources as well as the influence of cultural product trade on the visitor economy's development.

(2) Smooth out cultural product trade channels and enhance cultural resources' attractiveness to potential tourists: This involves simplifying the export procedures for cultural products, reducing export tariffs, and gradually relaxing policies on inbound and outbound tourism to provide convenience for overseas tourists. This requires actively formulating and implementing policies to support China's cultural industries and services to "go global", such as providing financial support, investment and financing channels, tax relief, and other policy support to enhance cultural product trade competitiveness in the global market. In addition, cultural communication channels should be expanded and a diversified, multilevel, and three-dimensional communication pattern established. Cultural communication is not a strong cultural export but should be "tailored" for overseas audiences and adapted to the characteristics of overseas localization of communication. China must bridge the gap between national cultural differences, lessen communication barriers caused by them, and remove

overseas audiences' resistance to different cultures, such as different ideologies and values, to promote the development of outbound tourism in China.

(3) Reduce the asymmetry of cultural communication patterns and promote the coordinated development of cultural communication and the visitor economy: Currently, there is a cultural circle and intercontinental imbalance in China's cultural communication, and cross-cultural communication requires strengthening. In particular, communication currently focuses greater attention on positive publicity and information diffusion while ignoring the specific needs, acceptance psychology, and cognitive elements of overseas audiences, resulting in difficulties in cross-cultural communication in achieving the desired effect. Therefore, when implementing cultural exports from China, it is necessary to carry out scientific market segmentation of cultural products, correctly select markets, and focus on intercontinental regions with strong cultural inclusiveness, good economic foundations, and positive travel potential, such as Europe, to tap the export potential of Chinese cultural products. This will realize the coordinated development of cultural communication and the visitor economy in China's cultural circles and intercontinental regions.

This study had some limitations, as it mainly used country-level samples to study the influence of cultural communication on the development of the visitor economy from a relatively macro perspective but lacked discussion on a more micro level. In future research, it will be an important improvement to further use the Granger causality test, vector autoregressive model (VAR), threshold regression, etc., to study the micro-mechanism and effect of cultural communication promoting visitor economy growth by using microdata of provinces and prefectures.

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