

Original Research Article

## An Analysis of the Role of Color in the Perception of Tourism Landscapes

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**Abstract** | The landscape in tourism serves as a pivotal element in crafting rich and memorable experiences. It encompasses not only natural features such as mountains, seas, and forests, but also cultural heritage, architecture, and human-made environments. This concept directly influences tourists' perceptions and their satisfaction with a trip. Within this context, color stands as a fundamental aspect in defining the landscape, capable of evoking emotions, showcasing cultural identity, and influencing tourist behavior (e.g., the impact of warm colors on increasing energy or cool colors on inducing tranquility). Despite its significance, the role of color within the tourism landscape has received limited scientific investigation. This research aims to analyze the role of color in the design and perception of tourism landscapes, focusing on three core questions: How can color be strategically leveraged as a tool to enhance tourist experiences? What factors should be considered in the design of colorful landscapes for tourism destinations? What are the differences in the impact of color on natural versus cultural landscapes? Ultimately, this study seeks to provide solutions for improving the visual identity of tourism destinations. This article employs a descriptive-analytical research method coupled with a systematic PRISMA review of sources (2000-2025), including Scopus, Web of Science, and internal scientific research journals. The selection of sources was purposeful, focusing on the pertinent literature on landscape design, color psychology, and tourism, with an inclusion criterion based on alignment with the research objectives and questions. The research findings indicate that the key criteria in designing colorful tourism landscapes include: a) Color diversity and balance in their application, b) the impact of color on spatial perception and the creation of focal points, c) the use of warm and bright colors for visual appeal, and d) Attention to seasonal changes and preventing monotony. These criteria strengthen the link between visual design and tourist experience, offering practical solutions for enhancing the visual identity of destinations.

**Keywords** | *Tourism, Landscape, Color, Perceptions.*

**Introduction** | The tourism landscape has consistently been recognized as one of the most crucial dimensions for attracting tourists and creating their experiences (Bell, 1999). The establishment of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) in 2000 accurately underscores this significance, articulating the social, economic, cultural, and ecological roles of landscape, as well as its contribution to societal well-being (Goudarzi, 2022). Given that a territory's landscape is a "public resource" and its condition is

subject to continuous change, it necessitates ongoing evaluation, protection, management, and planning (Skowronek et al., 2018). This concept comprises a blend of natural and cultural elements, alongside human designs, which collectively forge a unique experience for visitors.

However, despite the paramount importance of landscape in tourism, one of its key aspects -color- has received limited in-depth and systematic study. Colors not only serve as a tool for beautifying landscapes but can also, as psychological and cultural

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factors, significantly influence the tourist experience (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). In essence, a landscape transcends mere location, intertwining overt symbols like physical and positional factors (Basouli, 2024) and color with the hidden meanings embedded within each element, imbuing that landscape with a unique spirit. Each color carries specific meanings and impacts on the landscape, and their combination creates a distinctive appeal for tourists.

The role of color as part of a destination's visual identity is often overlooked in many tourism destinations. Improper use of colors in designing tourism spaces and environments can negatively impact visual appeal and, consequently, the tourist experience. For example, color disharmony in historical areas or the use of inappropriate colors in natural settings can, on one hand, reduce tourists' emotional connection with the destination and, on the other hand, weaken the area's cultural identity (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Conversely, intelligent planning and design that utilizes colors harmonious with the environment can enhance the sense of place, increase tourist satisfaction, and create a positive image of the destination. Domestic research also emphasizes that the principled use of color in environmental designs can directly affect the quality of the tourist experience (Quercia et al., 2016).

From a psychological perspective, colors exert a profound influence on human emotions and behavior. Research has demonstrated that warm colors such as red, orange, and yellow evoke sensations of energy, excitement, and dynamism, whereas cool colors like blue and green enhance feelings of calmness, tranquility, and focus (Hidayetoglu et al., 2012). These characteristics can be strategically applied in tourism landscape design to create distinctive and pleasurable experiences for visitors. However, neglecting these aspects in the design of tourism destinations may result in missed opportunities for enhancing visitor engagement and satisfaction.

On the other hand, colors can reinforce the cultural and spiritual identity of a destination. For instance, yellow and gold hues, which are prevalent in the traditional architecture of East Asian countries, symbolize grandeur and spirituality (Pearce, 2005). In Iran, the use of colors such as turquoise in the tilework of historic mosques reflects a distinct cultural and religious identity that can profoundly influence tourists. However, in many cases, the lack of careful planning in color application not only diminishes the appeal of destinations but may also lead to the erosion of their visual identity.

The central question is how color can be utilized as a strategic tool to enhance tourist experiences and create differentiation among tourism destinations.

This issue gains significance given that in today's competitive environment, tourism destinations require continuous innovation and improvement to attract visitors (Lin et al., 2007). In this context, studies examining the role of color in tourism landscapes can substantially contribute to intelligent and optimized design approaches in this field.

The study of tourism landscapes with an emphasis on color holds significance from both theoretical and practical perspectives. From a theoretical standpoint, this research can contribute to addressing existing gaps in tourism studies while providing deeper insights into human interactions with natural and cultural environments. Furthermore, a scientific examination of color's role in landscapes may establish a new theoretical foundation for analyzing tourist behavior and enhancing experiential quality.

Consequently, this study aims to analyze the role of color in the design and perception of tourism landscapes by addressing the following research questions:

1. How can color be utilized as a strategic tool to enhance tourist experiences?
2. What factors should be considered in designing chromatic landscapes for tourism destinations?
3. What differences exist between the effects of color on natural versus cultural landscapes?

The necessity of this investigation lies in its potential to identify and analyze the influence of color on tourist perception and experience, thereby offering practical solutions for managing and improving destination landscapes. Such research not only advances theoretical knowledge in tourism studies but may also contribute to the sustainable development of tourism destinations.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this research can assist tourism designers, managers, and policymakers in enhancing the visual identity of destinations. As competition among tourism destinations intensifies, attention to visual details, including the strategic application of color, can serve as a powerful tool for attracting visitors and increasing their satisfaction.

Given these imperatives, the current study seeks to develop an operational framework for the design and management of tourism landscapes with an emphasis on color. This research may enable tourism destinations to leverage their landscapes as a competitive advantage while contributing to sustainable development within the industry.

## Theoretical Foundations

A cultural landscape emerges from the continuous interaction between culture and its surrounding natural environment. The semantics of cultural landscapes

are shaped by the spectrum of meanings embedded in cultural consciousness. The symbolic significance of a color derives from both psychological characteristics of perception and cultural traditions.

“Every color is a social phenomenon. It is society that creates color, defines it, assigns meaning, establishes its codes and values, determines its uses, and dictates its acceptability” (Pastoureau, 2018; Lavrenova, 2023).

In a cultural landscape, chromatic composition visualizes a semiotic system. Color functions as a visual language with multilayered signs whose semantic depth varies. Its application, context-dependent, determines its role (as sign, symbol, or reflection).

In the European Landscape Convention, “landscape” has been defined in two ways. Initially, landscape is objectively defined as “land,” and then subjectively expressed as the perception of this land by all people. Through the subjective expression, the perception of place by all people occurs through elements. The elements in landscape design include color, line, shape-form, scale, space, texture, light-shadow, emphasis, sequence, and movement (Ender et al., 2016). 80% of human perceptions are formed through visual stimuli, and everything we see in daylight consists of colors. Since the 16th century, when colors were first scientifically theorized, this subject has been extensively studied and utilized by scientists and artists. Colors not only affect physiology but also have a profound impact on human emotions and feelings, conveying specific meanings and concepts beyond objective information (Thierry et al., 2009). In the field of landscape and environmental design, particularly in planting design, color is one of the most important elements influencing human experience. Some colors are easily recognized, while others may have different effects on human psychology and physiology. The entry of light into the eye is a physical phenomenon, the chemical and neural processes that occur in the eye in response to this light are considered a physiological event, and ultimately, the perception of light and color by the brain is a psychological process (Ender et al., 2016).

The visual effect that remains after light strikes objects and is reflected into our eyes is called color. In other words, color is the sensation created in humans when light waves of specific wavelengths interact with surfaces and are detected by the retina. Fig. 1 illustrates the formation of color after reflection from an object.

Colors are divided into two main groups: primary and secondary. Red, yellow, and blue are primary colors. Other colors are created by mixing these primary colors. Colors that are formed by an equal combination of primary colors in pairs are called secondary colors.

These colors include orange, purple, and green. Orange is created by mixing red and yellow, green by mixing yellow and blue, and purple by mixing red and blue. On the other hand, the vibration and radiation emitted by colors are used in their classification as warm and cool colors.

Generally speaking, color is a power that directly affects the soul. These colors create vibrations in the soul and guide individuals from the material world to the inner world (Mahnke, 1996). Colors nourish our inner desire for harmony and aesthetics. By itself, a color may not describe an object, but it is sufficient to explain a feeling or thought. The conscious use of color in cultural landscapes creates highly attractive scenery, while also enhancing design, making it sustainable, and evoking a sense of familiarity. The three dimensions of space are easily perceived through color and light.

The use of color as a design element within a system can be interpreted as a shared expression of perceptibility. Color helps designers conceal unwanted effects or highlight pleasing imagery. Color influences spatial perception in landscape applications. These colors indicate whether the elements used are near or far, or whether they attract attention. Since warm colors have a strong visual impact, they appear closer to the observer, which is why warm colors are often used to reduce the effect of spaces. While bright colors tend to stimulate and excite, cool or neutral colors are more suitable for calmness and tranquility.

In landscape applications, designs implemented with colors can be summarized under three categories: monochromatic, polychromatic, and natural arrangements (Alavi Moghaddam & Poorshahram, 2010; Singh & Srivastava, 2011; Wan et al., 2020; Jaglarz, 2023). The effects of several of these colors will be discussed in the following sections.

Yellow: This color brings joy and vitality while inducing calmness in individuals. It serves as an inspirational hue that enhances mental alertness. Yellow carries a symbolic meaning reflecting social life and teamwork. Prolonged exposure to yellow is reported to positively influence



Fig. 1. Color formation after reflection from an object.

Source: Ender et al., 2016.

the nervous system and blood circulation. As the first color perceptible to the human eye, yellow proves particularly effective in areas requiring visual emphasis (O'Connor, 2011).

**Orange:** Although a warm color, orange appears more mature and stable compared to red. This hue enhances emotions such as joy, creativity, confidence, sociability, and social motivation. Short-term exposure to orange induces calmness and happiness. However, excessive or prolonged use of dominant orange can create tension. This effect diminishes when orange is paired with shades of green and blue. As orange approaches brown tones, it produces a calming effect on individuals (Meerwein et al., 2007).

**Red:** This color evokes associations with the sun, flame, and blood. It instills qualities such as high energy, strength, dynamism, boldness, and determination in humans. As an exciting hue, red symbolizes both struggle and vitality. However, excessive use and prolonged exposure to red can induce tension and accelerate blood circulation (O'Connor, 2011).

**Green:** As the dominant color of nature and spring, green evokes sensations of stillness, tranquility, and trust. This hue emphasizes life, vitality, and creativity. Green emerges as the primary element in memories of previously experienced places and landscapes. Research has demonstrated its mitigating effect on digestive disorders. Furthermore, green balances the intensity and negative effects of warm colors (Meerwein et al., 2007).

**Blue:** This color symbolizes the sky, sea, and eternity. It evokes coolness, tranquility, and peace. Blue enhances life guidance, happiness, work capacity, and efficiency in thoughts and bodily actions. Among its characteristics are facilitating the emergence of creative ideas and balancing the intensity and negative effects of warm colors. Its use is particularly recommended in educational institutions, medical facilities, and public spaces (ibid.). Navy Blue, this hue represents eternity, efficiency, success, and authority. It also instills feelings of power and self-confidence in observers. Its balancing colors are yellow and orange (Elliot & Maier, 2014).

**Purple:** Recognized as a symbol of elegance, prestige, wealth, and self-confidence, this color stimulates willpower, contemplation, and creativity in observers while enhancing tolerance. However, dominant use and prolonged exposure to purple may generate restlessness and potentially reveal subconscious fears. These adverse effects can be mitigated through the use of lighter shades or by combining purple with yellow (Azeemi & Raza, 2005).

**Pink:** Recognized as a symbol of harmony, beauty, tranquility, happiness, and love, this color induces

stillness, clarity, and calmness in observers. Its balancing color is green. Pink has demonstrated positive effects in promoting relaxation, making it particularly suitable for use in prison gardens and hospital settings (Qi et al., 2025).

**Brown:** This color symbolizes realism and order. Brown has been shown to accelerate human behaviors and activities (Zhao et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2024).

**White:** This color symbolizes purity, innocence, honesty, and continuity. White creates a positive and desirable effect, and due to its light-diffusing ability, is particularly suitable for high-temperature spaces (Elliot & Maier, 2014).

**Black:** This color conveys seriousness and intensity. In addition to emotions such as sensitivity, pessimism, darkness, and fear, black can also evoke power and passion. Its balancing color is white. Using black in small areas can create a sense of dynamism, but in large surfaces may induce anxiety and fear (O'Connor, 2011; Elliot & Maier, 2014).

**Gray:** Short-term exposure to gray induces calmness, while prolonged viewing may cause tension and stress. Gray makes surrounding colors more noticeable. Typically associated with modernity and neutrality, gray is often used in urban and architectural spaces to convey sophistication and tranquility. Research indicates that color complexity and harmony play significant roles in emotional perception (Qi et al., 2025).

Three essential layers in hospitality and tourism, farewell, welcoming, and settlement with reception, are considered foundational and must be appropriately reflected in the spatial context experienced by tourists. The spatial characteristics of a place encompass three interrelated dimensions. First is the physical-environmental dimension, which emerges from the visual and structural order of the location. Second is the perceptual-symbolic dimension, closely linked to the tourist's mental imagery and experiential interpretation of the place. Finally, the functional-behavioral dimension emphasizes the importance of spatial hierarchy, territorial definition, and the creation of a shared environmental sense for both visitors and users (Hjalager, 2010; Gieryn, 2000). The intersection between architecture and tourism lies fundamentally in the way space is utilized and experienced.

## Literature Review

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between landscape, culture, and human experience within the context of tourism. For instance, the book *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* presents landscape not merely as a physical phenomenon but as

a subjective and emotional experience derived from human-environment interaction. This perspective, by emphasizing the role of landscape in generating meaningful tourist experiences, provides a foundation for understanding the importance of color in tourism (Tuan, 1977). In contrast, Carl Sauer’s work on cultural evolution defines landscape as the physical manifestations of culture on the land, highlighting the role of material transformations in shaping cultural identity. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that landscape, both as an objective entity and a subjective experience, plays a significant role in attracting tourists (ibid.).

In the domain of color psychology, studies such as those by Bell (1999) and Pearce (2005) have shown that colors influence not only aesthetic perception but also tourists’ emotions and behaviors. Bell (1999), in “Landscape: Pattern, perception and process”, identifies color as an integral component of tourists’ sensory experience. Pearce (2005), in his geographical analysis of tourism, emphasizes the symbolic value of colors in reinforcing the cultural identity of destinations. These findings suggest that color functions both as an aesthetic element and as cultural symbols.

Additional research has addressed the practical implications of color in tourism landscape design. In “The Tourist Gaze” (Urry & Larsen, 2011), improper use of colors is cited as a factor diminishing the visual appeal of destinations, whereas intelligent design employing environment-consistent color schemes is proposed as a strategy to enhance tourist satisfaction. These insights align with findings by Hidayetoglu et al. (2012), which indicate that color can influence tourists’ spatial orientation and spatial evaluation.

In domestic studies, Basouli (2019) examined the role of public bathhouses in the urban structure of Iran and demonstrated that these spaces functioned not only as hygienic facilities but also as hubs for social and cultural interaction. This research underscores the significance of preserving visual and cultural identity in the design of historical tourism destinations. Similarly, Mahan et al. (2022), in their study titled “Forgetting the landscape, modern phenomena, with an emphasis on examining the historical landscape of the cities of Semnan and Damghan,” conceptualized historical landscape as a synthesis of physical elements and collective memory,

emphasizing the necessity of intelligent reconstruction to attract tourists.

Drawing from prior research, it becomes evident that color, as a fundamental element in tourism landscape design, plays a crucial role in shaping tourists’ perception and experience. However, despite the acknowledged importance of this subject, limited studies have systematically investigated the role of color in tourism landscapes. This research gap indicates a clear need for further inquiry to leverage color as a strategic tool for enhancing tourist experiences and differentiating destinations in a competitive tourism market.

### Research Methodology

The research method employed in this study is descriptive-analytical. Document and literature reviews have been conducted based on the collection of reference books in the fields of tourism, landscape design, and color psychology, using keywords such as color psychology, tourism, landscape, cultural landscape, and their equivalents in both English and Persian. Sources include peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Web of Science and Scopus, national scholarly journals, academic theses, and valid documents on color and landscape within the time frame of 2000–2025. Adopting an analytical-interpretative approach, this study seeks to examine and interpret existing data across various sources to identify emerging patterns concerning the role of color in tourism landscapes. The selection of materials has been purposive, and the systematic review process was guided by the PRISMA methodology for source selection and screening. Within this process, only studies aligned with the research objectives and questions were included, while documents without full-text accessibility were excluded. This method is widely recognized in fields such as medicine, social sciences, and tourism for synthesizing and evaluating scientific evidence. Fig. 2 illustrates the PRISMA systematic review flow diagram.

The systematic review followed a structured multi-stage protocol as outlined below:

1. Identification: The initial search yielded a total of 200 articles and books from both international and national academic databases.
2. Screening: Approximately 80 sources were excluded due to duplication or lack of relevance to the research objectives.



Fig. 2. PRISMA flow diagram of the systematic review process. Source: Authors.

3. Eligibility: Of the remaining 120 sources, 63 were assessed as having high academic quality based on methodological rigor and thematic alignment.

4. Included: Ultimately, 29 credible sources were selected for in-depth analysis in the main body of the study.

Data collection tools included document analysis, data extraction, and categorization of findings according to key themes relevant to the research questions. Table 1 presents a summary of selected articles categorized by core topics and their alignment with the research objectives. Utilizing MAXQDA software[i] and a reflexive thematic analysis, 29 finalized articles have been examined from an interpretivist perspective. The analytical framework involves a three-tiered classification of themes into 'Global,' 'Organizing,' and 'Basic' categories (Abedi Jafari et al., 2012).

In this structure, 'Global' themes are positioned at the core of the thematic network and represent the central topics of the articles. 'Organizing' themes function as intermediaries between the Global and Basic themes, shaping the network's conceptual structure. 'Basic' themes, which are extracted directly from the source articles, signify key points within the text and are combined to generate the Organizing themes.

Table 2 provides a sample of the coding for concepts and components that influence the tourism landscape in relation to color. Furthermore, Fig. 3 illustrates a three-dimensional structure of the Global themes, wherein 10 Organizing themes have been developed from 135 Basic themes related to color in tourism, all of which have been coded using qualitative content analysis. Utilizing MAXQDA software[i] and a reflexive thematic analysis, 29 finalized articles have been examined from an interpretivist perspective. The analytical framework involves a three-tiered classification of themes into 'Global,' 'Organizing,' and 'Basic' categories (Abedi Jafari et al., 2012).

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Question 1: How can color be utilized as a strategic tool for enhancing the visitor experience?

Based on the findings presented in the table, it has been determined that color influences the visitor experience through two primary pathways: psychological (Elliot & Maier, 2014) and cultural (Lavrenova, 2023).

For instance, specific strategic applications that have been identified include:

- The use of warm colors in recreational spaces, such as restaurants, has been shown to increase levels of excitement and arousal.

- The utilization of culturally symbolic colors, exemplified by the use of turquoise in an Iranian context, serves to reinforce cultural identity (Basouli, 2019).

Therefore, it has been concluded that the harmonization of color with the natural environment enhances the enduring quality of the visitor experience.

Question 2: What factors should be considered in the chromatic landscape design of tourism destinations?

The key factors, as derived from the findings presented in Table 2, have been identified as follows:

- Harmony with Local Culture: The importance of harmonizing with the local culture has been noted, which involves avoiding colors that are incongruous with the destination's historical and cultural context (Urry & Larsen, 2011).

- Psychological Influences: The consideration of psychological effects has been emphasized, with a particular focus on selecting calming color palettes for nature-based environments (Azeemi & Raza, 2005).

- To leverage color as a strategic tool for enhancing the tourist experience, two key dimensions must be considered: symbolic identity-building and effective physical implementation.

On one hand, color can serve as a primary element in destination branding. The chosen color palette should be rooted in the history, culture, and geography of the location to create a brand that is distinct, sustainable, and credible. Employing colors with deep-rooted symbolic and semantic meaning within a nation's culture contributes to the creation of a unique and appealing mental image for tourists, effectively conveying the destination's core message (Bastenegar, 2015; Mirzaei Arjanaki et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the success of this strategy is contingent upon its proper and high-quality implementation within the rural and urban landscape. In this regard, the selection of colors and their quality should be adapted to the region's architecture and climate. Furthermore, technical considerations such as wall preparation, the use of durable facade paints

Table 1. Summary of Article Categorization Based on Core Themes and Their Relevance to Research Questions (\*A therapeutic modality in which the visible spectrum (i.e., colors) of electromagnetic radiation is utilized for the treatment of diseases, \*\*An instrument used for measuring the intensity of light within a part of the spectrum, especially as it is transmitted by or emitted from specific substances). Source: Authors.

No.	Title of Study	source	Type of research/ Source type and data analysis methods	Core Themes	Key Findings	Relevance to Research
1	A critical analysis of chromotherapy and its scientific evolution	Azeemi & Raza (2005)	Quantitative– Critical Analysis and Chromotherapy*	Physiological Effects of Color	The color yellow has been found to exert a positive influence on the nervous system and blood circulation.	Response to Question 1: Psychological and Physiological Effects
2	The Tourist Gaze 3.0	Urry & Larsen (2011)	Descriptive- Analytical and Documentary Research	Landscape Design and Common Errors	The inappropriate application of color within heritage sites has been shown to undermine cultural identity and diminish the visitor experience.	Response to Question 2: Factors of Color in Landscape Design
3	Color Psychology: Effects of Perceiving Color on Psychological Functioning in Humans	Elliot & Maier (2014)	Qualitative Analysis; Use of a Spectrophotometer**	Color Psychology and Emotional Influences	Warm colors, such as red and orange, have been associated with increased feelings of excitement and energy; conversely, cool colors like blue and green have been found to induce a sense of calm and relaxation.	Response to Question 1: The Strategic Use of Color to Enhance the Visitor Experience
4	Cultural tourism: An analysis of engagement, cultural contact, memorable tourism experience and destination loyalty	Chen & Rahman (2018)	Quantitative: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)	The Role of Color Psychology in Experience: A Cultural Perspective	Color has been identified as a stimulus for emotional arousal. Warm and cool colors have been shown to exert differential effects on an individual's emotional state. It has been found that greater tourist engagement fosters a more profound cultural understanding.	Response to Questions 1 and 3: The Influence of Color on Visitor Perceptions and Experiences; The Creation of Relaxing or Stimulating Environments
5	Cultural Ecosystem Services (CES) in landscapes with a tourist vocation: Mapping and modeling the physical landscape components that bring benefits to people in a mountain tourist destination in southeastern Brazil	Bachi et al. (2020)	Qualitative: The- matic Analysis	Color Harmony in the Landscape	A focus on avoiding discordant color combinations and utilizing integrated color palettes (such as the warm color family) has been recommended to create a sense of harmony and aesthetic appeal.	Response to Question 2: Factors of Color in Landscape Design for Tourism Destinations
6	Color Semantics of the Cultural Landscape	Lavrenova (2023)	Qualitative: Semi- otic and Compar- ative Method	The Cultural Symbolism of Color	Colors, acting as multi-layered semantic signs, have been shown to reinforce the cultural identity of destinations (e.g., the prominent use of turquoise in Iranian architecture).	Response to Question 3: The Distinction Between Natural and Cultural Landscapes
7	Tourists' preference for colors of forest landscapes and its implications for forest landscape planning policies	Liu et al. (2023)	Quantitative: Analysis of Vari- ance (ANOVA), Path Analysis	The Role of Color in Environmental Psychology and Tourism	It has been indicated that warm colors, such as red, yellow, and orange, are associated with the highest levels of preference and an increased inclination to linger; Attention restoration is positively correlated with landscape preference and the willingness to stay, Colors characterized by a low color temperature and high saturation have been shown to induce feelings of warmth and relaxation.	Response to Question 1: The Strategic Application of Color

Rest of Table 1.

No.	Title of Study	source	Type of research/ Source type and data analysis methods	Core Themes	Key Findings	Relevance to Research
7	Tourists' preference for colors of forest landscapes and its implications for forest landscape planning policies	Liu et al. (2023)	Quantitative: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Path Analysis	The Role of Color in Environmental Psychology and Tourism	It has been indicated that warm colors, such as red, yellow, and orange, are associated with the highest levels of preference and an increased inclination to linger, Attention restoration is positively correlated with landscape preference and the willingness to stay. Colors characterized by a low color temperature and high saturation have been shown to induce feelings of warmth and relaxation.	Response to Question 1: The Strategic Application of Color
8	Semiotic landscapes in Bangkok's Chinatown as a tourist destination	Pan (2024)	Qualitative (Exploratory): Thematic Analysis	The Role of Semiotic Resources in Attracting Tourists	Favorable perceptions have been linked to the specific combination of colors, ornamentation, and use of the Chinese language. Furthermore, it has been observed that six semiotic resources—the Chinese language, colors, decorations, imagery, products/cuisine, and architecture—work in combination to construct and convey a distinct Chinese identity.	Response to Question 2: The Consideration of Culture-Specific Architectural Elements
9	The color of Persian landscape: The position of color in Iran's tourism brand	Bastenegar, 2015	Qualitative: Descriptive and Analytical Approach	The Relationship Between Color, Geography, and Natural Heritage	It has been noted that the prevailing colors within the natural landscapes of Iran, such as the green of its forests and the blue of the sky, are reflective of the nation's climatic diversity and the visual appeal of its destinations.	Response to Question 1: The Use of Natural Colors in Branding to Integrate the Visitor Experience with the Natural Environment and Place Identity
10	Color symbolism in creative tourism brand of Iranian cities	Bastenegar (2016)	Qualitative: Descriptive and Analytical Approach	Color-Based Tourism Branding	It has been argued that designing effective tourism brands for Iran's Creative Cities is not feasible without a distinctive color identity, such as the established association of turquoise with the city of Isfahan.	Response to Question 1: The Purposeful Application of Color

(e.g., silicone-based), and the integration of contextual elements like the local soil color and indigenous materials are key physical drivers that can lead to the revitalization of rural tourism. This approach not only enhances the destination's visual appeal but can also serve as a creative economic solution to boost the local economy (Bastenegar, 2015; Basouli et al., 2022; Mirzaei Arjanaki et al., 2023).

Question 3: What differences exist between the effects of color on natural and cultural landscapes?

In general, it has been noted that colors in natural

landscapes are predominantly organic and non-symbolic (e.g., the green of a forest, the blue of the sea), which tends to induce a sense of calm (Küller et al., 2009). In cultural landscapes, conversely, colors are typically symbolic and meaningful (e.g., turquoise in Iran, red in China) and reflect historical identity. Therefore, cultural colors have been found to play a key role in shaping the memories of visitors (Lavrenova, 2023). The key components extracted in this section include:

- Role in Memory: While color in natural landscapes primarily aids in the initial cognitive encoding of visual

Table 2. Sample coding of concepts and components influencing the tourism landscape in relation to color. Source: Authors.

Basic Themes	Organizing Themes	Global Themes	Source	Relevance to Research Question	
Film theory as a tourism promotion media with 4 working indicators: color, features, properties, and ratios.	The Communicative and Marketing Functions of Color	Color as an Experiential Tool in Tourism: Enhancing the Visitor Experience	Sinulingga et al. (2020)	Question 1	
Chefs are encouraged to continue developing innovations in a presentation that includes aspects of nutrition, colour, shape, layout, and the arrangement of slices to maintain and increase tourist interest in traditional treats.			Syahrial & Anjarsari (2023)	Question 1	
Color plays a critical role in recognizing tourist experiences and influencing their emotions.			Yu & Egger (2021)	Question 1	
Warm colors stimulate excitement and energy.			Elliot & Maier (2014)	Questions 1 and 2	
Cool colors evoke a sense of calm and balance.			Chen & Rahman (2018)	Questions 1 and 2	
Specific colors (turquoise, red, yellow) bear cultural and symbolic meanings.			The Cultural Symbolism of Color in Tourism Destinations	Lavrenova (2023)	Question 2
The use of color in entryways or recreational spaces proves effective in capturing attention and fostering memorability.			The Communicative and Marketing Functions of Color	Hidayetoglu et al. (2012)	Question 2
The harmonization of color with the local climate and vernacular architecture has been shown to contribute to a more profound visitor experience.			Design Congruent with the Ecosystem and the Natural-Cultural Context	Mirzaei Arjanaki et al. (2023)	Question 1
The use of high-contrast color schemes, such as the juxtaposition of light and dark hues, in landscape design has been shown to establish focal points.	The Application of Color in Spatial Organization and the Shaping of Experience	BasteNegar (2016)	Questions 1 and 2		
Selecting colors aligned with seasonal variations and ambient lighting conditions is critical.	Climatic, Lighting, and Seasonal Conditions in Chromatic Landscape Design	Color as an Identity-Constructing Agent in Tourism Environments: A Focus on the Chromatic Landscape Design of Destinations	Lee et al. (2011)	Question 2	
The quality of the plant color landscape is an important factor affecting scenic beauty.	The Differential Function of Color in Natural versus Cultural Landscapes		Luo et al. (2023)	Question 2	
In natural landscapes such as forests, mountains, and seas, color often evokes tranquility and embodies the essence of nature.			Liu et al. (2023)	Questions 3 and 2	
Color in cultural landscapes (e.g., historical monuments) symbolizes the identity and history of a destination.			Pearce (2005)	Questions 3 and 2	
A regulated and balanced color diversity prevents visual monotony.	The Aesthetics of Color Combination in the Tourism Environment	Zhang et al. (2024)	Question 2		
Color functions as a signifier within the semiotic system of a destination.	Color as a Semiotic Element in Destination Branding	Color as a Tool for Destination Identity and Differentiation	Pan (2024)	Questions 2 and 3	
The consistent application of color across various touchpoints—including architecture, products, apparel, and tourism advertising—has been shown to reinforce brand integrity and coherence.	Color Coherence across the Visual Elements of a Destination		Bastenege (2015, 2016)	Questions 2 and 3	
The health benefits of contact with nature are widely recognized across human cultures. For example, 天人合一 (the harmony between humanity and nature) is a core idea in Chinese culture.	The Influence of Natural Colors on Health and Well-being		Li et al. (2023)	Question 3	
Color plays an important role in the encoding phase in designed and naturally evolved landscapes. On the contrary, in associative landscapes, color is important in the recognition phase as a part of the representation of complex images in episodic memory.	Color Perception and Its Association with Memory		Griber (2023)	Question 3	

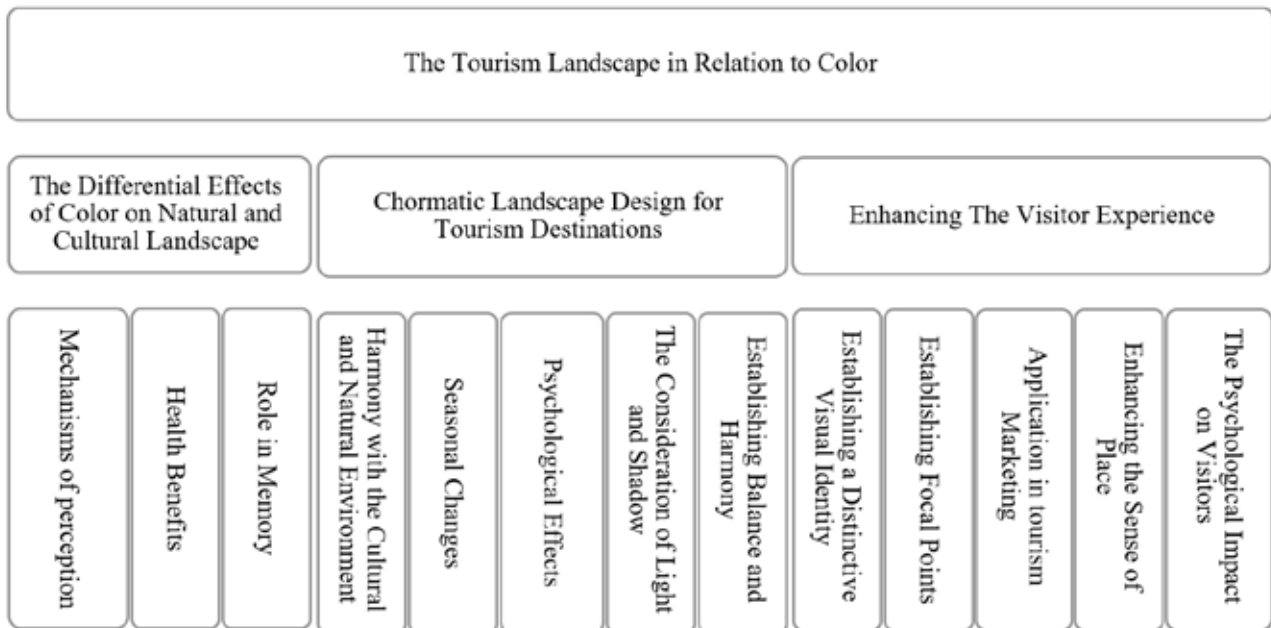


Fig. 3. Classification of components affecting the tourism landscape in Relation to Color (Derived from the systematic review and analysis of the final selected articles). Source: Authors.

scenes, in cultural landscapes, its function has been found to extend to enhancing the long-term recognition and recall of these environments. This distinction arises from the dual role of color as both a perceptual stimulus and a mnemonic anchor linked to cultural narratives (Griber, 2023).

-Health Benefits: Natural landscapes are widely recognized for their restorative effects on emotional and psychological well-being, a process guided by a biophilic interaction with natural color palettes. In contrast, cultural landscapes have been shown to offer benefits rooted in psychosocial enrichment, where color acts as a medium for historical continuity and place identity, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and cultural rootedness (Griber, 2024; Li et al., 2023).

- Mechanisms of Perception: The perception of color in cultural landscapes is mediated by constructed cultural symbolism and historical layering, making it a multidimensional interpretive process. In contrast, color perception in natural landscapes operates through more universal and biologically-based responses to color stimuli, reflecting an innate human attunement to ecological patterns and seasonal changes (Griber, 2024; Manav, 2017).

### The Symbolism of Color in Various Regions

Color symbolism across various cultures has been shown to play a significant role in conveying concepts, emotions, and values. Colors have been regarded not merely as aesthetic elements, but as symbols imbued with deep cultural and historical significance.

In Eastern cultures, particularly in China, the color red is

symbolic of luck, happiness, and celebration. It is widely utilized in wedding ceremonies and during Chinese New Year festivities. Research has indicated that in China, the color red is also a symbol of power and wealth (Bai, 2010). In contrast, the color white in China and several other Eastern countries, such as Japan and Korea, symbolizes death and mourning. This symbolic difference is notable when compared to Western cultures, where white represents purity and innocence (Gage, 1999).

In Western cultures, the color white is often associated with purity, peace, and innocence. It is widely used in weddings and religious ceremonies. According to a study by Adams & Osgood (1973), the color white in Western culture also symbolizes new beginnings and purity. On the other hand, the color black in the West typically symbolizes death, mourning, and, on occasion, power and formality. This symbolism has been noted to differ from that in some Eastern cultures, where black may be considered a symbol of evil or misfortune (Heller, 2009). In African cultures, colors are often associated with natural and spiritual elements. For example, in many African nations, the color green symbolizes nature, growth, and fertility. This color can also be symbolic of health and prosperity (Dzokoto & Okazaki, 2006). The color yellow, in some African cultures, is a symbol of the sun, energy, and life. Research has indicated that the color yellow is used extensively in African religious ceremonies and traditional festivals (Asante, 2007).

### Application of Color in Tourism

The Role of Color in Tourist Attraction: Colors serve as integral components of the visual identity of

tourism destinations and play a key role in attracting visitors. For example, the blue hues of the sea and sky, frequently featured in promotional materials for island destinations such as the Maldives or Bali (Fig. 2), evoke feelings of tranquility and escape from everyday life. Research indicates that warm colors like orange and red convey energy and excitement, making them suitable for adventure tourism or festival-related promotions (Cairo, 2012). Conversely, neutral tones such as white and beige are associated with luxury and modernity, and are commonly used in advertisements for five-star hotels or spa resorts. Fig. 4 illustrates examples of impactful color schemes used in promotional content, tailored to specific types of tourism.

Colors also function as reflections of a region's culture and historical heritage. For instance, yellow and red in tourism advertisements for China symbolize happiness and prosperity, deeply rooted in the country's traditional cultural values. In India, bright and diverse colors used in festivals such as Holi (Fig. 5) generate a unique cultural appeal that encourages tourists to participate in these vibrant celebrations (Arya & Jaiswal, 2022). Such use of color not only contributes to the preservation of local culture but also serves as a strategic marketing tool that differentiates destinations in a competitive tourism landscape. In Fig. 5, the cultural identity expressed through color is visually emphasized.

Colors exert a direct influence on tourists' emotions and behaviors. Studies have shown that calming colors such as green and blue reduce stress levels and are particularly suitable for natural environments such as national parks or mountainous regions (Küller et al., 2009). Conversely, stimulating colors like red and orange enhance appetite and activity levels, making them ideal for use in restaurants or shopping areas within tourism settings. The interior design of hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions can significantly improve visitor experience through the strategic use of color.

In tourism marketing, colors are utilized as powerful tools for branding and target audience engagement.



Fig. 2. Use of blue color in promotional materials for the Maldives Islands. Source: www.alibaba.ir.

Logos, websites, and promotional materials for destinations must be carefully selected to ensure that the intended message is clearly communicated. For instance, the use of green in ecotourism campaigns symbolizes sustainability and nature, while gold in luxury tour advertisements conveys opulence and high quality (Bastenegro, 2015).

It is noteworthy that definitions of color vary significantly across disciplines: the physical definition of color differs from that provided in the arts, and the psychological interpretation of color diverges from both (Ghavami, 2018).

### Analysis

Based on the conducted review, the theoretical foundations and relevant literature were examined in relation to the research questions.

Research Question 1: How can color be utilized as a strategic tool to enhance tourist experiences?

Color can serve as a strategic tool in tourism by enhancing tourist experiences through multiple approaches. Fig. 6 presents several key methods by which color contributes to this enhancement:

In establishing a unique visual identity, colors can function as integral elements of a destination's visual branding. The use of specific color schemes that reflect the cultural and historical context of a region can evoke a sense of belonging and connection among tourists. For example, the turquoise color in the tilework of historical mosques in Iran symbolizes cultural and religious identity, enriching the visitor's overall experience through aesthetic and symbolic resonance (Pearce, 2005; Stoykov, 2024).

In terms of psychological impact on tourists, colors exert profound effects on human emotions and behavior. Warm colors such as red and orange can evoke feelings of energy and excitement, whereas cool colors like blue and green are associated with calmness and tranquility (Hidayetoglu et al., 2012; Au al et., 2024). The intelligent application of these colors in the design of tourism spaces



Fig. 3. Holi Festival in India. Source: www.india.com.

can create a unique and pleasant experience, enhancing emotional engagement and overall satisfaction among visitors.

**Enhancement of Sense of Place:** Colors can significantly contribute to strengthening the sense of place for tourists. For instance, the use of natural colors such as green and blue in environments like national parks or mountainous regions can foster a sense of tranquility and connection with nature (Küller et al., 2009). Conversely, in urban and historical areas, employing color schemes that align with local architecture and cultural context can convey a sense of authenticity and historical identity to visitors (Lee, 2023).

**Application in Tourism Marketing:** Colors also play a pivotal role in tourism marketing. Logos, websites, and promotional materials for destinations must be carefully designed to convey the intended message to target audiences. For example, green is commonly used in ecotourism campaigns to symbolize sustainability and a connection to nature, while gold in luxury tour advertisements signifies opulence and high quality (Lin et al., 2023); Strategic use of color in branding and visual communication can thus enhance destination appeal and influence tourist decision-making.

Finally, concerning the establishment of focal points, it has been noted that bright and warm colors can be utilized to this end in the design of tourism

landscapes. Such colors have been shown to capture the attention of visitors and can function as elements of high visual appeal within tourism environments. For instance, the strategic use of colorful flowers at the entrances of parks or hotels has been found to induce feelings of happiness and vitality in visitors (Hang & Xueying, 2022; Luo et al., 2023; He et al., 2024).  
**Question 2:** What factors should be considered in the chromatic landscape design of tourism destinations?

In the chromatic landscape design of tourism destinations, it has been established that multiple factors must be taken into consideration to optimize the visitor experience. Some of these factors, which are illustrated in Fig. 7, include the following:

- The establishment of balance and harmony in chromatic landscape design can be examined from two primary perspectives:

1. **Visual and Conceptual Colors:** It has been argued that the chromatic landscape must establish a balance between visual and conceptual colors to create a cohesive and appealing environment. Visual color refers to the actual, perceived hues, whereas conceptual color pertains to the cultural and emotional associations linked with those colors (Bai, 2012).

2. **Color Harmony:** Effective color harmony has been shown to enhance the aesthetic appeal and emotional perception of a landscape. For instance, it has been demonstrated that color harmony significantly impacts affective responses, including feelings of beauty and vitality (Qi et al., 2024).

- The consideration of light and shadow has been shown to enhance the visibility and viewing conditions of a landscape. Design strategies must therefore account for optimal viewing distances and orientations to ensure that colors remain perceptible under various lighting conditions. This involves the careful consideration of natural light and cast shadows, as these factors can significantly influence color perception (Li et al., 2011).

- Psychological effects have also been identified as influential in the chromatic landscape design of tourism destinations, operating through two primary facets: emotional perception and behavioral intentions.

1. **Emotional Perception:** Colors have been found to have a profound impact on the emotional responses of visitors. For example, warm colors such as red and yellow are associated with positive emotions and an increased willingness to linger (Luo et al., 2023). Furthermore, the



Fig. 6. Various approaches to enhancing tourist experience. Source: Authors.



Fig. 7. Essential factors for the chromatic landscape design of tourism destinations. Source: Authors.

complexity and harmony of color schemes can influence perceptions related to safety, wealth, and tedium (Qi et al., 2024).

2. Behavioral Intentions: The emotional responses of visitors to colors can, in turn, directly influence their subsequent behaviors and decisions. It has been noted that these responses can affect outcomes such as the intention to revisit a destination or to provide positive recommendations to others (Bai, 2012).

Seasonal changes and the diversity of color across different seasons are key considerations in landscape design. It has been noted that using tree and plant species whose colors change with the seasons can enhance visual appeal and create a dynamic, year-round experience. This approach has been found to contribute to attention restoration and an improvement in overall satisfaction (Luo et al., 2023).

Another important factor in the chromatic landscape design of destinations is harmony with the natural and cultural environment. The cultural appropriateness of the chromatic landscape should be reflective of the destination's specific context. This process involves the consideration of local architecture, historical significance, and natural vistas to create a harmonious and contextually relevant design (Chang, 2014 ;Bai, 2012). Similarly, the design must also account for ecological factors to ensure that the created landscape is sustainable and respects the natural environment (Li et al., 2011).

Question 3: What differences exist between the effects of color on natural and cultural landscapes?

It can be argued that the effects of color on natural and cultural landscapes are markedly different. These differences primarily arise from the distinct nature of these two types of landscapes and their respective design objectives.

In natural landscapes, colors are typically present in an organic and natural state and are less subject to the influence of human design. Predominant hues include natural colors such as green (forests, pastures), blue (sky, sea), and brown (earth, rocks). It has been observed that these colors generally induce feelings of calm, tranquility, and a connection with nature among visitors (Küller et al., 2009). In natural landscapes, therefore, color primarily functions as an aesthetic element and is less imbued with symbolic meaning.

In cultural landscapes, conversely, colors are often symbolic and meaningful. These colors can be reflective of the culture, history, and identity of a region. For example, the use of turquoise in the tilework of historical mosques in Iran is symbolic of cultural and religious identity (Pearce, 2005). In this context, colors function not only as aesthetic elements but also as cultural

symbols, which can serve to make the visitor experience more profound and meaningful.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this research indicate that color, as a multifaceted strategic tool, can enhance the visitor experience across psychological, cultural, and spatial dimensions. Firstly, from a psychological perspective, warm colors (such as red and orange) have been shown to increase levels of excitement and energy, while cool colors (such as blue and green) enhance feelings of calm and focus among visitors. These results are consistent with the findings of Elliot & Maier (2014), who clearly demonstrated the affective influences of color on human perception. Secondly, in the cultural dimension, colors have been found to function as symbolic signs; for example, the use of turquoise in Iranian architecture constructs a religious and historical identity that can establish a profound connection between the visitor and the destination (Pearce, 2005). Thirdly, and most significantly, the application of color in marketing and the creation of spatial focal points are effective tools for attracting attention and strengthening the sense of place. The use of colorful flowers at entrances or high-contrast combinations can make the spatial experience more purposeful and memorable (Hidayetoglu et al., 2012; Bastenegar, 2015). Therefore, the findings can be further articulated as follows:

1. Strategies for Color Utilization: The selection of color palettes aligned with the emotional and functional objectives of an environment (e.g., warm palettes for recreational spaces and cool palettes for nature-based areas) can create a favorable synergy between the holistic visitor experience and cultural identity construction (Li et al., 2023; Larsen, 2024; Basouli, 2019).

2. Influential Factors in Chromatic Landscape Design: Harmony with the destination's cultural and natural context, consideration of seasonal changes, the balance of colors at different spatial scales (subtle vs. bold), and attention to light and shadow are among the key principles for creating an appealing and sustainable landscape (Küller et al., 2009; Urry & Larsen, 2011; Bastenegar, 2015; Zhang et al., 2024).

3. Differential Effects of Color in Natural and Cultural Landscapes: In natural landscapes, colors primarily follow organic environmental patterns and largely play a calming, reflective role. In cultural landscapes, however, colors carry symbolic and historical meanings that can enrich the visitor experience on a more meaningful and memorable level (Bastenegar, 2016; Heller, 2009).

This research, by employing a descriptive-analytical method,

has presented a theoretical and practical framework for the purposeful utilization of color in tourism landscape design. From a theoretical perspective, it was demonstrated that color, in addition to its direct psychological effects, can also function as a 'visual language' to reinforce destination identity through cultural symbolism. On a practical level, criteria such as color diversity and balance, the creation of focal points, season-appropriate design, and harmony with local architecture can be used as applicable guidelines for designers and tourism policymakers.

This study is also subject to certain limitations. As the research is based on a systematic literature review, a need for field studies is recognized to assess the actual reactions of visitors to different color combinations. It is suggested for future research that by using experimental

tests and structured questionnaires, the tangible and objective effects of color on visitor satisfaction and behavior in various destinations be measured. This research can provide a foundation for developing color-based designs and enhancing the tourism experience on both national and international scales.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in the execution of this research.

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