

Original Paper

Study on the Activation Strategy of Historical and Cultural
Blocks from the Perspective of Smart Cultural Tourism—A Case
Study of the Three Lanes and Seven Alleys in Fuzhou City

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Abstract

In recent years, as living standards have improved, there has been an increasing demand for spiritual fulfillment. New leisure activities such as visiting exhibitions and urban exploration, as well as immersive tourism, are replacing traditional sightseeing tours. As lifestyles change, so do people's consumption habits. Located in Fuzhou City, Three Lanes and Seven Alleys is known as "Manchu Architecture Museum" and "half of modern Chinese history". In the digital age, Three Lanes and Seven Alleys keeps up with the wave of smart cultural travel. Through "Cuocuo Youyu" Mini Program, media facilities in the museum, it uses scientific and technological means to achieve multi-connectivity and enhance tourists' sense of experience and interactive participation in visiting historical blocks. This paper starts with an analysis of the current digital development status and existing challenges faced by Three Lanes and Seven Alleys before delving into a study of strategies for activating this historical area.

Keywords

Fuzhou, Smart Cultural Tourism, Cultural relics and monuments, Three Lanes and Seven Alleys

1. Literature Review

Smart cultural tourism is the integration of information technology and cultural tourism. It uses Internet big data to integrate various resources and provide corresponding tourism services on mobile phones to improve tourists' sense of experience and convenience. Xu and CAI summarized the experiences of smart tourism construction in Europe, the United States, Japan and South Korea in "The International Experience and Policy Inspiration of Smart Cultural Tourism to Help Rural Revitalization". This

includes policies such as upgrading digital facilities, constructing smart tourism destinations, implementing smart networks, etc., which involve transportation, compilation of tourist routes, big data analysis, among other aspects (Xu, 2024); Jing Yanhong's Research on the Construction of Public Cultural Service System under the Background of the Integration of Culture and Technology believes that the smart cultural tourism service platform is committed to creating a "people-oriented" smart tourism experience for tourists (Jing, 2018); In "Smart Tourism Big Data Application Analysis", Yan Qiaozhi et al. pointed out that during the initial stages of construction there was no unified plan for business systems related to cultural tourism departments resulting in relatively closed information flow that hindered data sharing and interaction within the cultural tourism industry (Yan, Huang, & Lin, 2023); Yang Pingping's Research on the Construction of intelligent Cultural Travel Service Platform under the Background of Cultural and Travel Integration focuses on architecture design by integrating infrastructure development with technology and application system construction (Yang, 2019). Based on field research, conducted by this author at Three Lanes and Seven Alleys site (a popular tourist destination), shortcomings were identified regarding their implementation strategies for smart cultural tourism; thus corresponding strategies were proposed aiming at enhancing tourists' sense of experience.

2. Research Background

Three lanes and seven alleys is the largest and most complete ancient architectural cluster retained in Fuzhou city center. There are 270 ancient buildings, among which 159 are listed as protected buildings and 15 are national key cultural relics protection units (Ye & Zheng, 2019). Under the renovation in recent years, it is a typical Lifang-style historical and cultural block with strong Fuzhou traditional architecture and cultural characteristics. It mainly focuses on residential functions while integrating culture, leisure, commerce, and tourism. The existing historical and cultural resources mainly include former residences of celebrities, characteristic folk houses and historical relics.

In recent years, on the basis of the protection of cultural relics, the government and the public have increasing attention to making cultural relics and historic sites "alive" during the process of modernization. In December 2022, the Administrative Measures for the Activated Utilization of Cultural Relics Buildings in Fuzhou were issued and implemented to encourage rational utilization of these buildings while regulating activation methods to inject vitality into them alongside cultural relic protection efforts. According to the "Digital China Development Report (2023)", China's digital economy is projected to maintain steady growth in 2023, and the added value of the core industries of the digital economy will account for 10% of GDP. The scale of Fuzhou's digital economy has surpassed 400 billion yuan mark, accounting for more than 53% of GDP. Three lanes and seven alley have been well developed towards becoming smart blocks by incorporating digital industry into their modernization process which enhances their uniqueness amidst homogenized historical-cultural blocks while highlighting their rich cultural connotations.

3. Basic Overview of the Digital Application of Three Lanes and Seven Alleys

3.1 Digital Interpretation

In Three Lanes and Seven Alleys mini program called “Gold Commentary”, visitors can explore scenic spots such as Lin Juemin Bing Xin Former Residence, Yan Fu Former Residence, and Water Pavilion Stage. Visitors can scan the QR code at the gate to follow the public number and click on the link to access the scenic spot page, 15 yuan to unlock the AR interpretation service of 45 scenic spots in Three Lanes and Seven Alleys. No registration is required; simply scanning the code will take you there. The page will provide a catalog of explanations narrated by professional tour guides through live audio recordings. Tourists can experience this exclusive guide service through a mini program, which can be used with AR glasses to achieve a more intuitive and independent one-stop tour.

3.2 Multi-party Internet Applet in Scenic Spot

The mini program “Cuocuo Youyu” integrates the resource information about ancient houses in Fuzhou city, integrates a number of technologies such as blockchain and digital commemorative tickets, and provides functions such as scenic spot reservation, play ticket purchase, map and IP display. On its homepage, tourists have the option to register for research courses offered by the mini program called “Mingcheng Youth”. Additionally, this mini program includes an encyclopedia of lanes, regularly updated activity information, as well as introductions of cultural and creative IPs. Through this mini program, tourists can efficiently learn about the development of scenic spots and easily access service information.

3.3 Real-scene Digital Drama Tour

The scenic spot launched the “Mindu Secret Lane Surprise” real digital drama tour, using AR technology to allow visitors to complete tasks at specific locations and promote the progression of the plot. This creates a platform for interaction and communication between ancient houses and tourists, allowing them to experience the cultural charm during their visit.

4. Problems Existing in the Digital Construction of Three Lanes and Seven Alleys

4.1 Lack of Close Connection between Online and Offline

In terms of the display of scenic spots within the block, online tourists can access the “Cuocuo Youyu” mini program to view the hand-drawn map of Three Lanes and Seven Alleys, while offline, only the main street on both sides of the entrance has the map display board for the block, and there are no self-collected portable maps placed in prominent places within the block. The integration of various digital platforms such as mini programs for exhibition halls, digital melodrama mini programs, and “Cuocuo Youyu” requires tourists to switch between each mini program repeatedly during their tour, which is not convenient. Additionally, lack of publicity for the mini program means that most tourists are unable to obtain information beyond simply following the flow to the main street without taking initiative to explore historical and cultural attractions preserved in the alleyways.

4.2 Function Settings Are not Humanized Enough

Take the “Gold medal explanation” applet as an example. The main issue is that the explanation directory is not arranged according to the tour order, leading to different tourists choosing different tour routes and needing to manually adjust the explanation and play after it. This affects the experience of its main exclusive tour guide service. In terms of pricing, a fixed price of 15 yuan for explaining 45 scenic spots in the scenic spot does not provide enough flexibility. Additionally, there is a question about whether tourists who have visited more than half of the explained spots should pay for the rest. Furthermore, in the “Cuocuo Youyu” intangible cultural heritage map plate for Three Lanes and Seven Alleys, there is an issue with small text size that cannot be scaled, limiting its practical use for tourists during visits.

4.3 The Internal Support of each Plate of the Digital Platform Is Insufficient

The digital platform of Three Lanes and Seven Alleys has been set up, but the development of each function is unbalanced. For example, the five blocks in the mini program of “Cuocuo Youyu” focus on the specific scenic spot introduction, special activities and booking tickets of Three Lanes and Seven Alleys and Liangcuo, while for Zhuzi Fang, there is only one video to show the beautiful scenery, the video below is blank, there is no text science popularization, and the “click into” of Shangxia Hang and Nangong River Estuary plate is only decoration, which cannot be opened. In the “cultural and creative IP” plate, only “Zhou student” pop-up shop May Day activity publicity, and for “Zhou student” the origin of the IP has no text introduction.

5. Three Lanes and Seven Alleys Activation Strategy

The revitalization of Three Lanes and Seven Alleys should be grounded in their rich history and cultural heritage. It should aim to promote the integration of resources, foster innovative ideas and plans, and enhance the overall experience for tourists as well as the sense of participation for local residents. In order to effectively protect and utilize the historical and cultural assets of Three Lanes and Seven Alleys, the following four countermeasures and suggestions are proposed:

5.1 Expand Business on the Basis of Repair and Protection

For historical districts, some buildings can be opened for cooperation with tourism and photography companies on the basis of restoration and protection. This will enrich the smart cultural and tourism platform, providing tourists with more choices. The style and scenic spots of the block serve as an eye-catching background for photos, attracting tourists to visit. The Yantai Mountain Historical and Cultural Area in Fuzhou, also known as the “Architecture Museum of All Nations,” has attracted numerous photography studios, cultural and art studios to settle in. The historical culture behind the architectural style continues to attract a steady stream of tourists.

5.2 Creative Use of Cultural Resources in Three Lanes and Seven Alleys

Combine cultural resources with emerging media, change people’s stereotyped influence on cultural resources, make traditional culture and modern social development integrate well, realize the transformation of cultural resources into cultural capital, and drive economic development. Add more

experience projects to enhance the participation of tourists, rather than just passing through. Based on the humanistic history and folklore of Three Lanes and Seven Alleys, we will design cultural and creative products with characteristics and in line with modern aesthetics. The digital platform will update the page activities and major events of scenic spots from time to time, and can also provide channels for the design and sale of IP derivatives of scenic spots.

5.3 Planning Recommended Routes for Cultural Tourism Within the Block

Coordinate the relationship between the community, the government and the residents in Three Lanes and Seven Alleys through the mechanism, encourage the joint participation in the protection of cultural resources in Three Lanes and Seven Alleys, and encourage the participation of residents and suggestions to improve the scientific and reasonable development of local cultural resources on the basis of the protection of historical and cultural resources. The function of selecting recommended tour routes is provided in the mini program of explaining historical and cultural blocks, and the online explanation service is carried out according to the tour order.

5.4 Actively Promote Cultural Exchanges and Let Local Cultural Resources Go out

Multi-platform marketing the new look of the Three Lanes and Seven Alleys to expand its popularity. On holidays or before it holds special activities, preheat the activities, open official accounts on multiple Internet platforms, release the latest information, and carry forward the cultural resources. Additionally, collaboration with historical and cultural districts in other regions is sought in order to facilitate mutual learning and development.

Summary

Under the wave of digitalization, Internet big data technology provides a new way for the revitalization of historical and cultural blocks, and provides technical support in enhancing tourists' sense of experience and interaction. While building the digital platform, how to integrate various resources in an orderly logic and way is a problem that needs to be considered before the platform is built. Smart cultural tourism is the integration of information technology and cultural tourism, so the development and construction should also take full account of tourists' sense of experience, design into the identity of tourists, understand the needs of tourists and tour habits, so that the product can really provide convenience for tourists.

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