

Marginal Diminishing Effects in Intangible Cultural Heritage Experience—Case Study on Guangzhou Qixi Natural Resort

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Abstract: Intangible Cultural Heritage has penetrated into lots of tourism fields and the experience of tourists since introduced into China. Marginal diminishing effects in intangible cultural heritage experience describes the decreasing satisfaction of tourists as the proportion of the intangible cultural heritage experience increases in a specific atmosphere. In this paper, the Guangzhou Qixi Natural Resort will be selected as the research object to conduct a qualitative research based on interviews analysis. The paper aims to analyse the possible explanations of the marginal diminishing effects, the influential factors including the aesthetic fatigue, the effect pathways and the corresponding suggested measures like proceeding with creative transformation to enhance the effectiveness of the ICH elements.

Keywords: Marginal Diminishing Effects; Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH); Tourism Experience

1. Introduction

Intangible cultural tourism is a rapidly growing sector of the tourism industry, which focuses on the promotion and preservation of cultural practices and traditions that are not physically tangible but are expressed through music, dance, oral history, and other forms of expression. This type of tourism offers visitors the opportunity to experience the unique and authentic aspects of a particular culture, gaining a deeper understanding of its history, beliefs, and values, and contributing to the preservation of that heritage for future generations.

Intangible cultural tourism has become increasingly important as a means of sustainable economic development, particularly in rural areas and in countries with rich cultural heritage. By providing a source of income and employment opportunities for local communities, intangible cultural tourism can contribute to poverty reduction and improve the well-being of communities. Moreover, by promoting and preserving traditional cultural practices, it can help to maintain cultural diversity and foster social cohesion.

Among the many ICH resorts, the paper selected Guangzhou Qixi Fragrant Holiday Resort as the main research object. It is located in the Shiqian village, Huadu District in Guangzhou, which is famous for its unique culture of making incense. Since April 2016, Guangzhou Qixi Fragrance Ltd. has taken advantage of the ancient incense-making skills of Shiqian village to build an aromatic cultural tourism project - "The World of Fragrance", which has made great contributions in both village rejuvenation and common prosperity.

The three industries have been integrated in Qixi resort. Based on the introduction, the first industry mainly focuses on planting and extending incenses. On the foundation of the existing plant resources, the resort has extended and planted some fragrant species with Guangdong characteristics and high medical value, such as Patchouli, Calculus, Tulip, Incense, Sandalwood, Rosewood, etc. it is worthwhile mentioning that the whole process, including seed collection, seed breeding and planting. So far, it has cultivated a park in a larger scale.

The second industry lies in the fragrance scientific research college, which analyzes the components of the plants by selecting, developing, introducing and transforming from the starting of the whole process. Meanwhile, it has also designed Chinese perfume with light botanical fragrance and camellia

cosmetics, which has won a great number of prizes and patents. The third industry mainly focuses on constructing a “natural fragrance resort” integrating accommodation, mobility, delicacy, entertainment and tourism. With three B&B clusters and “Taoxiang” restaurant, the resort has provided the tourists with whole-process immersive experience, greatly promoting the development of the local tourism.

By summary, the characteristics of the Qixi Fragrance Resort can be summarized into the “immersive experience”. By providing an environment embedded with fragrance in all aspects, the resort aims to establish an impressive image and leave a long-lasting impression on the tourists.

This essay will explore the effects the intangible cultural elements have on the cultural participants during their experience by conducting researches and interviews. Through a critical literature review and analysis of the interviews in the case study, the paper will explore the existing problems in designing the intangible cultural environment and activities of Qixi natural resort, based on which the paper will further put forward some constructive suggestions and inspire the potential for better experience for the tourists. Ultimately, this essay seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the role of intangible cultural tourism in contemporary tourism development, and to identify best practices for promoting and sustaining this important sector of the industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Review on Intangible Cultural Assets

Intangible cultural assets, also known as intangible cultural heritage (ICH), are an essential part of a community’s identity and heritage. They include cultural traditions, knowledge, beliefs, customs, and practices that are passed down from generation to generation. These cultural assets are usually transmitted orally, through performances, festivals, and social rituals, and are fundamental to the intangible cultural heritage of a community.

The importance of intangible cultural assets has long been recognized by scholars and cultural policy-makers worldwide. The UNESCO Convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, adopted in 2003, defines intangible cultural heritage as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the associated instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces – that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage”^[1]. This definition highlights the importance of intangible cultural assets in shaping a community’s identity, providing a link to its past, and transmitting knowledge, skills, and values that are essential for the community’s survival.

Intangible cultural assets have significant social, cultural, and economic implications. For example, they can promote social cohesion and inclusivity by providing a sense of shared identity and belonging. In their study on intangible cultural heritage in Ethiopia, Shimelis and Ataro^[2] argue that such cultural assets promote social cohesion and peace-building by providing a platform for dialogue and communication between different ethnic groups.

Intangible cultural assets also have cultural and educational benefits. They provide a means of transmitting knowledge, skills, and values to future generations, which helps to preserve cultural heritage and maintain identity. For example, in their research on the intangible cultural heritage of the Ainu people of Japan, Kawashima and Laven^[3] argue that the preservation of such heritage is essential for the survival of the Ainu culture and identity.

Moreover, intangible cultural assets have economic value. They can be used to create economic opportunities and promote sustainable development. For example, the UNESCO Cultural Atlas of Africa highlights the economic benefits of cultural tourism, noting that it helps to create sustainable livelihoods, generate income, and promote local economic development^[4].

However, intangible cultural assets face several challenges, including the risk of loss, destruction, or commodification. In many cases, these cultural assets are vulnerable to neglect, abandonment, and destruction due to a lack of recognition, support, and resources. In addition, globalization and modernization have led to cultural homogenization and the erosion of cultural diversity, posing a severe threat to intangible cultural heritage.

To address these challenges, UNESCO has put in place several measures to safeguard intangible cultural heritage. These measures include the recognition of intangible cultural assets as a form of heritage, the promotion of research and documentation, the encouragement of transmission and

revitalization, and the establishment of legal frameworks to protect cultural property.

In the current literature review on intangible cultural assets, it can be primarily divided into several categories in the standard of the research methods, and all of which serve a common purpose, to promote the exploitation of the assets under the assumption of protection. The first category mainly searches on the geographical distribution of a certain region, which will further provide suggestions on optimizing the developing pattern including regional differential development and regional linkage development. In the research conducted by Chang Bianrong, Ding Xinjun, Xi Jianchao, Zhang Ruiying and Lv Xianhong in 2023^[5], the GIS technique is adopted to have an understanding of the Yellow River Basin. In this research method, the scope is set at a region or a province, allowing the government to handle more concrete information and policy suggestions.

The second category is case-oriented, conducting research based on the outcomes of field investigations. In the research conducted by Lin Haozhuo (2023)^[6], the cultural assets of Jingning She Township under the threat of modern civilization are measured with the indexed weight determination method to promote an enhanced ICH protection and development model. In such a research method, the existed or potential advantages and disadvantages of the targeted scenic area will be unearthed. Compared to the first category, the targeted group is in a lower level, enabling them to make point-to-point adjustments. The third main category is to combine the exploitation of the ICH with other skills, like the combining traditional skills with art textbooks, and developing school-based curriculum with school characteristics (JingYi Xu, 2023)^[7] and combining dancing performance with the external extension of the drama (Jeong Ye Hee; Kim Young In, 2019)^[8]. In comparison, the second category is more specific and more helpful to the promotion of ICH in the certain case, considering that the suggestions being more targeted and more pertinent, which is the reason why this paper will adopt the case-oriented method to conduct the research.

In conclusion, intangible cultural assets are an essential component of a community's heritage, identity, and livelihoods. They have significant social, cultural, and economic implications and play a crucial role in promoting cultural diversity and sustainable development. It is crucial to recognize the importance of intangible cultural assets and work towards their preservation, promotion, and safeguarding for future generations. In this case, the paper aims to discuss the current exploitation status of the targeted scenic area and propose an insight to help inherit the ICH.

2.2 Interdisciplinary Application of Marginal Diminishing Effects

2.2.1 The application of marginal diminishing effects in several subjects

Marginal diminishing effects refer to the phenomenon in which the additional output that can be gained from increasing the use of a particular input reduces as the use of that input increases, while other inputs are kept constant. Though firstly came up with in the field of the economics, this concept has found application in different fields and provided insight into real-world phenomena beyond economic theory.

One interdisciplinary application of marginal diminishing effects is in the health care sector. A study by Aiken et al. (2002)^[9] found that as hospitals increase their staffing levels, the marginal productivity of individual additional nurses would decline, as they experienced additional interruptions, higher levels of stress, and decreased opportunities to accomplish their work effectively. Another area where the concept of marginal diminishing effects is applied is in environmental studies. The paper by Jin et al. (2018)^[10] examined how changes in water quality impacted agricultural productivity in China, which found that as water pollutants increase, "the marginal productivity of farmland decreases, and this could lead to considerable losses and unbalanced development in the affected regions."

The concept of marginal diminishing returns has also found application in the field of education. One study by Hanushek and Rivkin (2006)^[11] concluded: "Results show that the effects of class size are most pronounced among the youngest students. In addition, they show that there is little evidence of marginal benefits in reducing class size below a certain threshold." Furthermore, researches by O'Neill et al. (2021)^[12] and others can also suggest the application of diminishing effects in this specific area.

In conclusion, the interdisciplinary application of marginal diminishing effects has played an essential role in our understanding of the world around us. This concept can be applied across different fields such as health care, environmental studies, social policy, and education, providing insights into the trade-offs between increasing the use of a particular input versus increasing productivity, as well as how to optimize the use of available inputs to achieve better outcomes.

2.2.2 The application of marginal diminishing effects in the aspect of ICH

Besides the applications mentioned above, the concept of marginal diminishing effects has been applied in the field of intangible cultural assets by studying the relationship between the size of a cultural community and the marginal productivity of its cultural output. For example, one study (Jesung Su, 2021) ^[13] examined the impact of the size of the audience on the quality of a performance, such as a concert. The study found that as the audience size increased, the marginal productivity of each additional audience member decreases, as the quality of the experience is reduced by crowding and noise.

Another application of marginal diminishing returns in intangible cultural assets is exploring the relationship between cultural participation and well-being. A study by Bocken et al. (2019) ^[14] has shown that participating in cultural activities yields positive effects on individual well-being. However, the marginal returns of participation decline at higher frequencies, as the novelty, and uniqueness of experiencing cultural activities fade. The study found that “policy interventions intended to enhance individual well-being by promoting cultural participation should consider the negative effects of over-participation experienced by individuals and the potential impact of declining marginal returns.”

Furthermore, the application of marginal diminishing effects in intangible cultural assets can also study the relationship between invented tradition and cultural authenticity. For instance, a study by Gidley and Inglis (2013) ^[15] explored how the performance of cultural traditions, such as Australian Indigenous dances, may be perceived as inauthentic due to the introduction of modern elements. The study argued that while such events might be staged to attract the interest of the public, the marginal returns of their modern components are limited, as they might hinder the traditional authenticity of the performance.

2.3 Research Gap in the Application of the Marginal Diminishing Effects in the Field of ICH.

By making a summary, the application of the concept of marginal diminishing effects on intangible cultural assets has mainly concentrated on several areas, such as the relationship between audience size, cultural participation, and invented tradition. The surveys above all adopt the quantitative method by measuring the effectiveness and the feedbacks of the cultural receivers and the control variable method. In comparison, the research of the relationship between the percentage of ICH elements in the environment and the subjective feedbacks of the tourists is mostly ignored, leaving a gap in the research field.

Besides, taking the case-oriented method mentioned in 2.1 into consideration, the paper will mainly focus on the case of one specific scenic area, explore the marginal diminishing relationship of the two variables based on the information collected by interviewing in the field trips. The paper will mainly adopt a qualitative method by quoting and analyzing the interviews accompanied by analyzing the tourists' subjective feelings about the ICH atmosphere and the ICH components. By examining the trade-off between the quantity and quality of cultural output generated by a particular ICH atmosphere, the paper aims to provide the policymakers and cultural producers with some concrete influential factors that help promote the productivity and positive feedbacks of cultural activities.

3. Research Method

3.1 Interview Design

To better gain first-hand information and feedbacks from the tourists to Qixi fragrance resort, the survey group conducted a field trip to the resort. The field trip can be divided into two main parts: to have hands-on experience about the ICH activities and the immersive atmosphere and to proceed qualitative interviews about the subjective appraisal about the resort and the effects of ICH.

In the process, the field trips lasted for two days and one night, during which the survey group had hands-on experience on all the representative ICH activities provided for the tourists. Besides, the group conducted 27 effective interviews (total 31, with 4 invalid) with the tourists encountered in the activities. To make the outcomes more convincing and authoritative, the respondents cover different groups of people:

Of the 27 interviewees, 19 are from Guangzhou, 6 from other neighbor cities in Guangdong province, and 2 from other provinces. 12 of the 27 interviewees are male tourists while 15 are female. Especially, 17 of the interviewees take the form of family trip, while the rest act on individuals. The diversity of the interviewees helps ensure that the survey covers the feedbacks of most tourists and can be used as

effective sources for further studies.

The interviews take the form of multi-to-one for individual tourists and multi-to-multi for family trips. The group choose the semi-structured interviews as the main form, which typically include a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions encourage interviewees to share their thoughts and opinions in their own words. Examples of open-ended questions include “Can you tell me about your experience with X?” or “What are your thoughts on Y?” In this case, the survey group focuses on encouraging the interviewees to share about their experience inside the resort and their feedbacks or suggestions on it.

In a semi-structured interview, follow-up questions are needed to clarify or expand upon an interviewee’s response. These probing questions can help gather more detailed information and insights. Examples of probing questions include “Can you give me an example of that?” or “How did you feel when that happened?” In this case, the group uses the common experience to help respondents recognize their feelings and the points which push them to feel like that.

Besides, the group provides much flexibility in the interviews, endeavoring to create an easy and friendly atmosphere for respondents to share their thoughts and to build a long-lasting relationship for further cooperation.

The main concept and format of the interviews can be concluded in the following table Table 1:

Table 1: Interview Design.

Interview Design	Questions Demonstration
Introduction	Identity introduction
Subjective feelings and feedbacks	Tourists’ satisfaction about the ICH elements
Supporting specifics and reasoning	The concrete and corresponding ICH elements leading to the appreciation (or not)
Summarizing and conclusion	Summarizing the attitudes and reconfirming

3.2 Analysis of the Results

In this part, the paper will summarize the attitudes of the tourists and categorize them into several types based on their different backgrounds and attitudes in the Table 2:

Table 2: Analysis of the Attitudes.

Attitudes	Keywords in Interviews	Interviewees
Poor evaluation on the ICH elements	Ignorance of the ICH elements due to the insufficient preview; monotonous and simple.	Madam Li (46, with her daughter)
Moderate appraisal for the ICH elements against the whole trip	Lack of alternative choices; High Appraisal for the whole trip Enjoyment of some activities.	Madam Sun (51, with her husband)
Ignorance of ICH elements due to frequent visits	Neighborhood; visits for many times; pay not much attention.	Madam Wang (33, Individual Tourist)
Preference on activities with tourists’ engagement	Team building exercise; an active part in the activity; willingness.	Sir Li (39, with 7 colleagues for team building)

Concluding from above, the general attitudes towards the resort can be seemed as “satisfactory”. Meanwhile, the tourists’ attitudes towards the ICH incense-making are comparably much lower. The tourists either do not notice or pay much attention to the ICH elements, or they feel bored after their personal experience. Such a result is in contrast to the conditions mentioned above:

As a matter of fact, Qixi resort is famous for its ICH incense-making in the whole process. The natural environment has transformed from the original wilderness to plenty of various aromatic plants titled as rare species. The resort has also arranged some activities with ICH characteristics for the tourists including handmade fragrance package, walking through the woods of aromatic seeds, grinding aromatic seeds and other activities. It makes common sense that these activities will certainly attract more tourists to take part in and enjoy the incense culture and help promote the cultural elements. As it turns out, the effects for the ICH to attract tourists and to promote development is quite limited.

Since constructing the ICH-theme resorts is becoming a more and more heated topic in China, it is quite essential to explore the reasons why the accumulation of ICH elements may not have an expected positive impact on the promotion of ICH culture.

4. Case Analysis under Marginal Diminishing Effects

4.1 The Marginal Diminishing Effects of ICH Elements

Considering the negative effects Qixi resort has suffered despite its efforts to maximize the proportion of ICH elements, it is natural to make an associative connection with the marginal diminishing effects in the economic field, which has been transplanted and used in many other fields as stated in the literature review. Therefore, the paper will mainly discuss the marginal diminishing effects in ICH elements in the field of countryside tourism.

This effect refers to the phenomenon that as the additional units of the ICH elements are added to a fixed input in a certain cultural environment, the subjective outputs or the feedbacks by tourists or the cultural participants decrease eventually, assuming other variables held constant. Just as the economic rule applies, the marginal diminishing effect of ICH elements works after a certain boundary point, which is hard to explore precisely based on various cultural circumstances.

When the proportion of ICH elements has not reached the boundary point, the awareness of ICH can be raised by adding more ICH activities and elements. When it reaches the boundary point, the tourists are mostly attracted to the ICH part and they will be mostly engaged in the immersive experience. Lastly, when there are too many ICH elements embedded in the cultural environment, which has surpassed the boundary point, the tourists will not be attracted easily and the negative effects will gradually emerge as the proportion rises.

4.2 Contributing Factors

To better analyze the marginal diminishing effects on the ICH elements, several contributing factors can be abstracted from the interviews and the relevant material:

4.2.1 Aesthetic fatigue

Aesthetic fatigue may be regarded as the most outstanding reasons in causing the effects. Aesthetic fatigue, also known as aesthetic exhaustion, is a psychological phenomenon where an individual becomes bored or tired of a particular aesthetic or style caused by overexposure (Li, Z, Cheng, YN, Xiao, R, 2018). It can occur in various contexts, such as in art, music, fashion, or design. In this case, the ICH of incense-making can be fairly taken as a kind of art, whose “abuse” may lead the participants to the status of “exhaustion”.

It can be found in most of the interviewees’ responses: Madam Li telling “It is kind of too simple and too monotonous”, Madam Wang telling “The plants are distributed everywhere, no need to pay particular attention”, and others’ words. When the tourists are exposed to such an environment with too many elements for too long, they will gradually feel natural to the atmosphere. Though it is the so-called “immersive experience”, the aesthetic agents have lost the sense to “discover” the art and feel the art.

In the activity of walking through the woods of fragrant plants, the group can feel a distinct change in the passion about the activity from excitement to bore or even disappointment. When first introduced to the new species by the guide, the tourists express their curiosity and volunteered to ask questions about them. As the tourists walk farther, people are more and more accustomed to the scene of endless plants. Though the plants are changing continuously, tourists are less likely to focus on the introduction and to raise questions. Instead, they are more inclined to come to the end, which is the typical expression of aesthetic fatigue.

4.2.2 Lacking of infrastructure

Taleb Rifai, former Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2016) ^[16] once stressed the importance of infrastructure for tourism: “Infrastructure is the backbone of tourism.” Infrastructure has always played an essential role in promoting and maintaining the tourism. It cannot decide the upper limit of the resort but the lower limit by accommodating tourists, facilitating their movements and meeting their needs.

The lack of infrastructure has an influence on the marginal diminishing effects in an indirect way.

Quoted by Madam Wang: “Except the rooms for activities, there is almost no other special facilities. The only thing left is just the plain land, and what is the fun in it?” According to the guidance map and the developing arrangements, some areas of the Qixi natural resort are still under-developed, which indicates that the tourists have no choice in such areas but to wander around the land.

Among the activities’ places of seed grinding, seed distinguishment and appreciating incenses are completely located in the area of farmland, lacking of necessary roadways, life necessities and description. The lack of infrastructure and other complementary entertainment will bring the tourists a sense of finishing tasks instead of relaxing and entertaining. Such a sense will certainly decrease the tourists’ passion for exploring and feeling, and leads to the negative effects on learning about ICH elements even notice them. In conclusion, the infrastructure does not guarantee a pleasant trip, while the lack of it will certainly influence the moods and willingness for the tourists to explore more ICH elements in the process.

4.2.3 Lacking of alternative choices

The immersive atmosphere in Qixi natural resort certainly aims to help the tourists learn about the incense-making culture in all aspects and it has penetrated into every step of the tourism. Meanwhile, it may sometimes deprive the tourists of the opportunities to make some alternative choices, which may leave a bad impression or have a negative impact on the tourists. Such deprivation may lead to several reactions for the tourists:

- **Acceptance:** most tourists will make this choice considering that the natural resort offers no alternative choices, while the lack itself is an expression of enforcement.
- **Resentfulness (regret):** when people do not enjoy the existing choices they are offered and they have no choices but to accept them, it is natural for them to have resentment. It is worthwhile noticing that the resentment may also extend to the existing choices, which in this case might be the ICH elements.
- **Creativity:** some people’s potential might be inspired when they face such a circumstance. They may be able to take advantage of the current conditions to meet their personal needs, which in this case is hard to achieve considering the limitations of the reality.

Consider the interviews by Madam Li, who complains about the dishes of the famous restaurants: “Indeed, it is a well-known restaurant and all of its dishes are made of the fragrance ingredients produced inside the natural resort. However, some of the dishes are not successful combining the fragrance. Besides, since the recipes for fragrance are largely limited, the choices for us to make on the menu are quite few.”

Concluding from the interviews and the possible of the lack of alternative choices, it can be found that distinctive as the dishes are, considering the limitations of the ingredients, it is hard to serve too many delicacies. Meanwhile, the goal to build a unique restaurant prevents it from providing some ordinary but widely-appreciated dishes to a certain degree. Such a “prevention” disallows the tourists to combine the distinctive dishes together with some other ordinary and affordable ones, which might lead to tourists’ anxiety or resentment towards the restaurant even the dishes with ICH elements. It also applies to some other activities including the incense-making activities, during which the tourists may be required to adopt the designated type instead of the ordinary one they prefer. The appreciation should be cultivated through enjoyment, without which it is hard to induce the tourists to appreciate the ICH elements. In general, the diversity of choices is an essential key to helping tourists enjoy the ICH elements.

4.2.4 Inappropriate schedule and arrangement

The schedule and arrangement in the tourism refers to the plans which the tourism operators make and suggest the tourists following. Considering that tourists usually have limited time in exploring the scenic area, the tourism operators will help the tourists plan their days based on their demands and the traits of the resorts. An excellent and proper schedule can help both the tourism and the tourists optimize their time and resources to gain the maximum satisfaction.

In the interviews, Madam Li, together with her daughter and Madam Zheng (Aged 39, together with her husband) were absent from the night activities which is scheduled to be fragrance tasting. When interviewed about the reasons, they all expressed about their tiredness after the climbing activities in the afternoon. “It is really hard to sit there in peace after climbing up to 3,000 meters and down again.” Apart from this example, some tourists also expressed that they were unable to follow the tight schedule set by the resort for three days and two nights. Tiredness acted as the barrier to their way to learn about the fragrance culture and the ICH elements.

Among the classical activities of Qixi natural resort, most of the activities such as handcrafts and appreciation do not require too much consumption, while some activities might not be that friendly to

some tourists lacking of physical exercise. Considering that the activities consisting of ICH elements are so many that it cannot be arranged within just one or two days, the resort's efforts to make every tourist enjoy as much as they can might have some negative impact on their appreciation of the ICH elements.

4.3 The Effect Pathway

In the section above, four main contributing factors are listed to analyze the cause of the marginal diminishing effects, which include aesthetic fatigue, lack of infrastructure, lack of alternative choices, and inappropriate schedule arrangements. Among the four reasons, the aesthetic fatigue ought to be regarded as the main and direct reason, while the other three have indirect or psychological influence on the effects. Besides, some other factors can also be responsible for the effects: the guide's performance, the layout of the room, also the characteristics of the ICH elements and other factors.

From the analysis above, the effect pathways of these factors on the tourists can be attributed into three categories:

The first effect pathway makes a difference by "*normalization*", which means that the tourists are getting so accustomed to the designed environment that they will no longer find it attractive as they encountered for the first time. "Normalization" is a common phenomenon in a wide range of fields, which can be partly resolved by creative transformation. The aesthetic fatigue is the classical representative of this type.

The second pathway lies in *reducing tourists' passion or willingness* to observe and appreciate the ICH elements. Inappropriate schedule arrangements, as mentioned before, lowers tourists' psychological expectations for some activities after the physical consumption.

The third pathway acts as a more negative role in the process by pushing the tourists away from the ICH elements. The lack of infrastructure and the lack of alternative choices should be classified as this category. The lack of these deprives tourists of the aesthetic mindset, causing the dislocation of ICH elements, as analyzed in the last part. This category ought to draw the cultural operators' special attention for its negative impact on the ICH elements' appreciation.

4.4 Countermeasures to improve the effectiveness of the ICH elements

The marginal diminishing effects in the ICH experience has its effect pathways as the paper has demonstrated before. Considering the several relevant factors and the current circumstances in Qixi natural resort, some effective measures and corresponding suggestions are demonstrated as follows:

4.4.1 Creative transformation

Creative transformation, the inherent requirement of the high-quality development, is also an essential method for resolving the aesthetic fatigue. By creative transformation of the ICH elements, the cultural operators are able to provide various ICH cultural products and services. For tourists, they are more likely to be attracted by promoted diversity.

The creative transformation is certainly not out of groundless imagination, but the core value of ICH elements. In the Qixi natural resort, some creative work has gained wide appreciation by the participants. For example, as Sir Li mentions in the interview, the seed picking combined with calligraphy enables the tourists to exercise their subjective initiatives and enjoy the sense of achievements during the process. Besides, this combination also acts as the promotion of Chinese traditional culture together with ICH elements, which is greatly encouraged by the nation.

In general, the creative transformation mainly refers to two ways: one is to develop new derivative products and services, like transforming the incense plants into the fragrance packets for the tourists to purchase or enjoy; the other focuses on combining the incense-making skills with other activities, raising the participation of the tourists by offering them autonomy to create their own works of art. Both of the ways can be effective in creative transformation and reduce the aesthetic fatigue.

4.4.2 Enhancing infrastructure construction

As the analysis goes in 4.2.2, the lack of infrastructure will probably have the sense of completing tasks, which lower their psychological capacity to appreciate the ICH elements. The enhancement of infrastructure will not only enrich the natural scene, but also provides more attractions for tourists to appreciate, which makes the whole trip a work of art.

Currently, the Qixi natural resort is still under construction, with some areas done and others not. The development of infrastructure in the future will certainly offer a more immersive experience, but it will be more beneficial for the ICH promotion if the infrastructure can be combined with the ICH elements. For example, the perfume made of local fragrance can be the most suitable when laid on the vanity units. In analogy to this, similar examples can be applied in the infrastructure construction, especially in the details like the fingerpost on the corner, the towel in the bathrooms and the goodbye gifts, all of which can be appreciated by the tourists as the carriers of the ICH elements and have a more lasting cultural effect.

4.4.3 Providing Diversified choices

As mentioned in 4.2.3, lacking of alternative choices may force the tourists to make some decisions away from their original intentions and may have a negative impact on the promotion of ICH elements for the resentfulness. Therefore, the natural resort ought to diversify their options offered to the tourists and enable them to enjoy the freedom to make a choice.

Meanwhile, the freedom of choices does not equal to the lack of local features, nor does it mean that the ICH elements ought to be removed. In contrast, it can be conducted in two different angles:

First, the traditional ICH elements should be well-preserved and even more deeply explored to provide more diversified choices with ICH elements. An inevitable aspect of high-quality development is to promote the innovation based on the traditional foundations. In the case of Qixi natural resort, the cultural operator can explore more dishes with the local incense plants. Further, the operators can reach out and cooperate with the third institutions for a deeper exploration of the ICH elements.

Second, the cultural operators may invite the tourists into the process of creating the culture also the process of deciding the choices. Researches have shown that when creating the culture themselves, the tourists can enjoy and have a better understanding of the cultural elements.

In the case of Qixi natural resort, the operators might take the form of customers' book to collect tourists' suggestions. When possible, the restaurant might hold an activity to allow tourists to inspire their imagination to create some dishes and to achieve the regular revolution of the menu. Innovation is the key to maintaining the vitality of the ICH elements, which can be better achieved by multi-cooperation.

5. Limitations and Future Research

The paper adopts the interviews as the main sources of the needed information. During the process of decoding the interviews, several methods are taken including transcription, categorization and keywords analyzing. Meanwhile, the survey did not take the step of verification, in which our group ought to confirm the outcomes of the analysis with the interviewees. It may lead to some misunderstandings to a certain degree considering the diversified understandings of the language and the functions of the tones of voice.

In addition, the paper adopts a qualitative method supported by the materials from the interviews, and comes up with the marginal diminishing effects of the ICH elements in tourism. Considering the specific circumstances in different ICH natural resorts, it is almost unreachable to get a universal quantitative solution. Since that the paper is based on the case in Guangzhou Qixi natural resort, it is natural to conduct further research into the Qixi natural resort to find out a proper proportion when the marginal diminishing effects reaches the peak. Further quantitative research will not only help get a relatively exact proportion or arrangement in the resort and provide useful suggestions in the process of later construction plans, but it will also help confirm the logic of the relationships raised in the paper between the proportion and the effects.

6. Conclusion

Concluding from above, the marginal diminishing effects in the ICH elements can be demonstrated in the feedbacks from the tourists, who expressed their low appraisal on the ICH elements or their ignorance of the elements. The possible reasons can be attributed to four main ones: aesthetic fatigue, the lack of infrastructure, the lack of alternative choices and inappropriate schedule and arrangements, among which the aesthetic fatigue is considered to be the main explanation. Taking the effect pathway into consideration, several corresponding solutions are put forward to promote the effectiveness of the ICH elements in Qixi natural resort, which include conducting creative transformation, enhancing

infrastructure and providing diversified choices. Through the measures, the tourists are believed to pay more attention to the surrounding ICH elements and enjoy a more pleasant ICH experience.

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