

Original Paper

Integration of Culture, Sports, and Tourism Drives Rural Revitalization—A Case Study of Rongjiang’s “Village Super League”

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Abstract

The “Village Super League” (Rongjiang Harmonious and Beautiful Countryside Football Super League) in Rongjiang, Guizhou, combines Guizhou’s culture with rural tourism through a spontaneously organized football tournament by villagers, forming an integrated model of “sports IP + cultural empowerment + tourism monetization” and realizing the comprehensive revitalization of the countryside. Taking Rongjiang’s “Village Super League” as a case study, this paper systematically analyzes the internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats of the “Village Super League” in developing tourism using SWOT and PESTEL analysis. It interprets its driving effect on rural revitalization and provides experience and reference for the integrated development of culture, sports, and tourism to drive rural revitalization across the country.

Keywords

Village Super League, integration of culture, sports, and tourism, rural revitalization, SWOT analysis, PESTEL analysis

1. Introduction

The “14th Five-Year Plan” proposal puts forward vigorously promoting rural revitalization and the integration of culture and tourism (State Council, 2021). Against this background, China’s rural tourism has transformed from a traditional sightseeing model (Wang, 2025)—mainly featuring beautiful natural scenery or long-standing historical sites—to a new model focusing on experience.

1.1 Case Analysis

In 2023, the “Village Super League” in Rongjiang County, Guizhou Province, became a hit across the internet. The “Village Super League”, officially named “Guizhou Rongjiang (Sanbao Dong Village)

Harmonious and Beautiful Countryside Football Super League” (Wang & Tao, 2024), is not a meticulously planned tourism project, nor does it have professional football stars or sky-high bonuses. The Guizhou “Village Super League” is just a grassroots rural football league rooted in Rongjiang County and spontaneously organized by the people. However, in a short period of time, it has achieved impressive results: the number of on-site spectators exceeded one million, the comprehensive browsing and playback volume on online platforms exceeded tens of billions of times, and it has attracted attention from across the country and even the world, including the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It has formed a unique “Village Super League” economic effect and promoted the strategic development of rural revitalization (Wu S. & Wu M., 2025).

This paper uses SWOT and PESTEL analysis methods to deeply explore the macro and micro aspects, internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats of the “Village Super League” in developing tourism, investigates its driving effect on realizing comprehensive rural revitalization, and provides a replicable template for the sustainable revitalization path of other rural areas.

1.2 Research Significance

Theoretical Significance: Taking the “Village Super League” as a typical case, this paper uses analytical tools such as SWOT and PESTEL to systematically explore the internal mechanism and realization path of the integration of culture, sports, and tourism driving rural revitalization, enriches the research dimensions in the field of rural revitalization and the integration of culture and tourism, and provides practical support for the deepening and expansion of relevant theories.

Practical Significance: The “14th Five-Year Plan” and “15th Five-Year Plan” proposals clearly put forward vigorously developing rural revitalization and promoting the integrated development of culture and tourism (Guo & Wang, 2025).). The successful experience of the integrated development of culture, sports, and tourism in the “Village Super League” not only promotes the economic growth, tourism development, and ethnic cultural dissemination of Rongjiang County, but also advances local rural revitalization. The promotion of its successful experience can provide a replicable model of rural revitalization strategy for other rural areas (Xue K. et al., 2019).).

2. Comprehensive Rural Revitalization Strategy

In the documents proposing the rural revitalization strategy, the Party has further made comprehensive arrangements for the implementation of the comprehensive rural revitalization strategy (Yang, 2022); in 2021, the Central Government clearly proposed consolidating the achievements of poverty alleviation while effectively connecting with rural revitalization; incorporating “comprehensively advancing rural revitalization” into the plan proposal to promote the high-quality development of culture and tourism.

2.1 General Requirements of the Rural Revitalization Strategy

The six general requirements of the rural revitalization strategy are prosperous industries, livable ecology, civilized rural customs, effective governance, and affluent life. Among them, prosperous industries are

the “focus” of rural revitalization (Fu & Lü, 2022), and the Rural Revitalization Promotion Law further emphasizes that “industrial revitalization is the material foundation of rural revitalization”.

Prosperous industries mean building a “diversified, integrated and sustainable development” countryside; Livable ecology means realizing “equal emphasis on ecological protection and living environment improvement”; Civilized rural customs mean cultivating civilized rural customs and inheriting ethnic culture; Effective governance means clarifying powers and responsibilities, and achieving “multi-dimensional coordination and efficient operation”; Affluent life means realizing common prosperity, “having guaranteed lives and promising development”.

2.2 Objectives and Tasks of the Rural Revitalization Strategy

Consolidate the industrial foundation: For example, in the case of the integrated development of culture, sports, and tourism in the “Village Super League”, the innovative industrial structure form of integrating culture, sports, and tourism is used to strengthen the construction of comprehensive rural revitalization and promote the inheritance of ethnic culture in ethnic minority areas.

Cultivate talent teams: The key to activating endogenous development momentum is to solve the dilemma of “talent shortage” in rural areas and build a talent support system where “local talents can stay, professional talents can be attracted, and skill levels can be improved”. Establish cooperative relations with universities to transport high-quality talents to rural areas.

Inherit and activate culture: The core of fostering the spiritual heritage of the countryside is to protect the cultural roots of the countryside and realize “traditional culture survives, civilized rural customs are established, and cultural values are utilized”. Strengthen the dissemination and development of intangible cultural heritage and endow it with new vitality in the new era.

Improve the ecological environment: The main task of building a livable and beautiful home is to realize “win-win situation between ecological protection and development”, so that the countryside can not only retain green mountains and clear waters, but also carry a livable life. Strengthen the environmental construction of rural areas and create a harmonious and livable environment.

Improve the governance system: For example, in the practice of the “Village Super League”, systems such as village collective cooperatives, benefit distribution mechanisms, and emergency response mechanisms are used to prevent safety risks and formulate public opinion response mechanisms.

Improve the quality of life: The ultimate goal of moving towards common prosperity is to let farmers share the fruits of development and realize “increasing income, guaranteed services, and high-quality life”. It is necessary to continuously increase farmers’ operational income, wage income, and property income through various channels such as industrial integration, employment assistance, and asset income to narrow the urban-rural income gap; promote the equalization of basic public services between urban and rural areas, and make up for the shortcomings in rural education, medical care, elderly care, and other fields (Wang, 2022). For example, under the drive of the “Village Super League”, Rongjiang has improved public service facilities such as tourist service centers and medical points, which also benefit local villagers; pay more attention to special groups such as the poverty-alleviated population, the elderly,

and the disabled, consolidate and expand the achievements of poverty alleviation, prevent large-scale return to poverty, and let all villagers steadily move towards common prosperity in the process of rural revitalization (Shao & Zhou, 2025).

3. Theoretical Analysis Models

3.1 SWOT Analysis

Internal Factors	Strengths	Weaknesses
External Factors	<p>(1) Unique Core Attraction: The organic integration of "sports passion + ethnic culture" is hard to replicate.</p> <p>(2) Prominent Brand Value: A strong nationwide IP effect has been formed.</p> <p>(3) Utilization of Universal Value Co-creation (UGC) with High Social Participation.</p> <p>(4) Operational Model: Low initial investment cost and high economic benefits.</p>	<p>(1) Inadequate Infrastructure: Remote geographical location, low transportation coverage, and poor accessibility.</p> <p>(2) Shortage of Professional Talents: Lack of professionals in tourism operation, destination management, marketing, and other related fields.</p> <p>(3) Seasonal Nature of Events: Distinct peak and off-seasons for the events.</p> <p>(4) Room for Improvement in Governance and Services: The government's management mechanism needs to be optimized, and the quality of community services urgently requires enhancement.</p>
Opportunities	SO Strategy (Growth-oriented)	WO Strategy (Turnaround-oriented)
(1) The planning proposals such as the "14th Five-Year Plan" and the "15th Five-Year Plan" have clearly put forward the comprehensive	<p>(1) Build the "Village Super League" brand through IP image creation.</p> <p>(2) Introduce big data and algorithms, and use tourist portraits</p>	<p>(1) Improve the accessibility of Rongjiang County.</p> <p>(2) Establish cooperation with institutions of higher education.</p>

revitalization of rural areas and the high-quality development of culture and tourism. (2) The prevalence of the experience economy (3) The rise of the "Guochao" folk trend	to achieve precise market positioning.	(3) Strengthen the construction of infrastructure such as homestays.
Threats	ST Strategy (Diversified Operations)	WT Strategy (Defensive-oriented)
(1) Intensified Homogeneous Competition. (2) Short Life Cycle of "Internet-Famous" Phenomena. (3) Pressure on Socio-Cultural and Ecological Carrying Capacity. (4) Public Security and Public Opinion Risks.	(1) Product Diversification Strategy: Develop non-event products such as intangible cultural heritage (ICH) study tours, sports training, and health and wellness vacations. (2) Deepen Regional Development: Jointly build an ethnic tourism corridor with "Village BA", Xijiang Miao Village, and other regional resources.	(1) Utilize big data monitoring to control tourist capacity and enhance visitors' experience. (2) Establish and improve a public security network and an emergency response mechanism for unexpected

3.2 PESTEL Analysis

Political: It is in the policy dividend period of national strategies such as rural revitalization, national fitness, and cultural confidence. The successful practice of local governments as “service providers” is an embodiment of “modernization of Chinese-style grassroots governance” in the field of tourism.

Economic: In the era of “experience economy”, consumers are willing to pay for emotions, stories, and cultural identity. The “hyper-authentic” experience provided by the “Village Super League” has become a high-value tourist attraction.

Social: It reflects the public’s collective desire for “de-commercialized” pure happiness and the post-95s and post-00s generation’s pursuit of “rural sentiment”.

Technological: Short video and live streaming platforms are not only communication tools, but also restructure the marketing model of tourist destinations and the decision-making path of tourists, realizing “de-intermediated” precise reach.

Environmental: Guizhou’s excellent ecological environment and cool climate in summer provide a natural comfortable background for the “Village Super League”, but the large number of tourists also poses a challenge to its environmental carrying capacity.

Legal: Relevant laws, regulations, and contract norms in aspects such as IP protection, commercial sponsorship, tourist safety, and community benefit distribution need to be improved urgently to protect the rights and interests of all parties.

4. Integration of the “Village Super League” with the Comprehensive Rural Revitalization Development Strategy

4.1 IP Deepening and Content Innovation—Making Attraction “Regularized” and “Diversified”

Build a four-season tournament system: Ensure that there are football highlights at different times throughout the year through spring leagues, summer Miao village football carnivals, autumn football challenge cups, winter invitation tournaments, etc.

Develop derivative IPs: Launch youth “Village Super League” (“Little Village Super League”), women’s “Village Super League” (“Beauty Village Super League”), senior “Village Super League”, etc., covering all age groups and expanding the participation base and influence.

Organize invitation tournaments and friendly matches: Invite other well-known grassroots teams from across the country and even international friendly village teams to exchange and compete, enhancing the openness and topicality of the tournament.

Development of cultural immersion and in-depth experience: Build an “intangible cultural heritage research” system: Launch “Dong Grand Chorus Research Camp”, “Miao Embroidery/Batik Workshop”, “Dong Wooden Structure Construction Technique Experience Course”, etc., allowing tourists to transform from “spectators” to “learners” and “inheritors”.

Design in-depth ethnic cultural tourism routes: Launch “Du Liu River Basin Ethnic Village Exploration Tour”, “Thousand Villages and Thousand Families Long Table Banquet Food Tasting Tour”, etc., connecting the ethnic tourism resources of Rongjiang and surrounding counties and cities into a line.

Create regular cultural performance spaces: On non-competition days, launch regular and high-quality ethnic cultural performances in fixed venues (such as cultural squares and specific villages) to make up for the gap period of the tournament.

4.2 Industrial Integration and Global Linkage—Making Consumption Scenarios “Extended” and “Globalized”

Promote the in-depth integration of the “Village Super League +” industry: “Village Super League + Agriculture”: Develop sightseeing agriculture and experience agriculture, making the prizes of the “Village Super League” (such as small yellow cattle and fragrant sheep) traceable and experienceable tourist commodities. Build the “Village Super League Specialty” brand to realize the premium of high-quality agricultural products.

“Village Super League + Cultural and Creative Industries”: Develop cultural and creative products themed on the “Village Super League” and ethnic culture, such as mascots, clothing, stationery, and digital collections, to extend the industrial chain.

“Village Super League + Health and Wellness”: Utilize Rongjiang’s good ecological climate to develop health and wellness tourism featuring football sports, ethnic medicine, and ecological diet.

Cultivate new formats and consumption scenarios: Support characteristic accommodation: Vigorously develop high-quality homestays and themed hotels with ethnic customs to improve accommodation quality and attractiveness.

Build themed commercial blocks: Plan and construct “Village Super League Cultural Street”, “Football-themed Bars/Restaurants”, “Intangible Cultural Heritage Markets”, etc., forming consumption clusters integrating shopping, catering, and entertainment to extend the stay time of tourists.

4.3 Facility Improvement and Intelligent Management—Making Service Guarantee “Refined” and “Efficient”

Improve infrastructure construction: Transportation: Upgrade the road grade leading to major villages and scenic spots, build additional ecological parking lots, and optimize traffic organization.

Accommodation: Encourage social capital to invest in the construction of accommodation facilities of different grades through policy guidance to meet diversified needs.

Public services: Construct high-standard tourist toilets, tourist service centers, medical points, etc.

Implement intelligent tourism management: Build an “Intelligent Village Super League” platform: Integrate functions such as ticket booking, hotel reservation, traffic navigation, information inquiry, and intelligent customer service to provide one-stop services.

Use big data for passenger flow management: Real-time monitor passenger flow in various areas, implement early warning and diversion during peak periods, and ensure the comfort and safety of visits.

5. Multi-dimensional Collaborative Governance

The sustainable development of the “Village Super League” ultimately depends on people and whether the multiple stakeholders behind it can form a joint force to build a symbiotic and mutually beneficial governance community.

5.1 Analysis of Multiple Stakeholders

Government (Guide and Rule-maker): Strengthen the construction of regional infrastructure, increase government investment, provide policy support for corresponding activities, strengthen market and safety supervision mechanisms, and formulate emergency plans for prominent situations.

Village Collective and Villagers (Owners and Main Bodies): Integrate the resources of village collectives and villagers, implement a profit distribution system, and ensure that villagers and collectives have the right to participate in decision-making, benefit distribution, and supervision in tourism development.

Market Entities (Operators and Efficiency Improvers): Social investment, travel agencies, etc., provide professional operation, capital investment, market channels, and technological innovation, and ultimately form the optimal cooperation model of “village collective/cooperative + professional operation company”.

Media and Platforms (Communicators and Amplifiers): Establish strategic cooperation with various communication platforms and news media, and use big data algorithms to maintain communication popularity.

5.2 Construction of a Collaborative Governance Model

The ideal governance model of the “Village Super League” should be a concentric circle structure with “culture as the root and villagers as the main body”:

Core Circle (Value Creation Layer): Composed of villagers, who are not only players of the football league but also shoulder the core task of cultural inheritance, occupying the main position.

Middle Circle (Service Support Layer): Composed of the government and village collectives. The government provides basic service systems and safety emergency guarantees; the village collective integrates villagers to be responsible for internal organization and coordination of various capitals.

Outer Circle (Market Empowerment Layer): Composed of market entities and media platforms. Under the constraints of rules, they provide professional operation, capital, technology, and communication support for the “Village Super League” and share development results.

The core of this model is to ensure that the original cultural community always holds the leading power of development, and other entities perform their duties and fulfill their responsibilities, ultimately forming a symbiotic and mutually beneficial ecosystem with “folk vitality as the root, government guarantee as the foundation, and market operation as the wing”.

6. Conclusions and Prospects

6.1 Research Conclusions

Taking the Rongjiang “Village Super League” as a case study, this paper draws the following conclusions through SWOT and PESTEL analysis tools: Firstly, the people-oriented development concept is the essential requirement of rural revitalization. The development of the “Village Super League” has always adhered to villagers as the main body, guaranteed villagers’ right to decision-making, benefit, and supervision in rural tourism development through benefit sharing, and stimulated villagers’ enthusiasm for participation; at the same time, guided by the core tourism needs of tourists, it provides in-depth tourism experience services, enabling tourists to feel the unique local cultural characteristics in folk football matches. It can be seen that the combination of comprehensive rural revitalization and in-depth tourism must adhere to “people-centered”, relying not only on local villagers but also meeting the needs of tourists. Secondly, regional coordinated development is the guarantee of rural revitalization. By uniting with other surrounding rural ethnic areas, realizing regional coordinated development, forming a powerful regional group, and enhancing competitiveness. Thirdly, through building a phenomenal IP and integrating with various industries, the “Village Super League” coordinates the orderly development of agricultural and sideline products, cultural communication, and tourism through multiple online and offline channels, providing a core strategic path for the realization of rural revitalization.

6.2 Future Prospects

In the future, we can conduct in-depth discussions on the path of rural revitalization through different types of cultural and sports activities. For example, combining with various ethnic cultures and festival activities to enhance the attractiveness of rural tourism. We can also explore from different regional perspectives (such as the western region). At the same time, in the future, we can conduct case studies on the six dimensions of the “Village Super League” based on the six general requirements of the rural revitalization strategy. The future era is a digital era. We can use digitalization, “artificial intelligence +” to integrate with the “Village Super League”, endow rural revitalization with digital experiences, and boost rural development.

It is hoped that during the “15th Five-Year Plan” period, the “Village Super League” can further build an intelligent tourism platform, develop corresponding digital service platforms, and realize mechanisms such as timely data feedback, tourist portraits, and one-click emergency response. The successful experience of the “Village Super League”, namely the coordinated development of culture, sports, and tourism promoting comprehensive rural revitalization, will form a replicable model and be demonstrated and promoted in rural tourist destinations across the country. It is hoped that the further organic combination of rural revitalization and culture and tourism can be realized, boosting rural development, achieving common prosperity, improving rural agricultural productivity, and continuously consolidating and expanding the achievements of poverty alleviation.

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