

A Study on the High-Quality Development Strategy of Zhanjiang's Cultural and Tourism Industry

Haiyan Zhao

Business School, Lingnan Normal University, Zhanjiang, China

Abstract: In the context of the country's promotion of the deep integration of culture and tourism, the cultural tourism industry has become a strategic pillar industry for regional economic transformation and upgrading, as well as for stimulating domestic consumption. This paper, based on the current development status and resource advantages of the cultural tourism industry in Zhanjiang, analyzes the pain points of development, and proposes strategies for the high-quality development of the cultural tourism industry in Zhanjiang from six dimensions: resource integration, business model innovation, brand building, industry integration, service upgrading, and institutional and operational support. The aim is to break through the bottlenecks in the development of Zhanjiang's cultural tourism industry, help Zhanjiang build a high-level coastal resort tourism destination, and provide reference and inspiration for the quality development of cultural tourism industries in similar coastal cities in western Guangdong.

Keywords: Zhanjiang City; Cultural Tourism Industry; High-Quality Development; Industry Integration; Coastal Tourism

1. Introduction

In recent years, the country has continuously introduced policies to support the cultural tourism industry, clearly stating the need to promote the deep integration of culture and tourism, cultivate new cultural tourism models, and promote high-quality development of the cultural tourism industry in the entire region. The cultural tourism industry has been positioned as a strategic pillar industry of the national economy. Guangdong Province has actively implemented the national strategy and promoted the cultural tourism cooperation among the Greater Bay Area, as well as the "Hundred Counties, Thousand Towns, Ten

Thousand Villages" high-quality development project. It has focused on supporting the upgrading of the cultural tourism industry in the western part of Guangdong Province and assisting in the development of coastal cultural tourism resources and improving the quality of the industry. This has provided a favorable policy environment for the development of local cultural tourism industries.

Zhanjiang City, as the provincial-level sub-center city and the core coastal city in the western part of Guangdong Province, has a leading position in the volume of coastal cultural tourism resources and enjoys unique cultural tourism resources endowment. With the official opening of the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang High-Speed Railway in 2024, Zhanjiang has fully integrated into the one-hour living circle of the Greater Bay Area, completely breaking through the barriers of transportation location and significantly enhancing its ability to receive cultural tourism flows from the Greater Bay Area [1]. According to the 2025 Statistical Bulletin of the National Economic and Social Development of Zhanjiang City, in 2025, the city received a total of 26.2090 million tourists, an increase of 7.4% compared to the previous year, with a total tourism revenue of 29.910 billion yuan, an increase of 9.4%; international tourism foreign exchange income was 142.8541 million US dollars, an increase of 108.0%. The growth rate of tourist volume and tourism revenue was far higher than the average level of the province, and the total volume has remained at the top of the western part of Guangdong Province for three consecutive years. The cultural tourism industry has become an important engine for driving local consumption and promoting economic transformation. However, compared with the Pearl River Delta and other well-known coastal tourism cities in China, the cultural tourism industry in Zhanjiang is still in the stage of "having resources but no brand, having scenic spots but no entire area". The average tourist stay time is only 1.8 days,

and the per capita consumption is less than 1,100 yuan, which is much lower than that of coastal cities such as Zhuhai and Huizhou in the province. The upgrading of the industry is urgent, and it is highly necessary to explore a high-quality development path of cultural tourism that suits the characteristics of Zhanjiang.

2. Connotation of High-Quality Development of Cultural Tourism Industry

High-quality development of the cultural tourism industry is the core goal of the transformation and upgrading of the cultural tourism industry in the new era. It differs from the traditional expansion-style development of the cultural tourism industry. Its core connotation is based on efficient utilization of resources, driven by innovative business models, centered on quality services, led by brand building, and achieving coordinated development of economic, social, and ecological benefits in the cultural tourism industry. It specifically covers five core standards, namely efficient resource utilization, diversified industry business models, high-quality product supply, standardized service systems, and long-term brand influence, ultimately building a modern cultural tourism industry system with coordinated operation, rich business models, high-quality services, and distinctive characteristics. Cultural tourism integration breaks the boundaries of industries such as culture, tourism, agriculture, sports, and digital economy, through resource integration, business model innovation, and scenario reconstruction, to cultivate new cultural tourism models, new consumption, and new driving forces in the industry development model.

3. Development Status and Advantages of Cultural Tourism Industry in Zhanjiang City

3.1 Current Development Status

In recent years, Zhanjiang City has attached great importance to the development of the cultural tourism industry and regarded it as a key industry for regional economic transformation and upgrading. The industry has achieved remarkable development results. From the perspective of industry scale, the number of tourists received by the city's cultural tourism industry exceeded 26 million in 2025, and the total tourism revenue exceeded 29.9 billion yuan, with year-on-year growth rates of 7.4%

and 9.4% respectively. It ranked first among cities in the western part of Guangdong Province. The contribution rate of cultural tourism consumption to the city's service industry added value exceeded 18%, and the driving effect continued to be prominent. From the perspective of top-level planning, Zhanjiang has successively introduced special policies such as the "Implementation Plan for Building a High-level Coastal Resort Tourism Destination in Zhanjiang City", forming a comprehensive cultural tourism development pattern covering "one core, one belt, two corridors, and three poles". This provides clear planning guidance for the industry development. From the perspective of project construction, during the "14th Five-Year Plan" period, the city has completed investment in cultural tourism projects exceeding 32 billion yuan. Key projects such as Zhanjiang Cultural Center, Military History Park, Seafood Food Industry Complex, and Qian'an Old Street Quality Upgrade and Renovation have been successively launched and put into operation. The cultural tourism hardware carriers have been continuously improved. From the perspective of overall development, multiple districts such as Xuwen, Suixi, and Liangjiang have successfully established provincial-level all-round tourism demonstration zones, with the coverage rate of all-round tourism reaching 65%. The integration of agricultural tourism, sports tourism, and food tourism has achieved initial results, and a diversified and coordinated cultural tourism development pattern has been initially formed.

3.2 Development Advantages

First, the resources are unique and diverse. Zhanjiang has a 1,243.7-kilometer mainland coastline, accounting for 30.23% of the total coastline in the province. It is surrounded by the sea on three sides, and has "five islands and one bay" of coastal resources of superior quality. It has 12 A-level coastal scenic spots, and the concentration of coastal tourism resources such as beaches, islands, and bays ranks first in western Guangdong. It also has diverse cultural resources, with Qian'an Old Street carrying the culture of a thousand-year commercial port and Leizhou Ancient City having 18 national and provincial intangible cultural heritage projects, highlighting unique Lingnan folk culture. Suixi and Xuwen also feature a range of historical, folk, and educational cultural attractions.

Combined with the characteristic seafood resources of over 2 million tons produced annually in Zhanjiang and the ecological resources of rural areas throughout the region, a diversified resource system of "coastal + culture + food + heritage + ecological" has been formed, with outstanding resource identification and development potential.

Second, the location and transportation advantages are prominent. Zhanjiang is located in the western part of Guangdong Province, facing the Greater Bay Area and adjacent to the Hainan Free Trade Port. Its strategic location advantages are significant [2]. After the completion of the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang High-Speed Railway, Zhanjiang has officially integrated into the one-hour transportation circle of the Greater Bay Area, completely solving the long-standing transportation shortcomings, and can efficiently receive the tourist flows from cities in the Greater Bay Area such as Guangzhou and Shenzhen, providing core transportation support for attracting and increasing tourism revenue for the cultural tourism industry.

Third, policy dividends continue to accumulate. The national all-round Tourism and rural revitalization strategies provide macro policy support for cultural tourism development. Guangdong Province is focusing on promoting the upgrading of cultural tourism in the western region and the construction of a coastal tourism industry belt. Coupled with the "Hundred Thousand Project" policy support, the provincial and municipal levels have continuously increased financial support and policy preferences for cultural tourism projects in Zhanjiang [3]. The local government has continuously optimized the cultural tourism business environment, and during the "14th Five-Year Plan" period, a total of 43 cultural tourism projects have been attracted and invested, with a total investment exceeding 32 billion yuan. Key new business forms such as night tourism economy, outdoor sports, and rural tourism have been focused on cultivating, and the policy empowerment effect has been continuously released.

Fourth, the industrial foundation is becoming increasingly solid. After years of development, Zhanjiang has formed diversified basic business forms such as coastal sightseeing, food experience, rural leisure, sports tourism, and educational study tours. The cultural tourism

consumption scenarios have been continuously expanded. The urban cultural tourism facilities have been continuously improved, and the basic conditions such as the quality of scenic spots, accommodation and catering, and transportation have been continuously optimized. The underlying foundation for the development of the cultural tourism industry has been continuously consolidated, and the basic conditions for high-quality transformation and upgrading have been formed [4].

4. Problems Existing in the High-Quality Development of Tourism and Culture Industry in Zhanjiang City

4.1 Insufficient Resource Integration and Severe Fragmentation of the Industry

The tourism and culture resources in Zhanjiang are diverse, but they are mainly distributed in scattered areas and developed independently. The overall effort for integrating and coordinating the resources across the entire region is insufficient. Currently, there are 36 A-level scenic spots in the city, but over 80% of them operate independently. There is a lack of coordination and collaboration mechanisms among different districts and counties, and the coastal resources, cultural resources, and ecological resources are disconnected from each other. The high-quality tourism and culture resources have not been connected into a line or formed a coherent trend, resulting in a development predicament where "the pearls are not linked into a chain". At present, the core attraction of tourism and culture in Zhanjiang still relies on 3-4 single-point scenic spots such as Chagang Old Street and Jinsha Bay, which account for over 60% of the total visitors. The market share of other small scenic spots is less than 40%, and the popularity of single points cannot be transformed into long-term and sustainable traffic for the entire area. The overall development synergy of tourism and culture is insufficient, and the overall value of resources has not been fully released.

4.2 Lagging In-Terminal Innovation and Low Product Added Value

The current supply structure of tourism and culture products in Zhanjiang is unbalanced. The proportion of traditional shallow-level tourism and culture products is too high, and the problems of product homogenization and

low-endness are prominent. According to the survey data on tourism and culture business models, the proportion of sightseeing tourism-related products in the city is as high as 78%, while the proportion of new types of experiences such as immersive experiences, high-end resorts, night performances, and cultural and creative education is less than 22%. The problem of a single product structure is significant. The conversion rate of Zhanjiang's outstanding seafood cuisine and intangible cultural heritage resources into tourism products is less than 30%, remaining at a shallow-level viewing and simple experience level. No standardized and series-based high-end tourism product system has been formed. The tourism industry chain is short, and the added value of products is low, making it difficult to meet the high-quality, diversified, and immersive tourism consumption demands of the new era [5].

4.3 Weak Brand Influence and Insufficient Market Recognition

Zhanjiang has not yet formed a unified, distinct, and deeply rooted core IP for tourism and culture. The construction of tourism and culture brands is lagging behind, and the communication effectiveness is insufficient. According to the monitoring data of new media tourism popularity, the total online topic exposure of tourism and culture in Zhanjiang in 2025 was only 35% of that of Zhuhai and 42% of that of Beihai. The market recognition and network breakout degree were significantly lower. Currently, the urban tourism and culture promotion is fragmented and lacks a unified brand positioning, promotional slogan, and visual symbols. The proportion of traditional government promotion accounts for over 65%, while the investment in young media marketing such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu is less than 35%, and the precision and scene-based marketing efforts are lacking. The weak brand influence makes it difficult for high-quality tourism and culture resources in Zhanjiang to be transformed into market competitive advantages. A large number of cross-border passengers from the Greater Bay Area failed to be effectively retained, and the passenger conversion rate was 15%-20% lower than that of neighboring coastal cities.

4.4 Insufficient Depth of Industry Integration and Slow Development of New Business

Models

The integration of "tourism and culture +" industries in Zhanjiang is insufficient, and the coordinated development pattern of multiple industries has not yet been formed [6]. The cultivation of new business models is lagging behind. Statistical data shows that the proportion of deeply integrated tourism and culture projects in the city is less than 18%, and over 80% of tourism and culture projects are still at the shallow-level superimposition stage of "tourism and culture + industry". There is a serious lack of deep integration scenarios with agriculture, sports, the digital economy, and pre-prepared food industries. Among them, the revenue from night tour economy accounts for only 12% of the total tourism consumption, which is much lower than the average level of 25% in similar coastal cities in China; the market size of new business models such as rural tourism, Educational travel, and digital cultural creation is less than 8 billion yuan, with a low industry proportion. The layout of new business models is scattered and uncoordinated, failing to form a complete tourism consumption loop, resulting in a single development momentum for tourism and culture and difficulty in achieving industrial quality improvement and efficiency enhancement.

4.5 Incomplete Supporting Services and Limited Capacity

The shortcomings of tourism infrastructure and service systems are prominent, and the capacity to support high-quality development is insufficient. At present, the coverage rate of transportation connections between rural tourism sites and remote scenic areas in the city is only 58%, and the rate of smart cultural tourism equipment in 3A-level and below scenic areas is less than 40%. Digital functions such as intelligent guidance, online services, and crowd flow monitoring are lacking. The level of intelligent service in the cultural tourism industry is relatively low. Meanwhile, the supporting facilities for urban night consumption are not complete. Only 30% of the scenic spots and cultural relic museums in the city have implemented extended opening hours, and the supply of night consumption scenarios is insufficient. There is a significant gap in the supply of high-end cultural tourism accommodation, with the proportion of high-end theme guesthouses and coastal resort hotels in the city being less than 25%. This makes it

difficult to meet the diversified consumption demands of long-term tourists and high-end tourists. The re-visiting rate of tourists is only 19%, which is lower than the provincial average of 28%. The tourists' experience and retention rate need to be significantly improved.

4.6 Insufficient Policy and Talent Support, with Weak Internal Driving Force

The special policies and talent support system for the cultural tourism industry are weak, and the internal development driving force of the industry is weak. At the policy level, the existing cultural tourism policies are mostly macro-guiding documents, and the proportion of detailed support policies for business formats, enterprise subsidies, and investment promotion incentives is less than 30%. The policies are not targeted and not well implemented. At the talent level, the annual average number of cultural tourism-related professionals cultivated by local universities is less than 200, and the retention rate of local cultural tourism talents each year is only 45%. There is a shortage of professionals in high-end cultural tourism operation, new media marketing, cultural design, and scenic area management, exceeding 1,200 people. At the same time, among the industry practitioners, the proportion of certified professionals is less than 28%, and the professional quality is uneven, resulting in insufficient refined operation of cultural tourism projects and weak industry innovation, which seriously restricts the long-term high-quality development of the cultural tourism industry.

5. Strategies for High-Quality Development of the Cultural Tourism Industry in Zhanjiang City

5.1 Integrating All-Region Resources to Build an Integrated Cultural Tourism Industry Pattern

Based on the overall cultural tourism development layout of Zhanjiang, which includes a "core area, one belt, two corridors, and three poles", break through the administrative barriers between districts and counties and the barriers of scenic area resources, establish a mechanism for coordinated development and joint operation of the entire cultural tourism industry, and solve the development problems of 80% of the scenic areas operating independently and having

fragmented resources. Systematically integrate the five core resources of coastal harbors, thousand-year ancient ports, historical and cultural sites, rural ecology, and seafood cuisine in the city, and scientifically plan four major theme premium tourism routes: coastal resort, cultural study, food experience, and rural leisure. Link up with the development of different districts and counties such as Chengan, Xiasan, Leizhou, Xunwei, and Suixi, promote differentiated development to avoid homogeneous projects, and achieve resource complementarity and business model complementarity. Promote the connection and interaction of core scenic spots such as Chengan Old Street, Jinsan Bay, Taicheng Island, and Leizhou Ancient City, to create a premium cultural tourism loop covering the entire region, transform single-point tourist flow into overall traffic, and strive to increase the utilization rate of the entire cultural tourism resources from the current 55% to over 80%, maximizing the value of the entire regional resources and building a new pattern of coordinated and shared development of the cultural tourism industry.

5.2 Innovating Cultural Tourism Business Models to Extend the Value Chain and Enhance Product Added Value

Focus on the unique resource advantages of Zhanjiang, optimize the structure of cultural tourism products, promote the transformation of cultural tourism products from traditional sightseeing type to immersive experience and high-end resort type, gradually increasing the proportion of new business models from 22% to over 40%. Deeply develop the seafood cuisine cultural IP, relying on the 2 million tons of seafood industry volume in the city, create standardized seafood souvenirs, high-end seafood banquets, and annual seafood food festivals series products, build a "food + tourism" full-chain industrial system, and increase the cultural conversion rate of seafood resources from 30% to over 60%. Focus on cultivating night-time cultural tourism economy, relying on Chengan Old Street, fishing port area, Jinsha Bay business district, and other areas, create night-time consumption business models such as intangible cultural heritage night markets, coastal light shows, immersive script games, and night folk performances, promote the increase of night-time cultural tourism consumption proportion to over 25%. At the

same time, vigorously develop diversified business models such as coastal health care, beach sports, intangible cultural heritage study, and rural premium guesthouses, fill the gap in high-end resort products, effectively extend the duration of tourists' stay and increase per capita consumption, and fully extend the industrial chain of cultural tourism and enhance product added value [7].

5.3 Condensing Urban Cultural Tourism IP and Building a Diversified Marketing System

Based on the resource characteristics of Zhanjiang, uniformly create the core urban cultural tourism IP of "Coastal Zhanjiang, Flavor City", integrate the four core tags of coastal scenery, thousand-year commercial port, seafood cuisine, and Lingnan folk culture, design exclusive urban cultural tourism visual symbols and integrated publicity system, completely solve the problems of fragmented brands and weak dissemination power. Innovate traditional marketing models, optimize marketing structure, increase the proportion of new media marketing from 35% to over 60%, build a young, precise, and regular new media marketing system, rely on mainstream platforms such as Douyin, Xiaohongshu, and Video Channel, through influencer shopping, short-video promotion, live-streaming promotion, and cultural challenge competitions, expand the overall online exposure of the city's cultural tourism, narrow the brand popularity gap with cities such as Zhuhai and Beihai. Relying on the annual 30 million+ passenger flow of Guangzhou-Zhanjiang High-speed Railway, actively connect with the Greater Bay Area for cross-regional cultural tourism promotion, combine beach sports events, folk festivals, and cultural exhibitions for scenario-based marketing, precisely attract tourists from the Greater Bay Area, increase the passenger flow conversion rate to over 35%, and continuously enhance the brand awareness and market influence of Zhanjiang's cultural tourism.

5.4 Deepening Industry Cross-Corner Integration and Improving the "Cultural Tourism +" Industrial System

Deepen multi-industry cross-corner integration, increase the proportion of deeply integrated cultural tourism projects, enrich cultural tourism new business models, and cultivate new industrial momentum [8]. Promote "culture and tourism + sports", leveraging over 200

kilometers of high-quality coastal beach resources, develop sports products such as beach volleyball, coastal cycling, and sea surfing, and combine with local events like "Guangdong BA" and "Guangdong Super" with an average of over 100 events per year, to create an integrated consumption loop of "spectating + tourism + cuisine". Promote "culture and tourism + agriculture + pre-prepared food industry", relying on the annual production of over 2 million tons of aquatic products and characteristic agricultural resources in Zhanjiang, create rural picking, rural study tours, and aquatic farming experience projects, and transform pre-prepared food and seafood specialties into cultural and tourism products, extending the agricultural, cultural, and tourism industrial chain. Promote "culture and tourism + digital economy", accelerate the coverage of smart scenic areas, build online cloud travel exhibition halls, develop digital cultural products, and utilize big data to precisely match tourists' needs. At the same time, deepen the integration of "culture and tourism + intangible cultural heritage" and "culture and tourism + study tours", activate 18 provincial and municipal intangible cultural heritage resources, build more than 20 characteristic study bases, and construct a diversified and coordinated modern cultural tourism industry system.

5.5 Upgrade Infrastructure, Standardize and Improve the Quality of Cultural Tourism Services

With tourists' experience as the core, comprehensively improve the infrastructure and public service system of cultural tourism, and fill the service capacity shortcomings. Focus on upgrading the transportation connection system of remote scenic spots and rural tourism areas, increase the coverage of all-region cultural tourism transportation connection from 58% to over 85%, uniformly standardize the tourism all-round Tourism identification system, and improve the standardization level of hardware support. Establish service standards for the cultural tourism industry, standardize the service processes of scenic spots, guesthouses, restaurants, and tour guides, and increase the proportion of certified personnel to over 45% [9]. Continuously improve the supporting facilities for night-time consumption, promote that over 60% of scenic spots, cultural and historical sites, and commercial districts achieve

extended operating hours, enrich the night-time dining, entertainment, and accommodation business types. Fully promote the construction of smart cultural tourism, achieve full coverage of smart services in 3A-level and above scenic areas, connect the integrated service loop of online reservation, intelligent guidance, passenger flow monitoring, and smart complaint, effectively increasing the tourists' return rate from 19% to over 30%, and comprehensively optimize the tourists' travel and enjoyment experience.

5.6 Strengthen Policy Support, Lay a Solid Foundation for Industrial Development

Improve the top-level design of the cultural tourism industry, refine the implementation supporting policies, and fill the policy and talent shortcomings. In line with the requirements of high-quality development policies of provinces and cities, introduce targeted special detailed rules for cultural tourism industry innovation, brand cultivation, and enterprise support [10], increase the proportion of implementation-specific policies to over 70%. Increase the investment in cultural tourism fiscal funds, allocate no less than 200 million yuan of cultural tourism special bonus every year, and focus on supporting key project construction, new business development, brand marketing promotion, and the activation and utilization of intangible cultural heritage. Optimize the cultural tourism business environment, simplify the project approval process, increase the investment in attracting high-quality cultural tourism enterprises, and strive to add more than 50 high-quality cultural tourism projects during the "15th Five-Year Plan" period, introduce professional operation teams to empower industrial development. Establish a cultural tourism industry supervision and assessment mechanism to regulate market operation order. At the same time, strengthen talent support, expand the enrollment scale of cultural tourism-related majors in local universities, annually cultivate more than 400 professional talents, build a school-enterprise cooperation education platform, precisely introduce high-end cultural tourism operation and cultural design talents, fill a 1,200-person talent gap, and establish a policy, funds, and talent triple guarantee system to lay a solid foundation for the high-quality development of the cultural tourism industry.

6. Conclusion

This paper takes the high-quality development of the cultural tourism industry as the core theme. Based on relevant theories such as industry integration and all-round tourism, it conducts a systematic study on the current situation, advantages, and pain points of the cultural tourism industry development in Zhanjiang City. The research shows that Zhanjiang City possesses unique diversified cultural tourism resources including coastal, cultural, and culinary aspects. Coupled with geographical location and policy advantages, the foundation for the development of the cultural tourism industry is solid and the growth momentum is good. However, there are still several prominent problems in the industry development, such as fragmented resource integration, lagging business model innovation, weak brand influence, insufficient industry integration, incomplete supporting services, and insufficient policy and talent support, which have restricted the improvement and upgrading of the industry. To address these issues, this paper constructs comprehensive and targeted development strategies from six dimensions: comprehensive resource integration, cultural tourism business model innovation, city brand building, cross-border industry integration, service system upgrading, and policy and talent guarantee. These strategies can effectively break through the bottlenecks in the development of Zhanjiang's cultural tourism industry and promote the transformation of the industry from scale growth to quality improvement.

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