



The Role of Liberal Arts Courses on Students' Multicultural Attitude And Entrepreneurial Motivation In The Tourism Sector

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Abstract: China is a culturally diverse country with a significant population of ethnic minority groups. In recent years, the government has emphasized tourism as a strategic tool for fostering education and entrepreneurial awareness, particularly among Generation Z. This study aims to investigate the extent to which liberal arts courses influence students' multicultural attitudes and entrepreneurial motivation in the tourism sector. The research adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. In the first phase, quantitative data were collected from 697 students in public universities across Yunnan Province, an ethnically diverse region of China, and analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) by AMOS 22 and SPSS 22 software. In the second phase, qualitative interviews were conducted with selected students, teachers, and cultural experts to deepen the interpretation of quantitative findings. The results indicate that liberal arts education, particularly courses involving traditional music and art, significantly enhances students' multicultural awareness. Furthermore, multicultural attitudes mediate the relationship between students' liberal arts course experience and their entrepreneurial motivation in the tourism sector. These findings highlight the potential of integrating local intangible cultural heritage into liberal education to support sustainable tourism and youth entrepreneurship. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that liberal arts education can play a vital role in promoting cultural understanding and developing entrepreneurial competencies. The implications suggest that universities and policymakers should design culturally relevant curricula that respond to tourism market needs. Furthermore, consistent support for ethnic minority heritage education can empower students to contribute to local tourism development while preserving cultural identity and diversity.

Keywords: Liberal Arts Courses, Multicultural Attitude, Entrepreneurial Motivation, Tourism, Ethnic Minorities, China

1. Introduction

Tourism is increasingly regarded by many countries as a strategic driver of economic development while simultaneously serving as a medium for showcasing cultural heritage to the world. In particular, cultural tourism has emerged as a major growth area, as tourists increasingly seek experiences that are authentic and rooted in the traditional culture of a destination (Alamineh et al., 2023; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Preserving cultural heritage is thus essential not only for maintaining the appeal of tourist destinations but also for strengthening local cultural values through arts education (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006). According to recent statistics, the global arts tourism market was valued at US\$44 billion in 2023 and is projected to grow by 3.1% annually until 2030. In Australia, for example, 43% of international tourists in 2017 engaged in arts-related activities, demonstrating the sector's significance in driving economic and cultural value.

Moreover, culture and heritage tourists tend to spend approximately 60% more than average travelers, underlining the economic potential of this sector. In addition, the global arts market is projected to grow from \$524.43 billion in 2023 to \$557.49 billion in 2024, further confirming the increasing global interest in arts and culture. Therefore, this trend presents a critical opportunity for arts education to play a transformative role in preparing future generations to preserve, innovate, and promote cultural expressions. However, despite this growth, developing countries often struggle to harness the full potential of cultural tourism due to limited community development and persistent cultural barriers (Aalto et al., 2024; Reindrawati, 2023). This challenge underscores the importance of equipping the younger generation, particularly Generation Z, with the necessary skills, attitudes, and motivations to engage with and promote cultural industries. Arts education, embedded within liberal education curricula, can play a transformative role in cultivating these capacities by promoting aesthetic awareness, cultural preservation, and entrepreneurial thinking (Tao & Tao, 2024).

In China, arts education emphasizes traditional techniques and respect for cultural norms. The centralized curriculum and standardized assessments reflect a broader respect for historical continuity and social order (Jiang et al., 2023; Lin & Liu, 2023). By contrast, Western education systems, such as that of the United States, prioritize self-expression and independent artistic exploration. Studies show that students exposed to arts education tend to earn more than their peers without such exposure (Thomson, 2024; Ulger, 2019). Furthermore, arts education contributes significantly to the growth of cultural and creative industries, which employ nearly 50 million people globally, primarily youth (UNESCO, 2024). Thus, arts education

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not only supports academic and personal development but also fosters collaboration and safeguards cultural heritage for future generations. The synergy between arts education and cultural tourism justifies investment in both as mutually reinforcing engines of economic growth and cultural sustainability (Ali et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2025). Therefore, integrating culture into tourism, particularly through artistic expression, can generate income, create employment opportunities, and sustain traditional practices.

The Chinese government increasingly recognizes cultural tourism as both a catalyst and facilitator of national development. Domestic travel and tourism expenditures have reached unprecedented levels, with cultural tourism now contributing nearly 10% to the national GDP (Zeng et al., 2023). The integration of local culture into tourism has led to the development of distinctive attractions that preserve tradition while enhancing tourist satisfaction and ensuring long-term cultural sustainability. These initiatives underscore the strategic significance of embedding culture within tourism to maintain cultural identity in the face of globalization (Verheijen & Darma Putra, 2020). Therefore, the convergence of tourism and culture has not only enriched travel experiences but also generated new economic opportunities and enhanced national competitiveness (Aalto et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2025). If supported by coherent and contextually informed policies, this convergence holds the potential to sustain momentum in China's economic and cultural development and provide a replicable model for other countries with rich heritage landscapes.

Sociocultural conditions also exert a profound influence on the sustainability of local arts and traditions, shaping public perceptions and engagement. Traditional Chinese art, for example, has historically promoted collective values and, during the Maoist period, was instrumentalized for political messaging through socialist realism (Alhammedi et al., 2024). By contrast, Western societies typically encourage individual expression in art, with forms such as street art becoming platforms for social and political commentary. Technological advancements have further deepened this divergence. China is leveraging digital innovation to modernize its traditional arts, while Western countries democratize artistic expression through social media and virtual platforms (Liu et al., 2023). Although China has recently introduced new liberal arts curricula to align with the ongoing cultural and technological transformation of the tourism sector, prior research has largely focused on entrepreneurial cognition and technical competencies. Studies have yet to adequately examine how arts-based curricula foster cross-cultural awareness and attitudes. For example, Zhai (2021) emphasizes the need to incorporate innovative elements into tourism management education in China. Similarly, Koerner et al. (2023) argue for stronger interagency coordination and human resource development to support tourism sustainability in Indonesia.

This study addresses a critical research gap by examining the role of liberal arts education, particularly arts courses, in simultaneously enhancing multicultural attitudes and entrepreneurial motivation among students. Empirical evidence on this topic remains scarce, especially within the Chinese context and other developing countries where tourism education has not fully integrated humanities-based approaches. Furthermore, there is limited theoretical exploration of how cross-disciplinary frameworks, such as constructivist learning theory, can explain the impact of arts education on entrepreneurial orientation in multicultural settings. Additionally, existing scholarship has seldom examined how universities can collaborate with local communities to expand the influence of liberal education in ethnic minority regions of China. Therefore, this research proposes a practical model for investigating how arts-based liberal education can enhance students' multicultural attitudes and entrepreneurial motivation in the tourism sector.

2. Literature review

2.1. Constructivist Learning Theory

The relationship between liberal arts course experiences, multicultural attitudes, and students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy in the tourism sector can be effectively explained through the lens of constructivist learning theory. According to this theory, learners actively construct knowledge through experiences, thereby enhancing their capacity for critical thinking, cultural awareness, and reflective learning (Viken et al., 2021). Consequently, when students engage with liberal arts content, particularly in courses related to the arts, they are more likely to develop an appreciation for cultural diversity and multiple perspectives (Kwan & Wong, 2015; Luong & Kim, 2022). This, in turn, cultivates multicultural attitudes that are essential for operating within globalized industries such as tourism.

Moreover, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is strengthened through exposure to diverse viewpoints and culturally embedded learning environments. Liberal arts curricula provide students with opportunities to engage in interdisciplinary exploration, thereby encouraging them to construct meaning through cultural narratives and personal interpretation (Hossain, 2024; Wijayanti et al., 2021). Such engagement enhances students' understanding of different cultural contexts and increases their adaptability, qualities that are essential for success in the tourism sector, which demands effective cross-cultural communication. Additionally, students' involvement in complex cultural scenarios and collaborative projects not only develops their confidence but also reinforces their entrepreneurial competencies. Therefore, constructivist learning theory provides a valuable foundation for understanding how liberal arts education fosters both multicultural sensitivity and entrepreneurial capacity.

2.2. Cultural Context of Yunnan's Ethnic Landscape

China's ethnic minority cultures, particularly those in Yunnan Province, serve as a rich resource for integrating traditional knowledge and cultural heritage into educational curricula. Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in Yunnan embodies unique, resilient, and vibrant traditions that reflect the historical and spiritual lives of ethnic minority groups. Historically, education has played a crucial role in the preservation and promotion of these traditions, positioning higher education institutions as central agents of cultural transmission.

Yunnan Province is home to 26 of China's 56 recognized ethnic groups, including the Yi, Bai, Hani, Zhuang, Dai, Miao, Lisu, and Wa, among others. Among these, 15 are considered culturally unique, and together they represent over 80% of the national population for their respective ethnicities. According to data from the Ethnic Times (May 15, 2021), Han Chinese constitute 66.88% of Yunnan's population, while minority ethnic groups make up 33.12%. These communities have developed distinctive cultural practices shaped by ecological environments, belief systems, modes of production, and historical social

structures. These differences are vividly expressed through folk art, music, crafts, and festivals, which together constitute the region's ICH.

These traditions represent not only the identity of local communities but also a valuable foundation for tourism and cultural entrepreneurship. As such, integrating these cultural resources into liberal arts education can deepen students' cultural awareness while simultaneously fostering entrepreneurial engagement with local heritage.

2.3. Students' Liberal Arts Course Experience

Liberal arts education plays a vital role in enhancing students' aesthetic sensibilities, creativity, social interaction, and intercultural competencies. Specifically, courses in the arts contribute to students' personal development and foster a sense of innovation and entrepreneurial potential. Entrepreneurship, as widely acknowledged, is a key driver of economic growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation, especially among youth (Sharma et al., 2024; Usman, 2019). However, entrepreneurial success is not solely a function of opportunity or necessity; it also depends significantly on one's attitudes, values, and intentions (Walter & Block, 2016).

Therefore, the demand for entrepreneurship education that nurtures intention, mindset, and capability has grown substantially. Educational interventions, ranging from formal courses and programs to extracurricular activities such as business clubs, incubators, and mentorship, can enhance students' entrepreneurial propensity (Almeida et al., 2021; Anggadwita et al., 2021). These interventions help develop critical elements of an entrepreneurial mindset, including self-efficacy, opportunity recognition, and risk-taking behavior (Junaidi et al., 2025; Lv et al., 2021).

Similarly, effective entrepreneurship education often involves formative assessments in which students identify personal objectives and reflect on their progress. Furthermore, when liberal arts education is embedded with local cultural content, it not only enriches students' understanding of heritage but also promotes national identity and social cohesion. As Wijayanti et al. (2021) argue, the integration of traditional arts into education enhances student engagement and learning outcomes. Therefore, incorporating multicultural and artistic content into liberal education programs is likely to positively shape students' attitudes toward diversity while also encouraging them to pursue entrepreneurial initiatives in culturally rooted sectors such as tourism.

Based on this understanding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Liberal arts course experience has a positive effect on students' multicultural attitudes.

2.4. Multicultural Attitudes and Entrepreneurial Motivation

The cultivation of multicultural attitudes through liberal arts education extends beyond cognitive development; it also influences behavioral intentions, including those related to entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial education, particularly when embedded in multicultural contexts, fosters networks of trust, cooperation, and social capital. These elements play a critical role in motivating students to initiate ventures, especially within culturally sensitive sectors like tourism (Junaidi et al., 2023). Moreover, reciprocal relationships among students and their communities build subjective norms that reinforce pro-social behaviors and entrepreneurial engagement (Zeng et al., 2023).

Additionally, multicultural learning environments cultivate values such as empathy, solidarity, and respect for diversity, which are increasingly recognized as essential for socially responsible entrepreneurship. According to Zhang et al. (2024), educational experiences that emphasize mutual support and cultural understanding strengthen students' behavioral expectations, including their willingness to contribute to community-based enterprises. These attributes are particularly relevant in the tourism sector, where entrepreneurs must balance economic goals with cultural authenticity and community participation.

Furthermore, entrepreneurial intention is influenced by individuals' belief in their capabilities. This entrepreneurial self-efficacy is shaped not only by technical knowledge but also by students' social and cultural capital. As students become more involved in liberal arts and culturally immersive learning environments, their confidence in navigating complex social and market dynamics increases (Smith et al., 2023; Wood & Moss, 2024). Entrepreneurial motivation is thus driven by the perceived feasibility of business creation, particularly when it aligns with personal identity and community development objectives (Tao & Tao, 2024).

Building on this theoretical and empirical foundation, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2: A multicultural attitude has a positive effect on students' entrepreneurial motivation in the tourism sector.

H3: A multicultural attitude mediates the relationship between students' liberal arts course experience and their entrepreneurial motivation in the tourism sector.

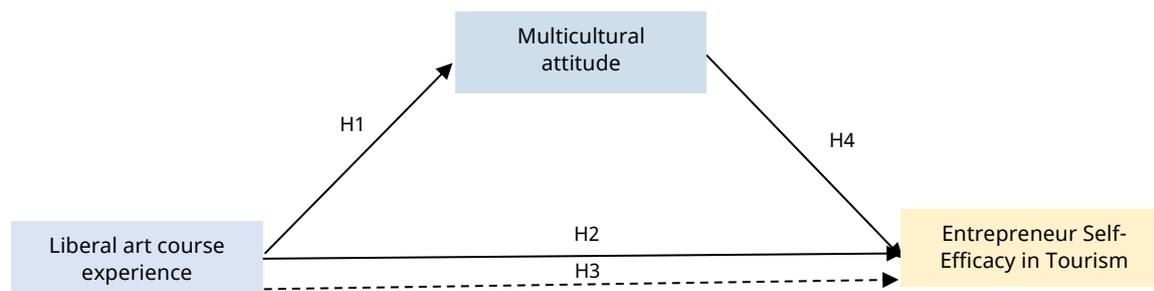


Figure 1: Proposed research model.

The conceptual framework connecting liberal arts course experience, multicultural attitudes, and students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy in the tourism sector underscores the dynamic interplay among these elements. A liberal arts education fosters critical thinking, creativity, and interdisciplinary learning, enabling students to explore diverse cultural perspectives and develop a

comprehensive understanding of the tourism industry. This educational approach, therefore, plays a foundational role in cultivating multicultural attitudes, which are essential for appreciating cultural diversity and enhancing the interpersonal competencies required to engage effectively with global clientele.

Furthermore, by fostering empathy, open-mindedness, and adaptability, liberal arts courses prepare students to navigate a range of cultural contexts, traits that are particularly vital in the tourism sector, where cultural sensitivity and effective communication are critical. In turn, the development of these multicultural competencies contributes to enhanced entrepreneurial self-efficacy, as students gain the confidence, resilience, and cross-cultural insight necessary to initiate and sustain ventures in a competitive and culturally diverse market.

Consequently, the integration of liberal arts education, multicultural awareness, and entrepreneurial orientation is essential for equipping students with the skills, mindset, and cultural intelligence required to thrive in the increasingly global and dynamic landscape of tourism entrepreneurship.

3. Methods

Traditional culture forms the cornerstone of a nation's identity and plays a vital role in preserving its intangible heritage. In line with this, the present study aims to explore the perceptions of university students, university teachers, and Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) experts regarding liberal education arts courses. It further adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach to examine how students' learning experiences influence their multicultural attitudes and entrepreneurial motivation in the tourism sector (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). This methodological design enables the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomena.

3.1. Quantitative Research Design

The quantitative phase of the study involved a survey of university students in China. Data collection was conducted using an online questionnaire distributed through social media platforms and email invitations. The research team collaborated with personnel administrators at selected universities to obtain access to contact lists of faculty members and students. While the initial goal was to implement a simple random sampling strategy, the practical limitations of participant recruitment through university administrators and digital platforms resulted in the application of a non-probability convenience sampling method. Participation was voluntary and based on respondents' willingness to complete the survey upon receiving the invitation.

Each participant received detailed information about the study, including its objectives, estimated time commitment, rights as participants, and data privacy assurances. Emphasis was placed on the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation. Upon completion of the survey, participants were sent a letter of appreciation, reiterating the value of their contribution to the research.

In total, 697 sophomore students from public universities in the Yunnan district participated in the survey. Yunnan is a culturally diverse region, with a high proportion of ethnic minorities. Of the 697 responses, 668 were deemed valid, resulting in an effective response rate of 95.83%. The data were screened for accuracy and consistency before analysis. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was then employed to test the research hypotheses by AMOS 22 and SPSS 22 software.

The learning experience scale consisted of five items adapted from Wilson et al. (1997). The multicultural education construct was measured using four dimensions: multicultural attitude, critical thinking, multicultural ethics, and attitudes toward xenophobia and racism, based on Hjerm et al. (2018). Entrepreneurial motivation in tourism was assessed through items measuring perceived social costs, economic benefits, and community participation, following the framework of Hsu et al. (2020).

Table 1: Respondent Demographics

Demographic Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	327	52.2
Female	341	47.8
Occupation		
Student	242	36.3
Teacher	426	63.7

Source: Calculated by the Author

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep, Thailand (approval number: R 205/2024). The research adhered to the ethical standards outlined in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and subsequent amendments. All participants provided informed consent via online forms before participation. They were also informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Data collection for the quantitative phase took place between April 1 and June 30, 2024.

3.2. Qualitative Research Design

Following the quantitative phase, qualitative data were collected to enrich and contextualize the survey findings. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and insights emerging from the interview data, thereby offering a deeper understanding of stakeholders' perspectives (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2022). The qualitative inquiry focused on identifying both best practices and key challenges in integrating regional ICH resources into liberal arts education within public universities in the Yunnan district.

In this phase, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to select interviewees who had relevant expertise and direct involvement with liberal arts courses and cultural heritage practices. Participants were chosen from among the respondents to the initial survey, based on their professional experience with regional ethnic minority resources. In total, 14 students, 5 teachers, 3 ICH experts, and 2 representatives of ICH inheritors and conveners participated in individual, semi-structured

interviews. These interviews enabled a nuanced exploration of how arts-based liberal education is perceived and implemented in the context of ethnic diversity and tourism development.

The demographic background of participants was consistent with the profile outlined in Table 1, ensuring coherence between the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. This integration of methods allowed for a triangulated understanding of how liberal arts education influences multicultural awareness and entrepreneurial motivation within a culturally rich educational setting.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Quantitative Results

The results indicate that participation in liberal arts courses positively influences students' levels of tolerance and entrepreneurial motivation. Due to the absence of a comprehensive list of Chinese university students who had completed a liberal arts course, the study employed a critical selection technique aligned with a purposive sampling strategy. To ensure the reliability of the instruments, a pretest and pilot test were conducted before the full-scale data collection.

To enhance response rates, participants were offered small incentives in the form of gifts or prizes upon survey completion. Filter questions were also included to confirm that respondents were currently enrolled university students and had taken at least one liberal arts course, thereby ensuring the validity of the sample. Moreover, the study addressed the risk of common method variance (CMV), a potential bias in self-reported data, by applying procedural remedies such as randomizing the order of measurement items and employing Podsakoff et al.'s (2003) recommended techniques.

The primary statistical analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) via AMOS and SPSS software. In addition, Harman's single-factor test was applied as a post-hoc diagnostic for the common latent factor (CLF), confirming that CMV was not a major concern. Non-response bias was also considered negligible, given the high response rate and randomization strategies.

The correlation matrix presented in Table 2 shows that the relationships among key constructs, learning experience, multicultural attitude, and entrepreneurial motivation in tourism are statistically significant, thereby supporting the appropriateness of further structural modeling. Following Hair Jr et al. (2019) recommendations, a two-step approach was adopted: first, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to evaluate the measurement model, followed by SEM to test the structural relationships among constructs.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix for Measurement Scales

Constructs	Mean	SD	LE	MC	ET
LE	5.42	1.43	0.745		
MC	5.75	1.24	0.451**	0.821	
ET	5.61	1.41	0.487**	0.365**	0.785

Source: Calculated by the Author. **Note:** LE = Learning Experience, MC = Multicultural Attitude, ET = Entrepreneurial Motivation in Tourism. Diagonal elements represent the square roots of the AVE for each construct. $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.001$

4.2. Measurement Model

The measurement model was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The fit indices demonstrate an acceptable model fit: $\chi^2/df = 4.382$, TLI = 0.951, RMSEA = 0.045, CFI = 0.955, and IFI = 0.957. As shown in Table 3, all measurement items loaded significantly onto their respective latent constructs. No items were excluded. The reliability of the constructs was established through Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), all of which exceeded the recommended thresholds, confirming both internal consistency and convergent validity.

Table 3: Measurement Results

Constructs	MLE estimates factor loading/ measurement error	Squared multiple correlation (SMC)	Composite reliability (CR)	Average of variance extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's α
Liberal art course learning experience			0.877	0.723	0.854
LE1	0.854	0.241	0.737		
LE2	0.765	0.285	0.598		
LE3	0.791	0.372	0.63		
LE4	0.802	0.357	0.64		
LE5	0.844	0.256	0.657		
Multicultural View			0.788	0.535	0.811
MV1	0.754	0.424	0.574		
MV2	0.788	0.409	0.478		
MV3	0.837	0.441	0.537		
MV4	0.824	0.388	0.587		
Entrepreneurial self-efficacy in Tourism			0.841	0.527	0.763
ET1	0.785	0.384	0.612		
ET2	0.772	0.368	0.525		
ET3	0.789	0.36	0.518		
ET4	0.854	0.237	0.641		

Constructs	MLE estimates factor loading/ measurement error	Squared multiple correlation (SMC)	Composite reliability (CR)	Average of variance extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's α
ET5	0.783	0.357	0.527		
ET6	0.898	0.245	0.713		
ET7	0.851	0.237	0.641		
ET8	0.882	0.228	0.685		
ET9	0.802	0.241	0.637		

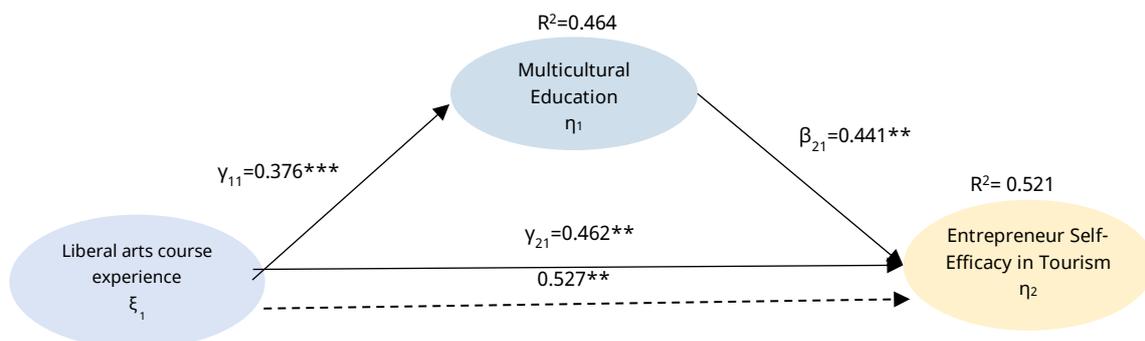
Source: Calculated by the Author. **Note:** All factor loadings and squared multiple correlations (SMC) were statistically significant and are available upon request. Model fit indices: $\chi^2/df = 3.631$, GFI = 0.956, NFI = 0.958, CFI = 0.958, IFI = 0.955, RMSEA = 0.045.

4.3. Structural Model

The structural model provides strong empirical support for all hypothesized relationships. Specifically, liberal arts course experience has a significant and positive effect on students' multicultural attitudes ($\gamma_{11} = 0.376$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting H1. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for multicultural attitude is 0.464, indicating that 46.4% of the variance in students' multicultural perspective can be explained by their liberal arts learning experience. The remaining 53.6% is attributable to unmeasured or external factors.

Similarly, a multicultural attitude significantly influences students' entrepreneurial motivation in the tourism sector ($\beta_{21} = 0.462$, $p < 0.001$), thus confirming H2. Furthermore, a multicultural attitude also acts as a significant mediator in the relationship between liberal arts education and entrepreneurial motivation ($\gamma_{21} = 0.441$, $p < 0.01$), lending support to H3.

The R^2 value for entrepreneurial motivation is 0.521, indicating that the model explains 52.1% of the variance in students' entrepreneurial intentions. The remaining 47.9% may be influenced by other factors not captured in the present model.



Note: Model fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.755$, GFI = 0.948, NFI = 0.952, CFI = 0.953, IFI = 0.953, and RMSEA = 0.051.

Figure 2: Structural model.

Table 4: Proposed model results

Hypotheses	Symbol	Path	Coefficients	Test results
H1	γ_{11}	Liberal arts course \rightarrow Multicultural view	0.376***	Supported
H3	β_{21}	Liberal arts course \rightarrow Entrepreneurial in	0.462***	Supported
H3	γ_{12}	Multicultural view \rightarrow Entrepreneurial	0.441***	Supported

Source: Calculated by the Author. Note: Significant at *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$

5. Discussion

The findings reflect students' awareness of and satisfaction with the liberal education program at the participating university. Students' familiarity with regional minority cultures appears to be strongly associated with both their multicultural attitudes and entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Specifically, the inclusion of regional minority cultural elements in art courses facilitates cross-cultural exchange and fosters the preservation and development of minority cultures. This outcome is consistent with earlier research by Ali et al. (2021), Chen (2024), Feng et al. (2024), and Sanchez Bengoa et al. (2018), who observed that students exposed to multicultural education were able to critically examine systemic marginalization experienced by minority groups within dominant cultural contexts. The cumulative impact of such educational exposure and reflective learning processes has significantly enhanced students' multicultural competence and overall learning experience.

Conversely, in some regions such as Cyprus, the formation of multicultural attitudes is more dependent on personal cultural orientation, as highlighted by Erkanli et al. (2024), Nguyen et al. (2024), and Teicher (1997). Despite these contrasts, the participants in this study acknowledged the relevance and strengths of the liberal education program, which they described as intellectually stimulating, innovative, and integrative. These programs were also recognized for fostering competencies in research, knowledge integration, and entrepreneurship.

From the perspective of instructors, the integration of minority cultural resources into liberal education art courses was met with a generally positive response. This aligns with previous research by Dubbeld et al. (2019), Kang et al. (2024), Wood and Moss (2024), and Yang et al. (2025), who emphasized the pedagogical value of embedding local cultural knowledge into formal curricula. Although some students reported limited awareness of regional cultures and ethnic resources, instructors

emphasized the importance of introducing these topics across disciplines. Therefore, it is recommended that universities implement mandatory liberal education courses on regional resources for all majors. These should include content on local history, traditional skills, folk music and dance, as well as customs and rituals.

Additionally, the integration of regional cultural content into liberal education courses can significantly contribute to the promotion of cultural pluralism. It can also enhance students' cultural literacy and cultural self-confidence while equipping them with creative and entrepreneurial competencies relevant to the tourism sector.

The findings further demonstrate that subject-matter experts recognized students' positive reception to the incorporation of local cultural resources in liberal arts education. This underscores the need for systematic delivery of information on multiculturalism both within and beyond China. The experts emphasized that such integration not only supports cultural pluralism but also strengthens the preservation, transmission, and revitalization of minority cultures. These observations are supported by previous research by Abacioglu et al. (2023), Karacsony et al. (2022), and Viken et al. (2021), who highlighted the central role of multicultural education in fostering social cohesion.

Liberal arts education, as indicated in this study, serves as a critical platform for nurturing cultural awareness and entrepreneurial capabilities. Furthermore, the effectiveness of such programs can be evaluated through students' participation in heritage-related activities, innovation practices, and public exhibitions. These avenues contribute not only to student creativity and entrepreneurial development but also to the broader vision of cultural innovation in the context of China's evolving knowledge economy.

5.1. Qualitative Results

Faculty interviews revealed four dominant themes regarding the liberal education new art course. First, faculty members proposed refining the course structure to enhance its quality, relevance, and novelty. They also expressed a strong willingness to support the integration of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) into art-based liberal education. When asked how universities should promote these courses to attract greater student engagement and heritage development, faculty respondents recommended enhanced collaboration between universities and local communities, the provision of policy support and financial incentives, and the combination of theoretical instruction with practical, hands-on learning.

Moreover, students suggested developing culturally relevant teaching materials and embedding the course within the university's overall talent development framework. Suggestions also included the formation of student-led clubs for ethnic heritage preservation, hosting thematic lectures, and organizing social investigations that encourage deeper student understanding of ethnic cultures. These initiatives were aimed at increasing awareness and fostering active participation in cultural preservation. The university administration was also urged to recognize the importance of liberal education and the pedagogical value embedded in regional ICH, thereby embracing cultural diversity across China.

Feedback from regional experts further emphasized the importance of collaboration between universities and community-based heritage inheritors. Experts advocated for the immediate establishment of formal mechanisms that allow for the appointment or inclusion of inheritors as course contributors. They also recommended the development of local ICH teaching materials and financial support for related campus activities.

When asked how the new liberal education art course could be integrated with other academic disciplines to enhance student engagement, the experts proposed three key strategies: restructuring course delivery formats, diversifying course content to include regional culture and real-life experiences, and aligning theoretical knowledge with practical learning opportunities. They noted that local intangible cultural elements encompass at least ten major domains, such as folk literature, traditional music, theater, crafts, games, medicine, and customs, all of which could attract and engage students. The experts also stressed the need to safeguard ethnic minority languages and scripts, particularly through the institutionalization of such content in the curriculum.

Finally, inheritors and conveners echoed similar sentiments, advocating for university–community partnerships that support mutual development. Some proposed creating practical training hubs to bridge community members with the tourism industry. Others recommended that universities take the lead in gathering and curating local cultural resources to fulfill their role as regional cultural centers. These respondents argued that maintaining the authenticity of traditional practices, while innovating for broader relevance, is essential for promoting regional cultural identity and sustainable development. This vision aligns with the broader mission of local universities as stewards of regional culture and contributors to cultural tourism and local economic growth.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the theoretical discourse by applying Constructivist Learning Theory to the promotion of tourism through arts-based liberal education. Specifically, the findings support the notion that experiential learning, through interaction with local art forms, enhances students' understanding of regional culture while simultaneously cultivating entrepreneurial skills. In the context of Chinese higher education, this approach encourages students to take an active role in constructing their knowledge of minority cultures.

Moreover, the integration of ethnic minority cultural content into business and tourism curricula creates opportunities for students to develop authentic and culturally grounded tourism experiences. This not only supports students' multicultural awareness and entrepreneurial self-efficacy but also enables universities to cultivate a new generation of professionals who are both culturally sensitive and aligned with the goals of sustainable tourism. Therefore, institutions and policymakers can draw upon these insights to reinforce the theoretical linkage between constructivist learning, heritage preservation, and entrepreneurship in tourism education.

5.3. Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, educational stakeholders can play a transformative role in promoting cultural tourism through the integration of traditional art exhibitions within university curricula. For instance, institutions can design liberal arts courses that

incorporate hands-on experiences, allowing students to engage in workshops, performances, and exhibitions centered on ethnic minority cultures. These participatory experiences not only deepen students' cultural appreciation but also empower them to act as ambassadors of intangible cultural heritage.

Furthermore, regular organization of cultural events, seminars, and exhibitions can enhance campus life and provide platforms for the continuous promotion of ethnic traditions. These initiatives are particularly important in cultivating talent within minority communities and stimulating student interest in tourism-related careers. Additionally, students gain practical competencies in areas such as cultural interpretation, marketing, and event management, skills that are essential in the tourism sector.

Collaboration between universities and local tourism stakeholders can also foster mutually beneficial partnerships, facilitating internships, applied research projects, and community engagement initiatives. As a result, educational institutions contribute not only to the employability of their graduates but also to the promotion of sustainable tourism practices that respect and preserve local cultures. This holistic approach supports the development of a culturally informed workforce while simultaneously reinforcing the region's appeal as a tourism destination and contributing to local economic growth.

6. Conclusions

Yunnan is a region characterized by its rich ethnic diversity, with a significant population of ethnic minorities and a deep reservoir of cultural heritage. Universities in such ethnically concentrated areas are uniquely positioned to leverage this diversity for both educational and tourism development. Yunnan's culture is marked by its diversity, geographical inlandness, marginality, and historical isolation. These characteristics provide a distinct regional advantage that, if effectively integrated into academic frameworks, can enhance educational outcomes and enrich the tourism sector.

Therefore, universities should actively engage in teaching and research activities that incorporate ethnic minority cultures. By doing so, they can utilize available cultural resources, accumulate valuable pedagogical experience, and contribute to the preservation and promotion of these traditions. Moreover, institutions should strive to strengthen the systematic study of ethnic cultures by showcasing exemplary cultural achievements, facilitating cultural practices, and cultivating talent specializing in minority cultural heritage. Given the substantial representation of ethnic minority students and the strong commitment of faculty members engaged in ethnic culture research, universities possess the human and intellectual resources necessary to deliver impactful cultural education. Integrating local cultural inheritors into liberal arts education not only enriches the curriculum but also serves as a critical external resource that strengthens the link between academia and traditional knowledge systems.

7. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the sample was drawn from territorial universities in Yunnan, which may not represent the broader diversity of higher education institutions across China. Therefore, future research should expand the geographic scope and explore how liberal arts courses influence multicultural attitudes and entrepreneurial motivation across different regions and cultural contexts. Incorporating additional variables may also yield a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Second, political sensitivities in China may have constrained the openness of participants during interviews, potentially limiting the depth of qualitative insights. Future research should seek alternative data collection strategies that can ensure more candid responses while safeguarding participants' privacy.

Finally, the limited proficiency of the researchers in various ethnic dialects posed challenges in fully understanding the symbolic meanings, oral traditions, and cultural nuances of minority groups such as the Yi, Hani, and Huayao Dai. Future studies should therefore engage local cultural insiders or translators to better capture the richness of these traditions. Adding specific local values and community-based perspectives will further enhance the authenticity and applicability of future research.

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Appendix:

Liberal arts course experience

This course has helped me to develop my skills and accept the culture and ethnic differences.

The teachers of this course motivate students to do their best work.

This course has helped develop my ability to work as a team member.

This course has improved my social interaction and communication.

We are given enough time to understand the multi-ethnic and cultural

Multicultural attitude

Our teachers are trying to make us think critically.

Liberal arts teach us the universal principles of life and the reciprocity of relationships among people.

During the liberal arts course, we can discuss the different views of culture, ethnicity, and religion.

During the time in the course, we discuss the negative impact of racism and xenophobia.

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy in the tourism sector

Perceived social costs

1. I often feel irritated because of tourism in my community.
2. Tourists in my community disrupt my quality of life.

Perceived economic benefits

3. I believe that tourism is a strong economic contributor to the community.
4. Liberal arts course enhancing income diversity in the local economy.
5. I believe that tourism is good for our community's economy.

Maximising community participation

6. Community residents should have opportunities to be involved in art exhibitions.
7. The tourism industry must embrace the values of community residents.

Long-term planning

8. I believe that successful management of tourism requires advanced local art and human quality.
9. Liberal arts courses and exhibitions should be continuously improved.