

# ***Analysis of Traditional Tourism Cultural Heritage --Taking Wuzhen as an Example***

**Chengqi Yu<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Hangzhou Foreign Language School Cal-Centre, Hangzhou, China, 310000

a. yuchengqi2021@163.com

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** In the current environment of collective commercialization of ancient town tourism, the authenticity of its performance culture needs to be further studied. This paper conducts a field survey of the Wuzhen Hongyuantai dyeing workshop, a cultural tourist attraction in Wuzhen, it shows that, for example, the core of the Wuzhen Blue Printed Fabric Workshop Hongyuantai, a cultural tourist attraction in Wuzhen, has been diluted into a commercial performance that attracts tourists. The authenticity of the culture behind it has been destroyed. With the further development of the region and the establishment of the brand, the idea of reshaping the authenticity has also been discussed again. This paper suggests orderly and reasonable organizations of traditional festival activities which can promote residents and tourists' understanding and integration of traditional culture, so as to inherit and protect this local authenticity as well as the real culture spirit behind.

**Keywords:** tourism, Wuzhen, culture, authenticity, festival activities

## **1. Introduction**

Since 2001, with the development of tourism industry and the protection of local heritage as the original driving force, Wuzhen has implemented “integrated protection and development” in its Xizha historical district and achieved rapid commercial success. However, amid the general praise, this protective measure has always been controversial. The biggest controversy is that the “integrated protection and development” of Wuzhen Xizha has formed a “commercial theme park” without residents, rather than a Living Heritage [1], the commercialization of the overall development and the utopian Park of the “Disneyland” type have also greatly affected the traditional culture and life of Wuzhen and its indigenous people.

This paper mainly discusses the authenticity of tourism in Wuzhen by pointing out the current over-commercial pattern and arguing the best demonstration of its cultural heritage, and finally gives out viable plan of integrating authenticity in tourism by the example of festival activities. Considering its specific scope, this paper wants to give a different perspective about the current tourism boom, and hopes to let the development committee to consider the real plans of authenticity.

## **2. Commercially Man-made Scenic Spots “Hongyuantai Dyeing Workshop”**

As one of the most famous sites in Wuzhen touristic restrict, Hongyuantai dyeing workshop is designed to attract tourists by its mimic of ancient dyeing process. The traditional technique behind

is also been affected by the commercial factors nowadays, and thus leaves a good example to discuss the authenticity of traditional culture behind.

Hongyuantai dyeing workshop was founded in the Song and Yuan Dynasties. It has been transformed into a tourist attraction in Wuzhen. People can see the whole process demonstration of traditional processes, and also take some finished products of blue printed cloth home from the shop.

When visitors pass by the Hongyuantai dyeing workshop, some will probe in and leave, and some will go in to have a look if they are more curious. Every time at this moment, the master of the dyeing workshop would stand up and brush sauce on the prepared cloth and flower board - this is the process of baking flowers. However, he only works when there are tourists in the workshop. It is really some kind of performance, or this mode should be called "performance".

In addition, Hongyuantai dyeing workshop itself is a man-made scenic spot. The original courtyard was a bamboo factory, but later it was changed into an electroplating factory, and because the electroplating factory was seriously polluted, it moved. Such "fictional" cultural attractions, including the "melodious" history of their promotion, form a strong contrast with reality. Such over artificial and even special redesign have seriously questioned the authenticity of cultural tourism.

The issue of culture is always the core concern of cultural tourism development in public vision. When traveling for nostalgia, seeking historical memory or experiencing regional cultural differences, tourists always hope to enjoy the original value experiences. As for the Hongyuantai dyeing workshop in Wuzhen, in order to increase the tourism landscape, the management committee introduced the craftsmen in the surrounding areas in the form of "investment attraction", and set up stalls in the old streets in the traditional mode of "front shop and back workplace". Hongyuantai was born under such a background. Thus, it is actually not a dyeing workshop before the establishment of the touristic site.

### 3. Discussion on the Authenticity of Cultural Presentation

The word "authenticity" originated from Greek and has the meaning of "made by oneself" and "original". It was first used to describe art exhibits and unearthed cultural relics in museums. In the 1970s, the word "authenticity" was first cited in the field of tourism research in western countries, that is, the discussion of tourism authenticity. After the concept of "authenticity" was introduced into tourism research by American landscape architect MacCannel, tourism experience has opened to a new world [2].

It is true that obtaining the maximum economic benefits is often the prior purpose of tourism operators to develop heritage tourism. Therefore, the behavior of tourism operators can not be separated from market orientation, that is, taking tourists' needs as objective guidance.

The original ecological and objective "authentic" signs can not attract enough tourism consumers, and it is difficult to generate considerable economic benefits. The "authenticity" packaged by operators in the operation process can not only meet the needs of tourists but also improve economic benefits. This is also the original intention of building a closed "Disney" mode scenic spot.

For a tourist, the streets of Wuzhen are indeed full of the "Utopian" flavor of China's old water-town society. Most of the sightseeing heritage tourists are aiming to achieve the effect of their "visit here", and do not make much preparatory work and distinguish the characteristics of the original heritage tourism, which can really meet their expectations for the appearance of the ancient town [3].

Therefore, new problems are also emerging. The actual tourism development is too commercialized, and the scenic spots are mostly similar, which affects the tourism authenticity [4]. Is this the best way to show tradition and craft? How many "authenticity" are here in the man-made agricultural and handicraft cultural heritage as tourism resources? These problems are still worth thinking.

Still take the example of Hongyuantai dyeing workshop, is this performance-like action really represent the old technique and the culture spirit behind? The dyeing technique was used to dye the

clothes with different colorful patterns, which is a unique beauty and trueness among Wuzhen folks. However, simply transform the technique use, discard the spirit behind, is it the dyeing still the old one? How much authenticity still exist in this demonstrating style?

Originally, because there are various touristic ancient towns occurred in China, ancient town tourism is facing serious homogenization competition [5], which may become a problem at the beginning of Wuzhen tourism development. Completely preserving the authenticity will inevitably reduce the attraction of the scenic spot. Thus various sites, like Hongyuantai dyeing workshop, transformed its traditional way to a more deliberate designed way that meet the appetite of tourists.

In recent years, with the improvement of national living standards, people have begun to pay more attention to spiritual and cultural experience than simple sightseeing and shopping tourism. Thus, the topic of authenticity was once again put forward in the discussion.

At the same time, with the Wuzhen Drama Festival, the Internet Conference and other large-scale activities held in Wuzhen. The brand attraction of Wuzhen has also reached the forefront in the field of ancient town tourism [6]. In other words, Wuzhen does not need to consider too much about attracting tourists by man-polishing. With the establishment of brand reputation, Wuzhen has sufficient conditions to reconsider its development direction. Whether it can consider authenticity and the cultural spirit spread by Wuzhen's indigenous people when developing its existing customs has become a question of development direction again.

#### 4. Suggestions on the Development Strategy Integrating Authenticity

It may be impractical to completely reform the park's operation mode or reopen the park to welcome back residents, but there are still other ways to revive the spirit of its culture. Under the basic framework of Wuzhen's development, integrate the authenticity of its culture and show the true face of Wuzhen culture. This paper takes festival activities as an example, hoping to arouse more ideas to revive the authenticity.

Festival activities refer to a series of activities or events held in a certain region, which can reflect the cultural characteristics and local characteristics of the host region [7]. Taking the holding of traditional festivals as an opportunity, local residents of Wuzhen can recall these cultural spirits flowing in their blood. Traditional festival activities is a good starting point since it not only represents the old traditions and spirit behind, but also provide more activities and opportunities for residents and tourists to participate together, and thus keep the booming under the background of increasing authenticity [8].

Take the traditional festival Zhongyuan festival as an example. In the traditional culture of Wuzhen, Zhongyuan festival needs to hold a traditional festival activity called Zhongyuan floating lantern. The Zhongyuan Festival, also known as the ghost festival, is a traditional day in China to honor the ancestors. It is said that all ghosts on this day are looking forward to crossing the dark river to heaven in the light paper boat put by their off-springs. Because the road is very dark and needs lighting to find the direction, putting on river lights has become the most important sacrificial activity on this day. Wuzhen people will put on river lights to commemorate their ancestors on this day. In this way, inheriting such long-standing traditional activities can awake people's innermost memories, which is naturally the spirit behind Wuzhen's traditional festivals.

It is because these festivals are long-standing traditions, the memory, and the spirit of Wuzhen people that makes these festivals become the most real appearance of Wuzhen. As a realistic miniature of Wuzhen's traditional culture, traditional festivals themselves perfectly reproduce cultural characteristics and local characteristics. Through the partial opening of the park and scenic spots, cultural activities with the theme of traditional festivals and events will be increased, so that the majority of local people and residents can pick up the traditional culture that may have disappeared. In the meantime, the tourists can also enjoy the real traditional activities in the festival, thus participate

in the most real, most authentic environment. Only in this way can the real revival of ancient town be realized.

At the same time, the localization, participation and entertainment of traditional festival events also enable tourists to get a better travel experience. The festival itself is a special tourist attraction, which can enrich the attraction system of the host place, thereby increasing the number of tourists and prolonging the staying time of tourists [9]. All kinds of traditional festivals and events can inject new blood into Wuzhen, bring various innovative resources, increase the diversity and participation of Wuzhen tourism products, promote the diversified development of Wuzhen tourism products, expand the scope of attracting tourists, effectively enrich Wuzhen touristic system, and accelerate the upgrading of Wuzhen tourism [10]. Therefore, traditional festival activities can also play an increasingly important role in the development of tourism in Wuzhen, and become an important factor affecting the image of tourism destinations.

Therefore, there is a close relationship between festival activities reflecting authenticity and tourism development in Wuzhen. They promote each other and belong to a symbiotic relationship.

## 5. Conclusion

As a carrier of Wuzhen culture, Wuzhen blue printed fabric crafts and various traditional festivals bear many historical relics, and also witness the development and changes of Wuzhen culture with a long history. The interpretation of the authenticity of cultural heritage tourism is firstly the maintenance of the authenticity of cultural heritage, and secondly the touristic experience of the authenticity of heritage tourism.

At the same time, the restoration of authenticity has been able to revive the dispersed traditional culture of Wuzhen and the real appearance of Wuzhen ancient town behind it, which, in other words, its cultural spirit, if conditions permit. Encouraging residents of Wuzhen to carry out traditional festivals and events can carry forward the traditional cultural spirit of Wuzhen, and truly revitalize the traditional culture finally.

## References

- [1] Gang Liu, Lan Wang. (2014). *Historical protection and reuse in Wuzhen cultural tourism development* [J]. *Times architecture*, (2): 30-33.
- [2] Lei Hong. (2014). *Examining the authenticity of Agricultural Cultural Heritage Tourism -- Taking the "hongyuantai" workshop in Wuzhen as an example* [J]. *Design art research*, 0 (3): 48-51.
- [3] Wen Xi. (2022). *The impact of tourist experience on word of mouth communication: the authenticity of destinations and the role of their commercialization* [J]. *Business Economics Research*, (3): 97-10.
- [4] Meihua Zhuang. (2015). *Literature review of tourism authenticity theory and empirical research* [J]. *Value Engineering*, 34 (24): 197-199.
- [5] Jianwei Zhao. (2021). *Cultural Experience and Authenticity of Tourism Performance* [J]. *Industry and Technology Forum*, 20 (10): 16-17.
- [6] Yutong Xie. (2021). *Research on the interaction between festivals and tourism development in Wuzhen* [J]. *Regional governance*, (23): 0293-0294.
- [7] Yuan Wang, Falin Fang. (2011). *Exploration and innovation of tourism culture carriers in ancient rural towns -- taking Wuzhen as an example* [J]. *Anhui Agricultural Science*, 39 (14): 8513-85148519.
- [8] Xugui Zou, Baoxue Chen, Bing Zhang. (2022). *Physical Narration of the "April 8" Festival Activities of the Miao Nationality in Western Hunan* [J]. *Journal of Huaihua University*, 41 (3): 42-47.
- [9] Cuijin Zhang. (2017). *Summary of Research on Traditional Festival Tourism in China* [J]. *Market Modernization*, 0 (8): 257-258.
- [10] Lei Zhu, Shiqi Liu. (2022). *A Study on the Strategy of Cultural Revival of Traditional Towns Catalyzed by Festivals -- Taking Wuzhen and Wuzhen Drama Festival as an Example* [J]. *Small Town Construction*, 40 (1): 69-75.