

Research on the Enhancement of Internal Tourism Products and the Integration with the External Cultural and Tourism Industry in Xixi Wetland

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Abstract: This study provides a brief introduction to the basic situation of construction and protection of Xixi Wetland, with a focus on reviewing its construction process and conservation achievements since 2003. With the development of urban areas surrounding Xixi Wetland, the tourism industry in the wetland has gradually grown, highlighting the increasing contradiction between ecological conservation and management operation. In recent years, the tourism products and cultural tourism industry in Xixi Wetland have faced a series of challenges, such as the lack of coordination between wetland development and urban development in the surrounding areas, the lack of connection between the industries surrounding the wetland and the wetland cultural tourism industry, and the absence of distinctive spaces within and around the wetland. This study employs field surveys and interviews to analyze methods for improving the relationship between Xixi Wetland operation and conservation. The study proposes further integrating wetland cultural and tourism products with surrounding industries and suggests protecting cultural and artistic spaces through "enhanced inheritance+continuous innovation." Ultimately, the aim is to achieve a balance between conservation and development in Xixi Wetland.

Keywords: Xixi Wetland; Tourism Products; Cultural Tourism Industry; Suggestions

1. Review of the Construction Process of Xixi Wetland

The Xixi Wetland Park is located in the western part of the main urban area of Hangzhou city. The total area is approximately

10.38 square kilometers, which is designated as a protected area. The wetland has a good ecological environment, unique natural landscapes, and deep cultural heritage. It is one of the few urban secondary ecological wetlands in China and an important part of Hangzhou's green space ecosystem, serving as the "kidney" of the city.[1]

The construction of the Xixi Wetland comprehensive conservation project was carried out in three phases. The first phase started in August 2003 and the third phase was completed and opened to the public in October 2008. According to statistics, since its opening in 2005, Xixi Wetland has received a total of 59 million visitors and directly created employment opportunities for nearly 5,000 people, of which about 70% are local residents. The cumulative revenue reached 2.4 billion yuan, significantly promoting the sustainable development of the surrounding areas' economy and society, and demonstrating remarkable demonstration and radiation effects.

Based on the new stage of development, it is crucial to fully implement the new development concept, establish a new development pattern, and promote high-quality development. Xixi Wetland conservation is now facing brand new development opportunities. Ecological civilization ideology provides scientific guidance for wetland protection. Standing at the strategic height of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and sustainable development, government has provided important instructions and discussions on wetland protection and restoration. These have laid down fundamental principles and action guidelines for wetland conservation work throughout the country.[2]

2. The Current Situation of Development in the Surrounding Areas of Xixi Wetland and

Internal Cultural Tourism Products

2.1 Rapid Development in the Surrounding Area

After 20 years of urban development, the Jiangcun area to the north of the wetland has become an important residential cluster in the western part of the city. The Tianmu Mountain Road along the southern side of the wetland has also greatly transformed its original appearance. Additionally, the Wuchang area to the west of the wetland is gradually taking shape due to the construction of the future technology city. Therefore, the urban characteristics of the wetland have been gradually strengthened over the past 20 years. The interactive relationship between the wetland itself and the surrounding urban areas has also been further enhanced, resembling a symbiotic relationship.[3][4][5]

2.2 Beautiful Internal Ecology

The beauty of Xixi lies in its ecology. It is rich in flora and fauna, with a land greening rate of over 85%. Remarkable plant species such as reeds, persimmon trees, plum blossoms, green bamboo, and camphor trees constitute a diverse and colorful plant community. Xixi Wetland also boasts abundant resources of birds, fish, and other wildlife.

2.3 Cultural Heritage of the Wetland

The significance of Xixi lies in its cultural heritage. The wetland area is rich in architectural and cultural landscapes, including historical sites, ancient military training grounds, residences of famous individuals, tombs and mausoleums, as well as ancient bridges and pathways. Xixi also boasts abundant resources of religious and folk culture, with renowned ancient temples, palaces, ancestral halls, and a continuous flow of people. It has long been regarded as a hidden paradise for literati and scholars. During the Qing Dynasty, both Emperor Kangxi and Emperor Qianlong visited Xixi and left behind numerous poetic works. Traditional folk customs such as the "Dragon Boat Festival" have a long history and are enjoyed by both the refined and common people.[6]

2.4 Operating Revenue

In recent years, Xixi Wetland has been managed with the concept of "Two Mountain

Theory," optimizing five major business areas including tourism, cultural experiences, night tours, leisure activities, and eco-accommodation. With the continuous increase in popularity and reputation, Xixi Wetland has experienced significant growth in the number of visitors and operating revenue. From 2015 to 2019, the annual number of visitors was approximately 5 million, and the average annual operating revenue was around 200 million yuan, making it the only profitable national wetland park in China.

2.5 Challenges Facing the Development of Xixi Wetland

In recent years, the ecological concept has gradually become deeply ingrained in people's minds. At the same time, keywords such as energy conservation, carbon reduction strategy, and digital transformation have become important strategic goals. The understanding of wetlands is no longer limited to protection and utilization; it should also focus on conservation, management, operation, and research.

As an explorer in the management and operation of domestic wetland parks, Xixi Wetland's governance objectives have expanded beyond the balance between protection and utilization. It now includes four aspects: conservation, management, operation, and research, demanding higher standards for governance. After twenty years of construction and development, Xixi Wetland has gradually transformed from a suburban area to a "special enclave" surrounded by the city. How to better interact with the city has become an important challenge that needs to be addressed.

3. The Main Issues Regarding Xixi Wetland's Tourism Products and Cultural Tourism Industry

3.1 Incompatibility between Wetland Development and Surrounding Urban Development

At the beginning of this century, during the initial construction phase of Xixi Wetland, the surrounding towns such as Jiangcun, Liuxia, and Wuchang had not yet undergone urbanization. The wetland and its surroundings shared a similar landscape, with the wetland's impact on the surrounding land primarily limited to height control.

However, after more than 20 years of urban development, as the surrounding land near the wetland matured, the positive interaction between the wetland and the surrounding urban areas has lagged far behind the pace of urban development. The wetland has gradually become disconnected from the city by urban roads such as Wen'er West Road, Zijingang Road, Tianmu Mountain Road, and the ring expressway. It is unable to provide urban functions beyond ecological roles to the surrounding urban areas.

3.2 Lack of Connection between Surrounding Industries and Wetland Tourism Industry

In the northern part of the wetland, the Jiangcun area, in addition to its residential function, has gradually developed certain commercial and business functions with the operation of facilities like Intime, Tianjie, Xixi First Mansion, and Xixi International. Along the southern side of Xixi Wetland on Tianmu Mountain Road, there has also been a concentration of characteristic industries such as car sales. However, when combining an industrial perspective with the wetland, it is evident that the difference between the "gold" and "jade" elements in the development model is growing. The connection between the surrounding industries and the cultural tourism industry within the wetland is weak. Whether it is in terms of commercial and business industries or automotive sales industries, there is a lack of industrial linkage with the wetland tourism industry, resulting in a clear absence of industrial interaction.[7]

3.3 Insufficient Distinctive Spaces in the Wetland and Surroundings

Before the development of the western part of Hangzhou, Xixi Wetland was located in the suburbs. With the formation of surrounding urban land, the construction of several urban roads surrounding the wetland has gradually led to the disappearance of distinctive cultural and leisure spaces around the wetland. What is even more regrettable is that with the completion of Qiantang Expressway on the south side and Zijingang Road Expressway on the east side, the unique spaces surrounding the wetland have further diminished. On the other hand, when looking at the surrounding areas of West Lake, whether it is the

commercial atmosphere along the lakeside or the distinctive cultural atmosphere along Yanggong Dike and Nanshan Road, the permeating spaces around the scenic area provide an important foundation for the growth of cultural tourism industries.

Moreover, although the wetland's interior has developed folk customs such as boating on rivers and canals, fishing with nets, community opera performances, and dragon boat races, with the process of urbanization, traditional farming culture and local rural culture have not integrated well with modern urban life. Additionally, with the displacement of indigenous people from the wetland, the carriers of local cultural heritage are missing.

3.4 Discrepancy between Visitor Growth and Supporting Facilities

Since the end of the pandemic, the number of visitors to Xixi Wetland has experienced a significant rebound. With the opening of Qiantang Expressway and the operation of five metro stations around the wetland, there will be a substantial increase in the number of visitors. However, the current main supporting facilities of the wetland were planned and constructed twenty years ago, and many of them cannot meet the current demands of visitors. For example, there is severe mixing of pedestrians and vehicles at the north gate of the wetland, frequent congestion occurs due to insufficient width of Fudi Road during peak periods, there is a severe shortage of parking spaces within the wetland, the inner loop for tourist boats is small, and there is a lack of distinctive tour routes. Additionally, the functionality of the Xixi Paradise area is missing.

3.5 Single Tourism Formats and Products Unable to Meet Diverse Visitor Demands

Currently, Xixi Wetland offers a range of tourism products including sightseeing, bird watching, boating, dragon boat festivals, and other festive activities. However, these products are still categorized under sightseeing tourism and exhibit obvious homogeneity compared to similar domestic scenic spots. They lack deep interactivity and have relatively short durations. With the changing consumer demands, tourism is no longer limited to superficial sightseeing but increasingly focuses on experiential tourism.

By relying on operational models such as "tourism+culture+technology+healthcare," tourism continues to develop and upgrade. Experiential tourism places greater emphasis on personal emotional experiences and internal feelings. Through in-depth participation and interaction, visitors can obtain more profound experiences and memories, allowing them to have a more special and extended stay in the wetland, achieving the concept of "staying in Xixi." This requires the exploration of immersive tourism with a focus on interactive experiences.

4. Recommendations for Improving Tourism Products and Integrating the Cultural and Tourism Industries

4.1 Achieving Further Integration between Wetlands and Cities

Expand the scope of wetland management beyond the wetland management red line, coordinate the development of industries within and around the wetlands, and promote the integrated development of the wetlands and surrounding urban areas.

In recent years, the areas surrounding the wetlands, such as Jiangcun, Wenzixi Road, and Tianmu Mountain Road, have been undergoing rapid changes. In addition to overall planning adjustments, it is necessary to optimize the relationship between the wetland boundaries and the surrounding areas through special planning or urban design, integrating the West Lake Wetland into urban development and better serving the large city of Xixi in the West Lake District. The deep integration of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Xixi Wetland (within the West Lake District) and Phase 3 (in the Yuhang District) requires adjustments that are aligned with the overall wetland planning and are moderately ahead of the current situation.

Comprehensive integration includes not only the internal integration of the wetlands but also the integration of the wetland areas with the surrounding city blocks and the interaction between industries within the wetlands and the neighboring land plots. This will allow the Xixi Wetland to better fulfill its role in the city.

4.2 Further Integration of Wetland Tourism Products with Surrounding Industries

On the south side of the wetlands along

Tianmu Mountain Road, create a cultural and tourism industry cluster that extends from the wetlands. This cluster will include a new batch of potential cultural and tourism industries represented by "Xixi Shiba Wu." Most of these industries are located within the area enclosed by the Xixi Wetland and the Xixi Scenic Area, serving as the conduit for the Shuangxi Passage. It is necessary to strengthen planning guidance and accelerate infrastructure construction. By exploring ecological and cultural resources, enriching the cultural connotation represented by "Shiba Wu," and deepening coordination, a common development path for the Xixi Scenic Village will be established, creating a complete ecological circle for Xixi. Promoting the development of product formats, building a tourism service system, and highlighting the brand effect are also essential.

On the north side of the wetlands along Wenzixi Road, utilizing the existing commercial foundation, integrate the distinctive blocks of Jiangcun to further attract new business formats and incorporate Song Dynasty culture. This will create a wetland version of the Hu Bin Pedestrian Street, comparable to the wetland's northern boundary. Ultimately, this will achieve synchronized upgrading of the industries in the southern and northern parts of the wetlands.[8]

4.3 Enhancing Cultural and Tourism Formats through "Enriching Products + Adding Connotations"

First, explore and create a new version of cultural and tourism integration. Based on the existing research on Xixi's ecological and cultural heritage, explore the cultural genes and historical context of Xixi to create immersive cultural and tourism products. Building upon research works such as "Xixi Culture Series" and "Xixi Youth Study Handbook," enrich cultural tourism products and create key branded routes, such as eco-tourism routes, ancient architecture exploration routes, and celebrity heritage trails. This will transform Xixi tourism from a dependency on tickets for gates, transportation, and boats (version 1.0) into an immersive experience of Xixi's cultural and tourism integration (version 2.0). Second, design and create exquisite traditional cultural IPs. Through collaboration in various fields such as

digital creativity, exhibition displays, and performing arts production, enhance sightseeing tourism to immerse visitors in a "participatory" era (version 2.0), allowing them to experience and understand Hangzhou's unique culture from multiple perspectives and in various forms of artistic expression within Xixi. Third, cultivate and create modern cultural and artistic IPs. Pay attention to the current trends in social and cultural movements and conduct in-depth research on popular "subcultures" among young people. Develop high-quality IPs that align with modern popular culture, such as Hanfu culture, anime culture, and gaming culture. Relying on the Xixi Creative Industry Park and the film and television culture companies surrounding the Xixi Wetland, adapt local operas into anime and establish Xixi anime IPs, creating cartoon characters that appeal to young people. Through popular variety programs that appeal to young people, generate interest in traditional folk festivals such as dragon boat races and fishing with netted boats during traditional holidays like Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and Double Ninth Festival. This will attract more visitors, increase the cultural value, and maintain the vibrant vitality of wetland tourism.[9][10]

5. Conclusions

To enhance the competitiveness of the Xixi Wetland cultural tourism industry, it is necessary to "strengthen inheritance + continuous innovation", exploring the unique characteristics of the Xixi Wetland and creating cultural and artistic spaces as well as diverse cultural tourism products.

Creating cultural and artistic spaces through "strengthening inheritance + continuous innovation" First, analyze and plan the indoor and outdoor spaces of the Xixi Wetland. Understand the existing situation, strengthen development planning, integrate modern urban elements with the advantages of global wetlands, and optimize the layout of indoor and outdoor spaces. Innovate office and living spaces, science exhibitions, and artistic activities to enhance the utilization of the space. Second, prioritize and improve the quality of activities in the Xixi Wetland. Develop different formats that have local cultural characteristics, such as accommodations, dining, special products,

cultural and creative products, conferences, and weddings. Encourage visitors to slow down and stay in the wetlands, allowing them to immerse themselves in the agricultural culture and fishing culture of the "Three Basic Fish Ponds" in the wetlands. Let them experience the unique lifestyle of the original residents who use bridges as roads and boats as transportation. Transform superficial sightseeing into immersive and in-depth experiences, achieving a win-win situation for wetland cultural dissemination and tourism operations. Third, protect and utilize typical features. Every stage of Xixi's development history has historical imprints worthy of preservation and research. Therefore, it is important to fully and scientifically recognize the value of the buildings from different eras, including the past 20 years, within the wetlands. For example, in some buildings belonging to the original residents, preserve their traditional way of life as a dynamic display and special tourism experience project. This will better showcase and present the diverse values of Xixi's ecological and cultural heritage.

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