

Study on the Current Development Status of the Cultural and Tourism Industry in Zhaoqing

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Abstract: *The era of rapid development of the cultural and tourism industry has arrived. How to truly implement the concept of the cultural and tourism industry, form a scale, and create an industrial chain, while ensuring the joint development of culture and tourism to exert their full potential, has been a topic of continuous discussion and practical exploration. For Zhaoqing, a city rich in historical and cultural resources with an early-developed tourism industry, there are still unresolved issues hindering the development of the cultural and tourism industry despite the strong advocacy for its growth. This paper will address these issues and provide some suggestions for reference.*

Keywords: *cultural and tourism industry; development of the cultural and tourism industry; issues; countermeasures*

1. Introduction

The cultural and tourism industry is an important part of the tourism industry, aiming to promote the simultaneous high-quality development of both culture and tourism through their integration. The integration of culture and tourism is not merely for the sake of integration, but to achieve the goal of constructing national cultural identity based on the development of these two major industries. It is an objective need during the transformation and upgrading of the cultural and tourism industries, aligning with the development of the times, and also aiming to meet the growing demand for a better life. Cultural and tourism products, from their initial conceptualization to their physical form, have diversified in just a few years, involving a wide range of fields. The involvement of multiple industries has accelerated the development of the cultural and tourism industry, but it has also led to a phenomenon where the focus is solely on presentation while neglecting content development. Further research on the content development of cultural and tourism products is essential to effectively utilize the tourism industry in driving local economic growth.

As one of the key cities for the integration of the cultural and tourism industry in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Zhaoqing has prioritized tourism revitalization as one of the "four major revitalizations." By leveraging its unique natural ecology and historical resources, Zhaoqing promotes culture through tourism and highlights culture through tourism. By utilizing digital technologies and increasing investments, Zhaoqing aims to achieve high-quality development through cultural and tourism integration. Zhaoqing boasts a long-standing culture, rich tourism resources, and deep historical heritage, offering enormous potential for the development of the tourism industry and substantial space for cultural and tourism product development. Given the current scale and rapid development of Zhaoqing's tourism market and the utilization of its tourism resources, there are still many areas needing improvement and development. The arrival of the era of cultural and tourism integration has brought new opportunities and momentum for the development of Zhaoqing's tourism industry^[1].

2. Development Status of Zhaoqing's Cultural and Tourism Industry

2.1 Initial Scale of Cultural and Tourism Integration

Zhaoqing began developing its tourism resources early on, with the most famous being the Xinghu Scenic Area. Due to its unique natural advantages, it was designated as one of the first key scenic areas and a national 5A-level tourist destination. Zhaoqing also has a rich cultural background. Notable cultural heritage sites such as the ancient city wall, Bao Gong Temple, and Longmu Temple have

become famous historical and cultural landmarks. Among them, the annual Longmu Festival held at Longmu Temple showcases Guangdong's unique folk customs and traditional practices, and it was included in the national intangible cultural heritage extension project list in 2011. These culturally significant resources and the solid foundation of tourism resources have made Zhaoqing a well-known cultural and tourism city. In the era of comprehensive promotion of the cultural and tourism integration industry, Zhaoqing has continuously focused on promoting the development of its cultural and tourism industries. As Zhaoqing's tourism industry is undergoing reform, the integration with the cultural sector has continually created new heights and vitality for the tourism industry. In 2023, Zhaoqing's Cultural and Tourism Group, based on the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee's "1310" plan and under the correct leadership of the Municipal Party Committee and Government, followed the municipal State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission's "Project Construction Year" directive, focusing on its core responsibilities and pushing for faster cultural and tourism integration development.

Zhaoqing has consistently adhered to the principle of "using culture to shape tourism and using tourism to highlight culture." The city has been committed to creating new highlights for its cultural and tourism industry and accelerating the development of a new pattern for cultural and tourism integration. It continues to develop new projects and products and introduces new tourism brands to promote the rapid integration of culture and tourism^[2].

2.2 Positive Industry Development Trends

After the pandemic, the national economy has been steadily recovering, and the tourism industry has been significantly affected. Looking at the development trends of Zhaoqing's tourism industry in recent years, there has been a clear improvement. According to statistics, in 2023, Zhaoqing received a total of 16.94 million visitors, a 67.1% increase compared to 2022. The total tourism revenue reached 17.66 billion yuan, a 135.6% increase from the previous year. Among these, Xinghu Scenic Area received 3.93 million visitors, a 74.8% increase; cumulative ticket (including card) revenue reached 102 million yuan, a 122.9% increase, surpassing 2019's figures. From January to April 2024, Xinghu Scenic Area received 1.647 million visitors, with ticket (including card) revenue of 36.47 million yuan. Since 2024, cultural and tourism activities have continuously been introduced, ushering in a favorable development trend. The first cultural and tourism series activity of the year, "Million Internet Celebrities Experience Zhaoqing," invited 12 influencers to Zhaoqing to experience and photograph various aspects of the city's culture and scenery. The influencers led people to experience Zhaoqing's vibrant New Year atmosphere and local customs. During the event's peak, online resources were fully utilized, and a "New Year-themed Zhaoqing cultural and tourism short video" campaign was launched on Douyin, yielding excellent results and marking a good start for cultural and tourism activities in the new year. Subsequently, a "100-Day Pledge" event in early March, which featured a short video about Zhaoqing's Dinghu Mountain, went viral. The "Go to Dinghu Mountain for a Wish Ball" trend became widely popular, even trending on People's Daily online.

Overall, tourism in Zhaoqing has been on the rise, and the increasing number of cultural and tourism events reflects the growing integration of local culture and tourism. The trend of cultural and tourism integration is becoming more and more evident.

3. Problems in the Development of Zhaoqing's Cultural and Tourism Industry

3.1 Insufficient Depth of Cultural and Tourism Integration, Small Market Scale

Zhaoqing has a long history and rich, unique natural resources, but its tourism industry still develops slowly. Especially in today's society, where tourism products are increasingly homogeneous, Zhaoqing faces the problem of having a small tourism market that struggles to attract large numbers of visitors, compared to other well-known tourist cities in the province. Although efforts have been made to develop tourism products integrating culture and tourism, the products lack intrinsic depth, and the cultural tourism projects do not sufficiently attract visitors, preventing significant acceleration in the development of the city's tourism industry despite cultural integration.

In recent years, Zhaoqing's Cultural and Tourism Group has set up a number of cultural and tourism integration parks and demonstration zones, such as the Shipaishi Homestay and Cultural Street and Jiahu Creative Park. However, these creative parks all suffer from a common flaw: their names do not match the actual projects, they are small in scale, and fail to reflect the local cultural characteristics,

lacking the features of tourist attractions. The projects within these parks are largely similar, primarily focused on dining, but there are no famous local delicacies. These places can only serve as daily consumption spots for locals and are unlikely to attract large numbers of tourists to visit as a travel destination. This situation makes it impossible to form a large-scale tourist attraction, and the real integration of culture and tourism has not achieved its intended effect. Therefore, these creative parks, which focus only on form, have not made a substantial impact on the development of the cultural and tourism industry^[3].

3.2 Lack of Representative Cultural Tourism Products, Difficulty in Creating Brand Effect

When Zhaoqing used cultural integration as an opportunity to develop the tourism market, there were phenomena such as attractions with only a name but lacking cultural depth, traditional cultural awareness being insufficiently widespread, and culture not being integrated into tourism. For example, the Longmu Festival, while well-known locally, lacks deep cultural recognition for outside visitors, making it difficult to attract tourists from other provinces. As a result, such local cultures do not have a significant impact on the tourism industry. However, if traditional culture is not integrated into tourism products, it cannot attract tourists to truly experience the local cultural essence and characteristics, nor can it create a regional brand for widespread promotion. The way Zhaoqing currently presents its historical culture to the public fails to resonate with tourists, failing to capture their interest and leading to a lack of intent or action to visit. Without clear tourism objectives, the experience is poor, and visitors are less likely to share their experiences, leading to complaints and disappointment. For the tourism industry, word-of-mouth is a crucial form of promotion, and poor experiences tend to spread quickly, reducing the desire to visit, and eventually being forgotten by potential tourists. The fundamental reason for this outcome is the lack of well-known and influential tourist destinations, and the similarity in the experience offered by other tourism destinations, making it difficult to create a brand effect. Without a branded tourism product in the region, it is impossible to drive the development of other tourist attractions, meaning that Zhaoqing's overall tourism industry, despite having a cultural background, still does not achieve the desired effect.

3.3 Lack of Professional Talent Needed for Industry Development

As a pillar industry of the traditional service sector, tourism is characterized by low barriers to entry, a high number of employees, and generally low educational standards, leading to a workforce with varying levels of education and a shortage of professionals. This has been a key reason for the low level of development and innovation in the tourism industry. In the era of advocating for the large-scale development of cultural tourism, there is an urgent need for professionals who possess deep cultural knowledge and management skills, especially high-quality, multidisciplinary talent who are familiar with the cultural tourism industry and have rich experience in industry operations and management. This is a weak link in Zhaoqing's tourism industry. Currently, Zhaoqing's tourism sector lacks sufficient professionals, with a noticeable shortage of high-level talent, making it difficult to elevate the tourism industry to a higher level. In the process of cultural and tourism integration, there has not been enough emphasis on cultivating interdisciplinary talent, and the mechanism for introducing tourism professionals needs improvement. These talent-related issues are key factors slowing the development of Zhaoqing's cultural and tourism industry^[4].

3.4 Insufficient Tourism Infrastructure and Services to Support Industry Development

The level of tourism development should be measured by the overall state of the industry, including tourism services, the quality of tourism staff, environmental sanitation, and supporting infrastructure, all of which should match the demands of tourism industry development. This is particularly important in the context of integrating culture into tourism, where the required professional services and infrastructure become even more essential. In Zhaoqing's current process of integrating culture and tourism, a prominent issue is the outdated facilities in some tourist attractions, the lack of professional services, insufficient service awareness among staff, and outdated service concepts. For example, Zhaoqing's tour guides have poor Mandarin proficiency, making it difficult to create an emotional connection with visitors when explaining in Mandarin. This prevents tourists from fully experiencing the impact of local historical culture. Another example is the Shipaishi Homestay and Cultural Street, which, as it stands, mainly focuses on dining, with no themed homestays or cultural projects, and facilities that do not match the theme. Such tourism sites, where the name does not match the actual content, fail to meet the expectations of visitors, leading to disappointment.

4. Strategies for Enhancing the Development of Zhaoqing's Cultural and Tourism Industry

4.1 Market Demand-Oriented Approach: Developing Cultural and Tourism Integration

The core of tourism is to drive social mobility and economic development. It is an activity that allows people to experience new environments and lifestyles, resulting in economic changes. In this process, the greatest motivator for consumption is people's interest in and the experience of tourism products. In modern society, tourism has become an essential part of people's daily lives. The success of the tourism industry depends on how well it meets people's satisfaction, meaning that tourist demand equals market demand. As people's quality of life continues to improve, their expectations for tourism quality also rise. Tourists no longer seek mere recreation but look for richer content and higher-quality services during their travels, desiring a deeper experience. Cultural and tourism integration can effectively address the lack of depth in tourism products. Tourism with a historical and cultural background gives more meaning to the experience, while innovative cultural products add commemorative value to the tourism process. Different cultures can change the trend of severe homogenization in tourism products, allowing tourists to experience local cultures and appreciate unique humanistic feelings. This is the level of satisfaction tourism should provide. In the development of Zhaoqing's cultural tourism, it is important to broaden perspectives and explore various channels to understand changes in tourist demand, focusing on market needs and offering unique cultural tourism products that meet tourists' expectations^[5].

4.2 Leverage the Strengths of Different Industries to Promote a New Era of Cultural and Tourism Development

The integration of cultural and tourism industries is a cooperation between two industries that creates new development opportunities, promotes mutual growth, generates larger benefits, and establishes an interactive and prosperous relationship between them. The goal is to introduce a new industrial concept and form a new market. During cultural and tourism integration, it is important to fully utilize the strengths of each industry and complement the shortcomings, thus driving mutual development. By exploring the rich connotations of culture, we can address the problem of a lack of content in tourism products. This continuous infusion of culture will diversify tourism products, enrich their content, and inject more experiential value into the tourism process, making tourism more meaningful. At the same time, the mobility of the tourism industry can facilitate the rapid and wide dissemination of culture. Continuous innovation in cultural products opens up more areas and directions for development. Therefore, Zhaoqing should leverage its local cultural background, develop distinctive cultural tourism products, and use culture to drive tourism while using tourism to spread culture, promoting high-quality development in the cultural and tourism industries^[6].

4.3 Attract Cultural Tourism Professionals to Enhance the Overall Quality of the Industry

Tourism is a labor-intensive industry, and its main characteristic is service-oriented. While modern technologies such as AI guides and robotic services have impacted the tourism industry, they cannot completely replace the demand for skilled personnel. The advantage of human service is that it can greatly enhance the tourism experience, offering personalized services with emotional connections, which leave lasting impressions on tourists and generate word-of-mouth promotion. This leads to more tourism consumption, something that modern technology cannot replicate. However, the cultural and tourism industry, once established, will require professional, versatile tourism personnel who can provide accurate and specialized expressions and humanized services. These professionals are the key to the industry's development. Therefore, strengthening the cultivation of cultural tourism talents, improving the professional quality and service level of industry workers, and providing a solid talent base for the development of the cultural tourism market are crucial.

To develop Zhaoqing's cultural tourism industry, cultivating professionals who are skilled in both culture and tourism is the top priority. This includes popularizing knowledge that integrates culture with tourism, encouraging cultural workers to transition into the tourism sector, and fostering tourism professionals' understanding of history and culture. It is also necessary to develop a talent training plan for the cultural tourism industry, actively introduce high-end tourism professionals for landscape design, planning, and cultural product creation, and encourage education departments at all levels to include tourism talent cultivation in training programs. The goal is to create a multi-faceted, multi-level development system for versatile cultural tourism professionals. Additionally, it is important to

establish policies to attract and retain top talent, ensuring good working conditions and competitive benefits to help retain talented professionals and contribute to industry development.

4.4 Improve the Tourism Environment and Supporting Facilities, Emphasize Cultural Experience

Modern tourism places greater emphasis on the experiential aspect of travel. Among the key elements of tourism, the quality of supporting facilities and the tourism environment are fundamental to providing high-quality services. The six key components of tourism—food, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment—require well-developed infrastructure to professionalize and personalize tourism, ensuring tourists' diverse needs are met and enhancing their overall experience. Only by doing so can tourism truly offer people a sense of physical and mental enjoyment. The importance of improving tourism facilities can be analyzed from three perspectives: From the tourist's point of view, improving facilities enhances their experience; from the tourism industry, it makes tourism resources more attractive and ensures the safety of tourists; from the government's perspective, it promotes sustainable development and economic growth.

For Zhaoqing's tourism industry, the immediate focus should be on understanding its shortcomings and addressing them. The priority should be improving the overall tourism environment, particularly focusing on sanitation. The improvement of the region's hygiene environment should be the central focus of work, with regular maintenance of details. It is essential to realize that tourists' experiences are not limited to the environment of the scenic spots and accommodations but extend to the overall environment of the area. Furthermore, maintaining cleanliness should not just be the responsibility of individual businesses but should be a collective effort led by the government, engaging the local population. Only with increased public awareness of environmental maintenance can small changes be brought about. A beautiful environment enhances people's physical and mental well-being, enabling them to appreciate the beauty of the scenery and the cultural differences it brings to the tourism experience.

Conclusion

In the era of vigorously developing the tourism industry and promoting the integration of culture and tourism, it is essential to accelerate the development of culturally distinctive tourism industries and form production paths for unique cultural tourism. The integration of culture and tourism should not merely be a conceptual or vague development. It is important to focus on the details of development. The various issues arising from cultural integration within Zhaoqing's tourism industry are inevitable steps in the process of cultural tourism integration. Problems should be identified and solved during development, and improvements should be made to each link in the industry chain. By making cultural tourism products precise and of high quality, the tourism industry can showcase its uniqueness, and the integration of culture can highlight its advantages, bringing new life and vitality to Zhaoqing's tourism industry.

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