



Research on the Cultural and Tourism Integration Model in Traditional Overseas Chinese Villages in Lingnan

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Received 18/02/2025

Revised 02/03/2025

Accepted 10/04/2025

Abstract

Background and Aim: Traditional overseas Chinese villages in Lingnan face dual challenges of cultural preservation and economic revitalization under globalization. This study examines the cultural-tourism integration model in Wulin Village to propose a sustainable development framework.

Materials and Methods: Combining qualitative field investigations and literature analysis, the study employs Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework to analyze interactions between heritage preservation and tourism development.

Results: The study found that Wulin traditional village has achieved a benign interaction between cultural heritage and economic development by using the interactive extension and community participation "culture and tourism +" model through excavating historical and cultural resources, promoting community participation, shaping the brand of cultural and tourism integration, and developing education and training. However, challenges such as over-commercialization and infrastructure gaps persist.

Conclusion: A balanced model integrating cultural capital theory and participatory governance is critical for sustainable revitalization.

Keywords: Cultural-tourism Integration; Overseas Chinese Villages; Cultural Capital; Sustainable Development; Lingnan

Introduction

The rapid processes of urbanization and globalization have precipitated a crisis in traditional villages worldwide, where the preservation of cultural heritage often clashes with the imperatives of economic viability (Wu, Perrings, Kinzig, et al., 2020). In Lingnan, a region renowned for its historical and cultural richness, traditional overseas Chinese villages epitomize unique architectural legacies and sociocultural traditions shaped by centuries of migration and cross-cultural exchange. These villages, however, face existential threats from depopulation, cultural homogenization, and over-commercialization, exacerbated by insufficient infrastructure and fragmented governance. Against this backdrop, the integration of culture and tourism has emerged as a potential pathway to reconcile preservation with development, yet its implementation remains fraught with challenges, particularly in balancing commercialization with authenticity and ensuring meaningful community agency.

This study addresses a critical gap in the discourse on rural revitalization: How can cultural-tourism integration models effectively harmonize heritage preservation, economic revitalization, and community empowerment in traditional overseas Chinese villages? Focusing on Wulin Village—a 600-year-old settlement in Fujian Province celebrated for its Lingnan-style architecture and overseas Chinese heritage—this research examines the mechanisms through which cultural capital and participatory governance can foster sustainable development. By applying Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, the study constructs a dynamic model that links resource utilization, community engagement, and institutional adaptation.

Existing literature has extensively explored cultural-tourism integration as a tool for rural development, emphasizing its dual role in economic growth and cultural transmission (Cui & Zhang, 2021; Liu et al., 2020). However, few studies critically assess the risks of over-commercialization or the structural barriers to community participation in Lingnan's overseas Chinese villages. Furthermore, while theoretical frameworks such as the "cultural tourism +" model (Hou et al., 2020) and community-driven approaches (Ding, 2024) have been proposed, their practical adaptability to villages with distinct historical and





sociocultural contexts remains underexplored. This research fills these gaps by offering a case-specific analysis of Wulin Village, where interactive extension strategies, brand-building initiatives, and grassroots participation have achieved preliminary success, yet persistent challenges underscore the need for a more nuanced governance framework.

Nevertheless, only a few studies have been done in the field of the Cultural and Tourism Integration Model in Traditional Overseas Chinese Villages. Consequently, the researcher is interested in conducting the current study concerning “Research on the Cultural and Tourism Integration Model in Traditional Overseas Chinese Villages in Lingnan”.

Objectives

To explore effective models of cultural and tourism integration in the revitalization of traditional villages

Literature review

The integration of culture and tourism has been a hot topic in the field of culture and tourism in recent years. Especially in the process of protecting and developing traditional villages, the integration of culture and tourism has gradually become an important means to promote their sustainable development. Existing research on the integration of culture and tourism in traditional villages in Lingnan has provided a rich theoretical framework and practical experience for this topic. The literature research section will discuss the following aspects: the basic theory of the integration of culture and tourism, the protection and revitalization of traditional villages, and the characteristics and challenges of traditional villages in Lingnan.

1. Basic theory of cultural and tourism integration

1.1 Basic concepts and development of cultural and tourism integration

Cultural and tourism integration refers to the organic combination of cultural resources and tourism resources, which promote each other through the dissemination of culture and the development of tourism, thereby achieving the dual goals of cultural inheritance and economic growth. With the acceleration of the process of globalization, the boundaries between culture and tourism have gradually blurred, and the interactive relationship between the two has become closer (Cui & Zhang, 2021). In recent years, the research on cultural and tourism integration has gradually shifted from a simple economic development model to a direction that pays more attention to cultural connotations and sustainable development (Liu, Yang, Ming, Zhang, & Lu, 2020). Many scholars believe that cultural and tourism integration should not only promote the growth of the tourism industry, but also pay attention to the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage (Shi, 2024; Ma & Liu, 2024).

In China, the concept of cultural and tourism integration started late, but with the introduction of the rural revitalization strategy, the model of cultural and tourism integration has gradually been applied in the protection and revitalization of traditional villages in various places. Especially in the process of revitalizing traditional villages, cultural and tourism integration is considered to be an effective path (Cheng, Hu, Yang, et al., 2024). In this process, rural tourism, as an important part of cultural and tourism integration, has not only promoted local economic development but also promoted the dissemination and regeneration of cultural heritage (Xiong, 2024).

1.2 Model of cultural and tourism integration

The cultural and tourism integration model refers to a new industrial model that combines the cultural industry with the tourism industry and realizes the mutual penetration, promotion, and common development of the two industries through resource integration, product innovation, market expansion, and other means. This model emphasizes that culture injects connotation into tourism, and tourism expands the market for culture. The two complement each other and form a synergy. With the continuous exploration and development of cultural and tourism integration, several typical integration models have gradually formed, including the interactive extension integration model, reorganization integration model, penetration integration model, digital integration model, community participation integration model, and "cultural





tourism +" integration model. Each model has shown unique advantages and effects in practice and jointly promoted the deep integration and high-quality development of culture and tourism (Hou et al., 2020).

(1) Interactive extension integration model: Realize the complementarity of culture and tourism through cultural heritage tourism, festivals, and theme parks such as the "New Year in the Palace Museum" festival event of the Palace Museum (Sui, Han, & Yin, 2023).

(2) Reorganization integration model: Develop new products by restructuring the industrial value chain according to market demand, such as the live performance project of "Song of Everlasting Sorrow" in Xi'an, combining history with modern technology.

(3) Penetration integration model: Integrate cultural elements into the tourism industry, such as the cultural block of Kuanzhai Alley in Chengdu, which integrates traditional architecture, folk customs, and food.

(4) Digital integration model: Use smart tourism platforms, big data, and artificial intelligence to enhance the cultural and tourism experience, such as Hangzhou's "City Brain" tourism platform.

(5) Community participation integration model: Maintain the authenticity and vitality of culture through the participation of local communities, such as the ancient city protection and community tourism project in Lijiang, Yunnan.

(6) "Cultural Tourism +" integration model: Integrate culture into multiple industries such as agriculture, education, and sports to form cross-industry collaborative development, such as agricultural tourism and historical and cultural research projects.

2. Protection and revitalization of traditional villages

Traditional villages are the carriers of the traditional culture of the Chinese nation and have irreplaceable historical and cultural value. However, due to the acceleration of the modernization process, many traditional villages are facing the dilemma of population outflow, resource depletion, and cultural disappearance. To effectively protect and revitalize these villages, scholars at home and abroad have proposed a variety of methods and models. Wang and Han (2023) pointed out that the protection of traditional villages is not only the protection of physical space but also includes the protection of cultural ecology and the inheritance of social structure. On this basis, the cultural and tourism integration model provides a new solution for the sustainable development of traditional villages.

Many scholars believe that the revitalization of traditional villages not only depends on external capital injection but also needs to combine the characteristics and resources of the village itself to form a cultural and tourism integration model with local characteristics. Ding (2024) emphasized that cultural and tourism integration can not only promote economic benefits but also enhance the cultural confidence of residents and enhance their sense of social participation. The success of this model lies not only in the attraction of foreign tourists but also in the recognition and inheritance of traditional culture by residents.

3. Characteristics and challenges of Lingnan Overseas Chinese traditional villages

The traditional villages of overseas Chinese in Lingnan have a profound historical background and cultural heritage, integrating local folk customs with overseas Chinese culture, and retaining unique architecture and cultural landscapes (Liu, 2003). However, the integration of culture and tourism faces many challenges: first, with the process of urbanization, many villages have suffered population loss and economic recession, and traditional culture and historical buildings have been gradually abandoned or destroyed; second, due to insufficient planning and management, "over-commercialization" and "cultural homogenization" have emerged, resulting in the disappearance of cultural characteristics and a single tourism experience; third, the infrastructure is lagging and cannot meet the growing needs of tourists, which needs to be solved urgently.

In summary, the current theoretical framework of cultural and tourism integration is complete, with rich practical experience, clear problem orientation, and diverse research perspectives. To deepen the cultural and tourism integration of Lingnan overseas Chinese traditional villages, we should also strengthen the exploration of cultural characteristics and avoid homogenization; promote community participation in co-construction and sharing of results; focus on sustainable development and balance the economy and





ecology; innovate technological applications and improve service intelligence; expand the "cultural tourism +" model and enrich product lines; strengthen policy support and optimize the development environment; and establish an evaluation and feedback mechanism to continuously optimize the integration strategy to achieve high-quality and sustainable development of cultural and tourism integration.

Field Research Review

In the practice of cultural and tourism integration, field research is an effective way to obtain first-hand information and deeply understand the combination model of culture and tourism. Through field research on the Wulin traditional village, this paper explores the practical experience and achievements of the village in cultural and tourism integration and analyzes the challenges and shortcomings it faces. Through field investigation, this paper summarizes the successful model and problems faced by Wulin's traditional village in cultural and tourism integration.

Overview and cultural background of Wulin traditional village

Wulin Traditional Village is located in the southwest of Xintang Street, Jinjiang City, Quanzhou City, Fujian Province. It is backed by Shigu Mountain and faces the Wuyan River. It covers an area of about 1,000 mu and has a construction area of 60,000 square meters. The village has a history of more than 600 years. It was formed during the Hongwu period of the Ming Dynasty, developed in the Qing Dynasty, and reached its peak in the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China. Wulin Traditional Village is famous for its rich overseas Chinese culture and unique architectural style. It is known as the "Overseas Chinese Architecture Museum" and is a typical and complete traditional village in southern Fujian (Figures 1 Figure 2).

The practice of integrating culture and tourism in Wulin traditional villages

Wulin Traditional Village's attempts at integrating culture and tourism are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

(1) Exploration and display of cultural resources

Wulin Traditional Village deeply explores its unique cultural heritage, skillfully integrates overseas Chinese culture with local history, and greatly enhances the tourism appeal of the village by creating cultural heritage tourism projects. The village has carefully planned several themed tour routes, including the National Love Theme Tour Route, the Intoxicating Southern Fujian Theme Tour Route, and the "Indulge in Southeast Asia" Theme Experience Route, etc., so that tourists can deeply experience the rich cultural connotations and historical charm of Wulin Traditional Village on different tour routes. (Table 1)

(2) Rural tourism and community participation

Wulin Traditional Village actively develops rural tourism and uses the needs of the modern tourism market to attract external tourists. By building leisure and entertainment facilities and developing eco-tourism and characteristic homestays, the tourist experience and the villagers' income sources have been improved. More importantly, Wulin Traditional Village encourages and supports residents to participate in the development of cultural tourism projects, enhancing their sense of identity and participation in the village culture. For example, villagers participate in the production and sale of handicrafts, the provision of rural tour guide services, etc., so that tourism income can benefit villagers and promote a virtuous cycle of the community economy.

(3) Brand building of cultural and tourism integration

Wulin Traditional Village has gradually formed its tourism brand, highlighting the two theme elements of "overseas Chinese culture" and "Lingnan style". The village has attracted a large number of tourists by holding cultural festivals and overseas Chinese food festivals, and has promoted the village through social media, thus increasing its popularity. The cultural festivals of Wulin Traditional Village not only help spread culture but also promote the common development of local catering, handicrafts, accommodation, and other industries.

(4) Education and training on cultural and tourism integration



To ensure the sustainability of the integration of culture and tourism, Wulin Traditional Village also pays attention to the education and training of villagers and practitioners. Through tourism service skills training and cultural guide training, the employment skills and service level of villagers have been improved. This measure not only improves the quality of tourism experience but also provides a stable source of income for residents, which helps to achieve the dual goals of cultural inheritance and economic development.

Conceptual Framework

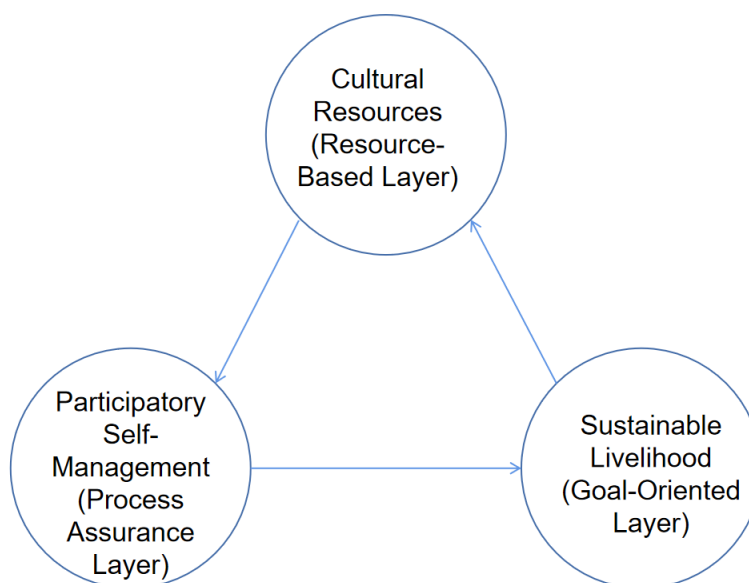


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

This study integrates the three dimensions of cultural resources, participatory governance, and sustainable livelihood, forming a positive feedback system of cultural capital appreciation → enhancing governance effectiveness → optimizing livelihood structure → feeding back into cultural heritage. It highlights the closed-loop logic of "cultural resources - governance process - development goals."

Methodology

In order to fully explore the cultural value of the traditional villages of overseas Chinese in Lingnan, this paper adopts a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods and comprehensively analyzes the collected data through literature research and field investigation to ensure the scientificity and objectivity of the research results.

1. Literature research method: Through in-depth research on existing literature, explore the cultural and tourism integration model of traditional villages.

2. Field investigation method: Conduct field investigations on traditional villages that have been successfully revitalized through cultural and tourism integration and summarize their successful cultural and tourism integration models.

Results

Through in-depth research on traditional villages of overseas Chinese in Lingnan, especially taking the Wulin traditional village as a typical case, the study obtained the following main research results:

1. The effectiveness of the integration of culture and tourism in Wulin traditional villages
 - (1) Improvement of economic benefits



The integration of culture and tourism has brought significant economic benefits to Wulin Traditional Village. With the rise of tourism, the income level of villagers has increased, especially through the development of homestays, handicraft production, catering, etc., forming a relatively complete rural tourism industry chain. According to survey data, since the implementation of the integration of culture and tourism, the average annual growth rate of tourism income in Wulin Traditional Village has exceeded 20%.

(2) Strengthening cultural heritage

Wulin Traditional Village has promoted cultural inheritance and innovation through the integration of culture and tourism. The development of cultural activities has enabled more people to understand and respect the history and culture of the village, especially by playing a positive role in the cultural education and identity of the younger generation. At the same time, traditional handicrafts, festivals, and other forms have been effectively protected and inherited, maintaining the vitality of traditional culture.

(3) Enhanced sense of social participation

The cultural and tourism integration model of Wulin traditional villages focuses on community participation. The villagers' active participation in tourism activities has enhanced their sense of social participation and collective identity. Villagers are not only beneficiaries of tourism but also promoters of tourism development. Many villagers have gained more social resources and a voice by engaging in tourism-related work.

2. Challenges faced by the integration of culture and tourism in Wulin traditional villages

Although Wulin Traditional Village has achieved some initial results in the integration of culture and tourism, it also faces some challenges in actual operation:

(1) Risk of over-commercialization

As the number of tourists increases, some businesses and investors may over-exploit tourism resources, resulting in the commercialization and homogenization of local traditional cultural characteristics, which lose their original cultural charm. In particular, in the design of some tourism activities and products, there is a phenomenon of over-catering to market demand and ignoring cultural connotations.

(2) Insufficient infrastructure

Although Wulin Traditional Village has improved its tourism infrastructure to a certain extent, it still has problems such as inconvenient transportation and insufficient public service facilities, which restrict its ability to receive large-scale tourists. At the same time, infrastructure construction also faces problems such as insufficient funds and low participation of villagers.

(3) Balance between cultural protection and tourism development

In the process of promoting the integration of culture and tourism, how to balance the relationship between cultural heritage protection and tourism development is still an important issue for Wulin Traditional Village. Overdevelopment may damage cultural heritage and affect the sustainable development of the village. Therefore, in the integration of culture and tourism, how to achieve an organic combination of protection and development is the key to the future development of the Wulin Traditional Village

Discussion

(1) Cultural tourism integration is an effective way to promote the sustainable development of traditional villages.

Cultural tourism integration serves as a crucial mechanism for fostering the sustainable development of traditional villages by leveraging their unique cultural heritage to generate economic and social benefits. Traditional villages often possess rich historical and cultural resources, which, if effectively integrated into tourism, can contribute to their preservation while stimulating local economies. According to Li et al. (2021), cultural tourism provides an opportunity to enhance community engagement and protect intangible cultural heritage, ensuring that traditions are not lost in the process of modernization. Sustainable tourism models emphasize the importance of maintaining ecological balance and preventing the depletion of



cultural assets, which makes cultural tourism integration an essential strategy for safeguarding traditional village identities while fostering long-term economic growth.

(2) The cultural tourism integration model of the Wulin traditional village has achieved significant economic, cultural, and social benefits.

The success of the cultural tourism integration model in the Wulin traditional village demonstrates how this approach can generate substantial economic, cultural, and social benefits. By utilizing local cultural resources, the village has been able to attract tourists, thereby creating employment opportunities and increasing income levels for residents. Studies indicate that well-implemented cultural tourism initiatives can enhance community pride and cohesion, as they encourage local participation in preserving and showcasing cultural elements (Zhang & Xu, 2020). Moreover, cultural tourism can improve social infrastructure, such as education and healthcare, through the reinvestment of tourism-generated revenue. However, achieving these benefits requires a well-balanced strategy that aligns economic growth with cultural preservation, ensuring that the authenticity and integrity of traditional heritage are maintained.

(3) In the process of cultural tourism integration, attention should be paid to issues such as excessive commercialization, insufficient infrastructure, and the balance between cultural protection and tourism development.

Despite its advantages, cultural tourism integration also presents challenges that need to be addressed to ensure sustainable development. One of the primary concerns is excessive commercialization, which can lead to the commodification of cultural heritage and the loss of authenticity. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure, such as transportation and accommodation, can hinder the overall tourism experience and limit the potential economic impact (Chen et al., 2019). Furthermore, finding a balance between cultural protection and tourism development is critical to prevent the overexploitation of heritage sites. Policy measures, such as community-based tourism planning and government support for heritage conservation, are essential to mitigate these issues and sustain the long-term viability of cultural tourism in traditional villages. By addressing these challenges, traditional villages can maximize the benefits of cultural tourism integration while preserving their unique cultural identities for future generations.

Conclusion

(1) Selection and Adaptability of Cultural Tourism Integration Models. Different cultural tourism integration models demonstrate varying adaptability in their application across different villages. For instance, the interactive extension integration model has yielded positive results in festival activities, while the community participation integration model has played a significant role in enhancing villagers' cultural identity and economic benefits. Therefore, other traditional villages should select appropriate cultural tourism integration models based on their unique resource characteristics and cultural backgrounds to achieve the best revitalization effects.

(2) Commercialization and Traditional Culture Protection in Cultural Tourism Integration. Balancing commercialization and traditional culture protection is a pressing issue in the process of cultural tourism integration. The practice of Wuli Traditional Village indicates that moderate commercialization can help revitalize the village's economic vitality, but excessive commercialization may lead to the loss of cultural value. Therefore, establishing strict tourism development standards and strengthening regulations are crucial for ensuring the protection of traditional culture.

(3) Sustainable Development of Cultural Tourism Integration. The sustainable development of cultural tourism integration requires considering factors such as the ecological environment, social culture, and economy. In the process of cultural tourism integration, Wuli Traditional Village should place greater emphasis on environmental protection, strengthen infrastructure construction, improve the quality of tourism services, and achieve long-term sustainable development.



Recommendation

(1) Each village has its unique resources and cultural background, making the selection of an appropriate cultural tourism integration model crucial. Villages should conduct a comprehensive resource assessment based on their own resource characteristics and cultural background to identify strengths and development potential, and then choose a suitable cultural tourism integration model.

(2) Commercialization is an inevitable phenomenon in the process of cultural tourism integration, but over-commercialization can lead to the loss of cultural value. Therefore, it is necessary to establish strict tourism development standards and regulatory mechanisms, clearly defining the scope and intensity of tourism project development to avoid over-commercialization.

(3) Sustainable development is an important goal of cultural tourism integration. Villages should focus on ecological protection, develop eco-tourism, improve infrastructure, enhance service quality, and develop diverse tourism products to achieve the sustainable development of cultural tourism integration.

(4) Community participation is key to the success of cultural tourism integration. Villages should establish mechanisms for community participation, encourage villagers to engage in cultural tourism projects, enhance villagers' tourism service skills, provide employment opportunities, and share the economic benefits brought by tourism development to promote the sustainable development of the community economy.

(5) The government should increase its support for the integration of cultural tourism in traditional villages, such as providing policy, financial, and technical support, encouraging the participation of businesses and individuals, improving tourism infrastructure, enhancing service levels, strengthening market regulation, creating a favorable atmosphere for tourism development, and enhancing the protection and inheritance of traditional village cultural heritage to provide cultural support for the development of cultural tourism.



Figure 2 Entrance view of Wulin Traditional Village
Source: Author (2024)



Figure 3 Wulin Traditional Village Architecture
Source: Author (2024)

Table 1 Wulin Traditional Village Theme Tour Routes

Theme	Roadmap	Features
Love for the Country		Educational Research + Story Wulin



Theme	Roadmap	Features
Drunk Minnan	<p>主题场景② 醉闽南 闽南传统非遗建筑+体验内容</p> <p>德越宅厅祠 公妈氏宗厝厝 祭百福里 悲巷万东里</p>	Traditional intangible cultural heritage architecture in southern Fujian + experience
Italian Nanyang	<p>主题场景③ 意南洋 老南洋的慢生活</p> <p>五层厝楼文仙楼 城厝楼容楼居界 德厝楼能楼界 松楼长东万里 梦家声 万安松厝神新厝 份低演街炳祥厝 文曲楼成店厝国 顺米楼成怀参楼 朝东楼全段厝</p>	Experience Nanyang Life

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