

# Research on the Current Situation and Path of Development of Cultural Tourism Towns in China

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**Abstract:** Since the reform and opening up, China's small towns have entered a stage of rapid development, and many provinces have started to carry out the creation of small towns with special characteristics, among which small towns with cultural and tourism characteristics have shown rapid growth and development. This kind of special town not only enhances the influence of regional tourism, but also well promotes the growth of regional economy. However, at the same time, many regions only emphasize the quantity and scale in the process of building cultural and tourism towns, but neglect the quality of town construction, so the development of cultural and tourism towns has also encountered some difficulties due to the utilitarian pursuit of maximum economic benefits.

**Keywords:** Desktop Research, Special Town, Cultural Tourism, Rural Revitalization.

## 1. Introduction of Cultural Tourism Town

### 1.1. Concept of Special Town

A special town is a comprehensive development project with a clear industrial orientation, cultural connotation, tourism features and certain community functions, which has a beautiful ecological environment and excellent infrastructure. It relies on a special industry or special environmental factors (such as regional features, ecological features, cultural features, etc.), and is different from the "three highs" that rely on high investment, high consumption and high pollution. "It is a new urbanization model of urban-rural integration. At present, China's special town is divided into three models: "unestablished town" model, "established town" model, and both models. Zhejiang Province is a representative of the "non-established town" model, and its town is neither a town in the administrative unit nor a district in the industrial park; Liaoning Province is a representative of the "established town" model, and the construction of its special town is based on the existing industries in the township. Jiangxi Province has both of these models, creating a town with both urban functions and rural appearance.

### 1.2. Features of Cultural Tourism Town

In recent years, a large number of small towns with various characteristics have emerged with a wide variety, such as ecological town, modern manufacturing town and cultural tourism town. For cultural tourism town, cultural tourism industry is the core industry, characteristic industry and leading industry, which relies on the advantages of location, natural resources, human resources, characteristic community and characteristic industry to develop tourism industry and to make it integrate with other related industries (such as residential community, other tourist areas and scenic spots).

The main purpose of China's cultural tourism town is to integrate industry, culture and tourism into one. The features can be summarized in three words: integration, cross-border, and sharing. In detail, the specific characteristics include: first, it has unique cultural tourism resources, historical relics,

humanistic resources and natural landscape resources; second, the town's location advantages are obvious and the traffic is relatively convenient. It follows the concept of designing a compact and clear space, taking into account the distinctive features, industrial development, green ecology, beautiful and livable, etc. Third, it is comprehensive, combining urban and rural space construction and ecological civilization construction, with sound and complete facilities, which can provide visitors with food, accommodation, tourism and shopping, as well as cultural display, interactive exchange, touring experience and cultural experience. Fourth, as a new carrier of urbanization, the town is focused on providing more and better jobs for local aborigines with the core concept of "people-oriented". Fifth, the management mechanism of the town is relatively sound, with a professional management agency or management company in charge. The cultural and tourism industries are integrated, and tourism revenue is a major contributor to the area's GDP and tax revenue.

## 2. The Development Status of Cultural Tourism Town

### 2.1. Development trends

In the Notice on the Cultivation of Characteristic Towns published by China, the statistical analysis of the characteristic towns at the present stage was conducted, in which the number of cultural and tourism towns in China has exceeded 200, occupying about 55% of the overall number of characteristic towns, which is the main development type of special towns in China in the future. [1]

The initial form of cultural tourism characteristic town is the six ancient towns of Jiangnan (Zhouzhuang, Tongli, Luzhi, Xitang, Wuzhen, Nanxun) and the ancient cities of Lijiang and Pingyao, etc. The early tourism demand of tourists is the sightseeing tour of these ancient cities and towns; with the rapid development of urbanization and the increase of disposable income, people's demand for cultural tourism characteristic town is upgraded to leisure and vacation tour. In this period, there were also new cultural tourism towns such as Yuanjia Village and Yiren Ancient Town. In 2014, Zhejiang Province first proposed the concept of "special town", which

led to the concept of "cultural tourism town". And since 2015, the cultural tourism towns represented by Xianghua Bay and Gubei Water Town have been completed and put into operation, marking the stage of cultural tourism characteristic towns. Since 2016, the national and local levels have announced the cultivation targets of the characteristic towns, among which the largest number of cultural tourism characteristic towns, and China's cultural tourism characteristic towns began to enter a comprehensive development stage.

## 2.2. Influencing factors

The rapid development of cultural and tourism characteristic towns has not only responded to the market demand, but also received strong support from the government and social enterprises.

The influencing factors of the development of cultural tourism characteristic town are mainly the following: First, policy-driven. Town construction policy, economic policy, and local government support policy have helped the rapid development of cultural tourism characteristic town, and the central government attaches great importance to the development of special town from the aspects of policy finance, development finance, commercial finance; Second, the development of the overall tourism market. In recent years, the number of urban and rural resident tourists has increased rapidly, and the total spending of residents in domestic tourism has increased. The third is the change of travel structure. With the increase of residents' car ownership and the increasing maturity of road and railroad networks, the travel frequency of short-distance travel and self-driving travel has also increased rapidly; Fourth, the capital boost. The introduction of social capital and financial institutions has improved the construction efficiency of small towns, and PPP (Public-Private-Partnership) Partnership [2] financing model has emerged to speed up the development of the town from the level of benefit sharing and risk sharing.

## 2.3. Development dilemma

Throughout the past two years, the development of China's cultural tourism town has revealed many problems. First, the scientific nature of planning is not strong: the positioning is vague, and many towns just blindly imitate in the construction and development process, without a clear positioning and analysis of themselves, which results in the serious "homogenization" of the characteristic town. Lack of characteristics makes it difficult to form a long-term cultural hotspot; second, as the industry of culture and tourism integration, the public service function of the scenic spot is not perfect; the third is that many cultural and tourism towns have financing difficulties, and there are even many cultural and tourism towns that have been reduced to "empty cities" due to broken capital chains and fleeing merchants, thus in a state of failure and collapse. Fourth, the introduction of talent mechanism is not sound: the professional talent power is of scarcity.

To solve the current problems of the cultural tourism town, we should make efforts from establishing the town brand, improving the facilities to enhance the experience of tourists, and attracting the injection of funds and talents to help the growth of the town transform from external "blood transfusion" to internal "blood" transformation.

# 3. The Development Path of Cultural Tourism Town

## 3.1. Branding the town

### 3.1.1. Clear self-positioning

Special town, "special" is the key. Many of the towns in China have seized their cultural qualities and made cultural tourism promote rural revitalization under clear self-positioning, opening up a new situation of "livable development" and creating an excellent special town business card. [3]

For example, Yulin City, in Guangxi province, known as "Lingnan Jade, scenery like a forest", has given full attention to its cultural advantages and tourism resources, successfully upgrading and creating scenic spots such as Ceramic Town, Colorful Field, Dareng Mountain, which enhances Yulin's cultural tourism brand image and creating a new business model for high-quality development.

In addition, Guilin Dong Li Ancient Village, based on the unique architectural style of northern Guizhou and the scenery of the ancient village of Li River, has created an art village of living Li River traditional culture and an immersive humanistic experience plus wild luxury idyllic life complex: visitors can enjoy the beautiful scenery of northern Guizhou, but also experience first-hand inherited creations; they can stay in a special bed and breakfast to feel the local customs and culture while enjoying parent-child fun with a family trip to the mountains.

Such a comprehensive showcase of tourism villages with brand characteristics not only shows distinctive cultural characteristics, strong regional flavor, but also has a strong tourism attractiveness and radiation-driven effect; it not only "empowers" the regional culture, but also "empowers" the development of villages. [4]

### 3.1.2. Creating brand IP image

The IP image is a brand-based image with strong brand characteristics and brand connotation, based on connotation, story, value, culture and personality [5]. The functional characteristics of brand IP image include three elements: content attributes, extension attributes and anthropomorphic attributes [6]. For instance, the 2022 Winter Olympic Games mascot IP ice dun, which combines Olympic elements, Chinese elements and modern elements in a cute and unique image, which not only conforms to the contemporary aesthetic trend, but also reflects the style of a large Chinese country. Therefore, establishing its own brand IP image for the cultural tourism town is a new starting point for building a quality image of the town. It not only provides a major visual channel for the town's brand promotion, but also is a carrier for the town to manifest its cultural symbols, spread its image information, better reflects the town's high level of understanding of its material and spiritual resources. In conclusion, taking the IP image as a link to draw the distance between the town and the tourists makes the town well-known.

However, the survey shows that the brand IP image of the town is still in a neglected situation during the development and construction of the whole cultural tourism town, and there exist problems such as low recognition of the brand IP image, disorganized application system and lack of personality charm. Some IPs have failed to condense the resources of the brand to a high degree, and failed to grasp the growth vein of the town.

To create a successful IP image, the first thing is to personify, which is the core DNA of the brand IP. The creation is on the basis of research, analysis and refinement of the people, culture, scenery and events of the town. Especially, it is necessary to give the IP image a unique visual appearance, role and world view. In addition to the external personality, the internal spirit is also significant. Establishing a "biography" of the brand and writing a brand story will be a good anchor point for the brand. Such a brand IP image will convey emotional spiritual values in a "human" way and communicate with visitors in a spiritual way; it will continue to output content through its own media image, allowing audiences to connect more deeply with the brand itself and convey a friendly and positive impression to the target consumers. [7]

### **3.2. Increasing the "immersive" experience with the help of technology**

Although many areas have rich cultural and tourism resources, many towns are still single-function with the "scenic spot + town" development mode, relying only on ancient architecture or natural scenery in attracting tourists. This single industrial structure makes the development of the whole town present a "small, weak and scattered" situation.

In the process of developing industrial clusters, the governance mode of the town needs to be adjusted. Developers and managers should integrate new innovative concepts, pay attention to the improvement of their industrial service capacity, and ensure the quality and level of service. [8] Therefore, it is urgent to use technology to build an integrated town development model with whole-area resources, whole-area construction and universal participation: to increase supporting facilities, to meet the "immersive" experience needs of tourists, and to build a cultural tourism group with core competition.

#### **3.2.1. Building a digital experience scene**

In 2017, Suzhou Humble Administrator's Garden built the VR Virtual Reality Experience Hall, a new artistic expression based on the historical background of the garden and using VR technology to show the historical heritage of the landscape. Visitors can enjoy the beauty of the garden in all seasons by riding in a six-axis motion palanquin and wearing VR glasses, as well as immersive travel through multi-sensory interaction with historical figures such as Wang Xianchen, the owner of the Humble Administrator's Garden. In addition, the Humble Administrator's Garden has also developed VR Panorama Tour software, which gives visitors a different viewing experience through a panoramic display perspective. [9] The application of VR technology in the Humble Administrator's Garden has also opened a window to the products and services of the cultural tourism special town scenic spots.

#### **3.2.2. Integrating Digital Resources**

It is important to integrate digital resources to create a digital tourism brand. Nanqinxu Town has made use of the public WeChat platform such as "Jingxiu Nanping" and "Jingxiu Town Nongjia", the small programs such as "Nanqinxu Town Reservation Service" and "Jingxiu town catering services" and other small programs. "Nanpingxiu town" video channel, as well as the relevant microblogging number, helps provide tourists with tourism advice, booking, guided tours and other services like a comprehensive display of the activities of Nanpingxiu town, which enriches the

online experience of tourists, and gradually. South calm cultivation town also set up "Renli set" digital government governance cloud platform and villagers digital file ledger in order to strengthen the grid management, promote public affairs, improve the business environment and further promote the local brand building and development. [10]

### **3.3. Expanding the professional workforce**

To realize the "self-blood" function of the special cultural tourism town, talents are the key. The survey [11] shows that the influencing factors of talent attractiveness of the special town at this stage are mainly divided into five aspects: policy attractiveness, humanistic attractiveness, prospect attractiveness, work attractiveness and environmental attractiveness. In general, although the respondents have a high recognition of the local humanistic customs, development prospect and work unit system of the featured town, some of them said that the featured town is located in a remote part of the city and the transportation is not convenient enough. In addition, the policy attractiveness of the featured town is still not well-established, and the respondents do not have a high recognition of talent introduction subsidy, rental subsidy, and entrepreneurship subsidy.

The author believes that we should vigorously cultivate cadres and talents in agriculture-related management, management, technology and finance, motivate excellent rural talents to take root at the grassroots level, actively cultivate local high-quality talents in the training of rural talents, and play the core role of grassroots organizations. Each region can cooperate and exchange with local colleges and universities on the basis of existing talent resources, combine the concepts of college planning majors with the future planning of cultural and tourism characteristic towns, encourage college students to conduct regular related research and study cases of characteristic towns and train more targeted talents to make up for the shortage of rural planning talents. [12]

In addition, encouraging incoming enterprises to organize recreational activities, strengthening humanistic care for employees and developing a suitable salary system are the keys to retaining people's hearts. The survey learned that the sense of belonging is relatively low for employees from overseas, and the government and enterprises can give more subsidies in medical care, housing, children's education, spouse placement, etc.

## **4. Conclusion**

The special town is the bridge between the countryside and the city. Since the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, the special towns have supported the "four beams and eight pillars" of rural revitalization, providing not only new momentum for China's economic development, but also new ideas for solving the development problems in the process of urbanization. As the main force of the special town, the sustainable development of cultural and tourism town should be paid more attention. In the process of development, it is inevitable that they blindly follow the trend due to the eager for success, but timely identification of problems and adjustment of development strategies can give a helping hand. We believe that cultural tourism town can play a good "engine" role to help solve the "three rural problems" in China and promote common prosperity.

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