

Ancient Town Tourism from the Perspective of Chinese Cultural and Creative Industries——Taking Wuzhen Theatre Festival as an Example

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Abstract: *In the constantly accelerating process of globalization, how to balance the uniqueness and innovation of different regional cultures has become one of the problems faced by cultural and creative development. Based on the development of Wuzhen cultural and creative industry, this paper combines Wuzhen Theatre Festival to analyze the development of cultural and creative industries in ancient towns in China, and proposes its development.*

Keywords: *Cultural and creative industries; Tourism; Wuzhen; Theatre festival*

1. Introduction

China's ancient villages and towns are places where traditional Chinese culture and customs are relatively intact and concentrated [12]. With the increasing competitive pressure of tourism, especially in the large number of ancient towns in the south of the Yangtze River, there is a growing homogenization phenomenon.

Wuzhen is one of the most representative ancient villages and towns in Jiangsu, Zhejiang and even the whole country. In addition to its profound cultural heritage, Wuzhen Theatre Festival has become a new cultural element of Wuzhen, enriching the cultural connotation of Wuzhen and gradually forming its own Cultural brand [13]. The positioning of Wuzhen has gradually become a cultural town from a sightseeing and holiday town in the south of the Yangtze River, so Wuzhen has stood out among many similar Jiangnan water towns.

At present, all parts of the world are in the process of rapid globalization, and different regions have different regional characteristics, which are the key to distinguish between different regions. However, in the context of globalization, the boundaries between regions are not so clear, but gradually blurred, which makes the links between different regions closer. However, the ensuing problem is that the cultural uniqueness and innovation of different regions continue to decline, which is a major problem in the current creative development process of cultural industries. Therefore, balancing the uniqueness and innovation of different regions has become an urgent problem to be solved. This paper takes Wuzhen cultural and creative industry as the research object, based on the development background of Wuzhen cultural and creative industry and its cultural uniqueness and innovation, and puts forward development suggestions according to local conditions.

2. Development Status of Wuzhen

2.1 Wuzhen Scenic Area

Wuzhen Tourism Co., Ltd. is a state-owned enterprise jointly invested by China Youth Travel Holdings Co., Ltd. and Tongxiang Wuzhen Guzhen Tourism Investment Co., Ltd. Wuzhen Scenic Area is a national 5A scenic area in China. It is at the center of the golden triangle consisting of Shanghai, Hangzhou and Suzhou. As stated in Wuzhen Tourism Co., Ltd. [3], as of December 2021, the company's total assets were 8.6 billion yuan, net assets were 5.5 billion yuan, and the annual income of the scenic area exceeded 1.7 billion yuan.

2.2 Wuzhen Cultural Tourism - The Core is Cultural and Creative Industries

Different from other Chinese ancient scenery towns, Wuzhen will continuously expand the cultural connotation of the scenic spots. Wuzhen combines culture and tourism to stand out in the increasingly homogenized ancient towns of Jiangsu and Zhejiang. The core of cultural tourism is cultural creativity, while the creativity of Wuzhen is based on the cultural genes of the ancient town [6]. In 1999, Wuzhen began to carry out protective development, repairing the old as old. The repairing according to the original appearance of the ancient town, laying down modern water conservancy and electric facilities under the stone road, so that the ancient town has a modern living standard while preserving its original features. Visitors can experience a different lifestyle than other ancient towns. The development direction of Wuzhen not only improves the living standards of local residents, but also meets the interests and needs of tourists.

At the same time, Wuzhen has successively introduced the Mao Dun Literature Awards Ceremony, the establishment of the Muxin Art Museum, and the holding of the Wuzhen Theatre Festival. Tourists in Wuzhen meet their demands for cultural consumption and cultural exchanges by understanding, experiencing and learning. From sightseeing to vacation to culture, Wuzhen Scenic Spot's step-by-step upgrade of its own positioning has brought about a steady increase in revenue. Data shows that in 2017, the cumulative number of tourists received exceeded 10 million for the first time, reaching 10.1348 million, ahead of similar scenic spots in China. In the face of unfavorable factors such as epidemic control in recent years, Wuzhen Scenic Area has continuously promoted its anti-risk capability during the epidemic by actively expanding its business in cultural industries such as vacations and exhibitions.

3. Analysis of the Development of Wuzhen Cultural Tourism——Taking The Wuzhen Theatre Festival as an Example

3.1 Development and current situation of the Wuzhen Theatre Festival

The Wuzhen Theatre Festival was co-sponsored by Chen Xianghong, Huang Lei, Lai Shengchuan and Meng Jinghui in 2013. It consists of the Specially Invited Plays, the Emerging Theatre Artists Competition, the Outdoor Carnival, and the Wuzhen Dialogues, etc. The theatre festival gradually became the cultural brand of Wuzhen.

Based on the experience of tourism management in the mature system of Wuzhen Scenic Area, the Wuzhen Theatre Festival brings different visitors' different needs for the drama into the unified theater festival atmosphere. Mr. Chen Xianghong (2015), one of the founders of the Wuzhen Theatre Festival, said: "The Wuzhen Theatre Festival is increasingly showing a feature. The festival is not a simple literary festival. The combination of the festival and the town has become a way of life."

Judging from the content setting of the festival, Wuzhen originally had no theatre origins in the history, but the Wuzhen Theatre Festival benchmarked the international theatre festival standards and integrated global drama resources. Constantly improve the breadth of the participating countries and clarify the different audience positions of different international and domestic dramas, so as to realize the positioning of the world-oriented theatre festival from the perspective of Chinese culture.

Judging from the setting of the performance scene of the festival, the Wuzhen Theatre Festival broke the limitation of the scene, focusing on the combination of the themes of the drama content, the theater performance space and the Wuzhen characteristic culture. There are seven indoor theaters and a large outdoor theater during the festival. In 2013, Wuzhen built the Wuzhen Grand Theatre with the theme of "Lotus", combining the indoor theatre with the outdoor public performance space to break the boundary between the stage and the audience. In addition, all the performances of the "the Outdoor Carnival" section of the Wuzhen Theatre Festival were performed in the public space of Wuzhen Scenic Area. Street performances, modern dances, physical dramas, and acrobatic shows of domestic and foreign art groups are all based on wooden houses and stone bridges, and stone roads are used as a stage to create exclusive performance space in Wuzhen. The New York Times International Edition reported this scene: "These absurd moments full of drama are rarely seen on the streets of China. In China, public performances are strictly restricted. So the monologue of Mr. Liu on the streets of Wuzhen is a refreshing and realistic moment [1]."

Judging from the atmosphere structure of the festival, Wuzhen Theatre Festival has created an equal and free communication platform and space for the drama lovers. For example, the Emerging Theatre Artists Competition provides a stage for young drama creators to show and learn from each other. The

Wuzhen Theatre Festival also provides them with creative funds and develops a series of programs to support youth artists, thus promoting the development of young original dramas. the Wuzhen Dialogues, in collaboration with the International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC), provide opportunities for audiences to meet face-to-face with artists [2].

Therefore, the Wuzhen Theatre Festival is not only a professional drama communicate platform, but also the cultural tourism and cultural consumption created by it is involved in the construction of “drama”. Wuzhen Scenic Area has mature supporting measures and rich experience in clothing, food, housing and transportation, and provides more comprehensive support for “drama Utopia”. The drama ecological environment created by the Wuzhen Theatre Festival combines drama and life, bringing all the tourists and dramas that come to Wuzhen have a full-scale connection, and the seemingly niche drama festival becomes a popular festival. Therefore, Wuzhen relies on the drama festival to build itself into a high-quality cultural tourism scenic spot [4].

3.2 The Business Model of Wuzhen Theatre Festival

Wuzhen Theatre Festival is a folk-initiated drama festival. Wuzhen Tourism Co., Ltd. provides financial support. Wuzhen Theatre Festival Committee consisting of four promoters and the chief planner and general executive are responsible for the quality control of the festival. This non-government-colored folk activities, Wuzhen Theatre Festival emphasizes non-commerciality while maximizing the purity of art, and this model is lacking in many art activities in China, so the Wuzhen Theatre Festival has received more drama enthusiasts' attention and favor. (Yu Y.Q. 2016)

In 2013, the first Wuzhen Theatre Festival was held, and it achieved a box office of 3 million. Due to the epidemic, the Wuzhen Theatre Festival was suspended for one session in 2020, but its influence in the theatre market has not diminished. Tickets for the most popular drama at the 8th Wuzhen Drama Festival in 2021 sold out in just 8.4 seconds. The successful launch of the Wuzhen Theatre Festival has added a large number of passenger flows to the Wuzhen Scenic Area. The Wuzhen Theatre Festival is usually held in late October. Most of China's scenic spots have gradually declined after the National Day Golden Week, and the Wuzhen Theatre Festival has undoubtedly extended the tourist season in Wuzhen Scenic Area. Through the combination of drama tickets and tourism consumption links such as scenic accommodation, catering and shopping, the consumption level of Wuzhen Theatre Festival has been enhanced, reflecting the economic added value brought by the cultural and creative industries to the tourism industries [5].

3.3 The Drawbacks of Wuzhen Theatre Festival

In the Outdoor Carnival of the Wuzhen Theatre Festival, many art groups from domestic and foreign performed in the public space of Wuzhen Scenic Area. On the one hand, this setting creates an immersive drama viewing experience, but on the other hand, the relatively dense setting of time and performance venues does not provide a complete and smooth viewing experience for the audience. Compared with the Specially Invited Plays, the relatively small repertoire content and the performance team's introduction, the requirements of the audience's understanding and appreciation, will inevitably affect the audience's viewing experience [7].

The Wuzhen Theatre Festival's pursuit of non-commerciality has reduced the funding sources of the festival. Therefore, compared with the domestic ordinary theatres, the relatively high theater fare sets a high threshold for the economic strength of tourists participating in the Wuzhen Drama Festival [6].

Therefore, I suggest that the Outdoor Carnival should arrange different types of performances at the same time period in the repertoire performance setting, so that the audience can choose the type of performance they like and at the same time, they will not miss other favorite programs of the same type.

In order to solve the problem of high fares, I suggest that the Wuzhen Theatre Festival provides online pay-per-view services for theatrical programs in the case of copyright protection [8]. Using virtual reality technology, 3D video and other means, viewers who have no financial ability to watch on the spot can watch it in real time through the network. In doing so, it will expand the audience of Wuzhen Theatre Festival and raise its attention while satisfying people's needs, and will become another profitable way of the Wuzhen Theatre Festival.

4. Conclusion

Wuzhen Scenic Area takes Wuzhen Theatre Festival as its brand and gradually builds its own creative cultural industries development [9]. The inclusiveness, diversification and innovative development of Wuzhen have also attracted more and more cultural industries and projects into there. For example, the first World Internet Conference in 2014 was held in Wuzhen, and Wuzhen became the permanent venue of the World Internet Conference [10]. The development of Wuzhen Theatre Festival has brought a new perspective to China's cultural tourism and the development of ancient towns. The creation of cultural tourism destinations based on creative cultural activities such as festivals has become a new direction for the development of tourist attractions. Wuzhen takes "drama" as the starting point and brings new thinking to the development of other ancient towns. In the context of cultural tourism, different ancient town scenic spots can explore a development path that meets their own conditions based on their own natural resources and human resources, combined with animation, film and television, design and other elements in the cultural and creative industries [11].

To sum up, in the environment of accelerated globalization, the differences of different regions are gradually disappearing. At this time, how to balance the cultural uniqueness and innovative development of different regions is the primary issue. Through the analysis and research of the cultural and creative industries in Wuzhen, this paper, based on the traditional culture of Wuzhen, provides feasible suggestions for the development of Wuzhen and other regions under the background of globalization, that is, based on its own natural resources and human resources, combined with various cultural and creative industry elements, such as animation, film and television, design, etc., so as to explore the path of cultural and creative industries in this region, Avoid the decline of its own characteristic industries.

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