

# LINGNAN ANCIENT VILLAGES CULTURAL TOURISM HELPS RESIDENTS' HAPPINESS AND ITS OPTIMIZATION PATH RESEARCH

Wei Tang\*, YuNan Xu, BoHao Zeng

*School of Tourism and Historical Culture, Zhaoqing College, Zhaoqing 526061, Guangdong, China.*

*Corresponding Author: Wei Tang, Email: angletw@aliyun.com*

**Abstract:** Traditional villages are the richest and most valuable heritage of Chinese civilization, which is a synthesis of tangible and intangible cultural and tourism heritage. In order to fully implement the strategy of rural revitalization and promote common prosperity, the shortcomings and weaknesses are in the villages, and the optimization space and development potential are also in the villages. This study takes Langtou Village in Guangzhou, a national-level traditional village, as an example, and explores the factors affecting residents' happiness and their optimization paths from the perspective of residents' happiness. This is an important initiative to explore the value and revitalization path of traditional ancient villages in Lingnan, as well as an important exploration of the path of integrating the traditional cultural and tourism resources of Lingnan into the ideological and political education of colleges and universities.

**Keywords:** Traditional ancient villages in Lingnan; Residents' well-being; Optimization path; Cultural and tourism resources; Case study

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Traditional Chinese ancient villages are a special public resource, a treasure of the Chinese nation's excellent traditional culture and tourism, a material carrier of human civilization and a valuable historical heritage, with high significance for protection[1]. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, General Secretary President Xi has pointed out that "it is better to have green water and green mountains than gold mountains and silver mountains" and "ancient villages should be effectively protected"[2]. At the same time, common prosperity is the essential requirement of socialism, the common expectation of the people, and the proper meaning of Chinese modernization. To fully implement the strategy of rural revitalization and promote common prosperity, the shortcomings and weaknesses are in the countryside, and the optimization space and development potential are also in the countryside. In the context of the new era, the countryside is the focus and difficulty of realizing common prosperity. Rural areas have rich and diversified natural scenery, unique cultural tourism and folklore resources with strong local characteristics, and the development of rural tourism has become an important force to promote the high-quality development of rural industry, promote common prosperity and meet the people's needs for a better life. It plays an important role in prospering the rural industry and economy, promoting the growth of residents' incomes, preserving and inheriting the rural culture and tourism, and enriching the lives of the residents, etc. The material and spiritual prosperity of the urban and rural residents is also a key factor. Spiritual affluence[3].

Rural tourism construction is in full swing around the world, want to stand out in the fierce competition, local governments and rural tourism developers need to dig deep into the local folk culture and tourism connotation, their own cultural and tourism characteristics as the main focus of rural tourism, to develop innovative tourism products. Characteristic rural tourism molding, nostalgia culture and tourism, exquisite lodging culture and tourism, as well as red tourism and other rural characteristics of tourism will become the new development trend.

From the comprehensive perspective of residents' happiness and the integration of culture and tourism, this study adopts the research method of questionnaire survey and in-depth interview to conduct field research on Langtou Village Ancient Village in Guangzhou, a national-level traditional ancient village. The study explores the impact of the development model of "tourism + culture and tourism" on the well-being of local residents, evaluates the well-being of Langtou Village residents, and proposes a path to optimize the well-being of Langtou Village residents. This case helps to analyze the path to the common prosperity and happiness of the residents of traditional ancient villages in the context of cultural and tourism integration, and has a good reference and demonstration effect on the improvement of the existing rural tourism development mode.

## 2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The early theory of gaze originated from the mirror theory proposed by French psychologist Jaques Lacan. With the deepening of the research, it was then introduced by Early into tourism research as "tourism gaze" theory, and became an important theoretical analysis tool in tourism research. Tourism gaze as a product of combining tourism demands, motives and actions, tourists and hosts gaze at each other in both directions: as the local "I" hosts and outsiders "other". How the relationship between tourists should be dealt with and the interaction and gaming process between the host and the host are of great significance to the sustainable and healthy development of tourist destinations. Specifically tourists'

gaze reflects their perception of the tourism destination, affecting their tourism experience and tourism behavior, while local residents are also gazing at tourists and observing tourists in the reverse direction, which will form the residents' cognitive image of tourism and consciously and proactively develop local material and symbolic resources to develop tourism[4]. Host-guest interaction has developed into a special kind of tourism attraction, which can not only reflect the cultural and tourism interaction and communication between different individuals through host-guest interaction, but also further achieve the balance of supply and demand between tourist destinations and tourists.

The application of gaze theory in tourism mainly focuses on the research of tourist image and gazers' behavior, while there are fewer researches on the projection of tourist image by using gaze theory[5]. This study takes Langtou Village in Guangzhou City as an example to analyze the village tourism image projection and study its value and path construction, so that the local Langtou Village can adjust the tourism image shaping and projection of the village scenic spot in order to achieve better publicity effect and attract tourists' interest.

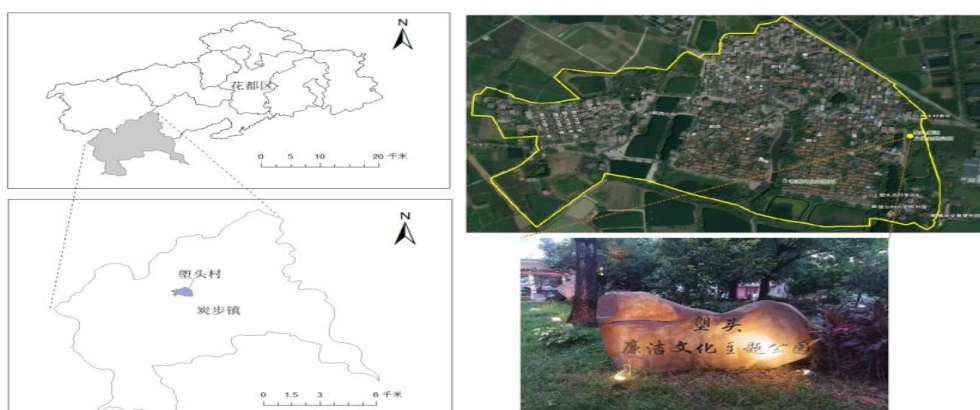
### 3 CASE SELECTION

#### 3.1 Principles of Case Object Selection

This study launches a case study on the well-being of the residents of Langtou Village, Tanbu Town, Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province, chosen for the following three reasons. First, the principle of typicality. Relying on the local cultural and tourism construction, Langtou Village has realized its popularity, attracted some tourists to visit, and driven the local economic development to a certain extent, which makes the happiness of local residents change and has sample significance. Second, the feasibility of the study. The survey of residents' happiness in Langtou Village provides a good sample material for this study, which has a high degree of fit with the research theme, helps the literature and practice dialog, and continuously improves the theoretical model through repeated iterations of argumentation. Third, the accessibility and richness of data. The research team conducted in-depth research on the case sites and conducted in-depth interviews with the residents of the case sites to obtain more detailed information, which increases the authenticity and reliability of this study.

#### 3.2 Basic Overview of the Case Site

Langtou Village was selected as one of the second batch of national traditional ancient villages in 2013 and was built in the 27th year of the reign of Emperor Zhizheng of the Yuan Dynasty. There are nearly 200 well-preserved green-brick buildings of the Ming and Qing dynasties, including a total of nearly 30 ancestral halls, study halls and academies, as well as three gun towers and gate towers. There are more than 20 ancient alleys in the village, as well as the historic Shengping Renrui Pai Fong and Qingyun Bridge. Langtou Village is famous for the variety of ancient buildings, the large scale of preserved buildings as well as the rich cultural connotations, and is by far one of the largest preserved ancient villages in Guangdong. Langtou Village is also characterized by a profound culture of cultivation and study. Langtou Village is a famous "scholar village" in the Pearl River Delta region, where villagers have always respected their teachers and advocated a "culture of cultivation and study", believing in the traditional value of "being a scholar in the fields in the morning and becoming a scholar in the sky in the evening". Langtou Village also has a profound culture of filial piety. In Langtou Village, the filial piety culture has been passed down for a long time. The village has preserved many folk activities related to the tradition of respecting the elderly, for example, every year at the Chung Yeung Festival, the village will celebrate the birthday of all the elderly aged 60 and above by holding a feast and distributing pork. Langtou Village also has a profound culture of integrity. In Langtou Village, there are stories about the integrity of the sage Huang Hao, "Tie Han Gong" and "Jin Mu Goose", and now there is a theme park of "Integrity Culture", which reminds the world of the integrity of the government and the people. In Langtou Village, there are folk art activities such as Lantern Festival, Lion Dance and Martial Arts, Cantonese Opera and so on, which have been passed down for hundreds of years. Most of the performances are centered on the Chinese New Year and Lantern Festival, which are not in a big form but have a lot of characteristics of the village, which is one of the characteristic cultures of the ancient village. Overview of the Long Valley Village area can be seen in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1** Overview of the Langtou Village area

## 4 RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

The field survey was conducted in Langtou Village, Guangzhou City during two time periods, July 10 to July 12, 2023 and January 10-12, 2024, and researched twenty-nine respondents. The interviewees included major groups such as tourism practitioners, residents, and village committees. The interviews were analyzed at five levels: personal information, perception of socio-economic development, perception of changes in social life, perception of changes in the human habitat, and perception of cultural and tourism construction[6-7]. The questionnaire data were organized, classified and analyzed as follows.

### 4.1 Overview of Basic Information on Residents

Of the 29 respondents, 17 were female and 12 were male. Most of the respondents were retired people, accounting for 24.14%, and students accounted for 20.69%, which is in line with the reality that most of the elderly and children in Langtou Village are left behind.

Among them, the education level of the respondents is mostly concentrated in university (college) and above, accounting for 31.03%. The proportion of residents with education level of elementary school and below is 27.59%, which is in line with the actual situation that most of the local residents are elderly people and students. This reflects that the education level of the majority of local residents is lower than medium, and they are not sensitive to the construction of cultural tourism and the issuance of related policies. The basic information of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Basic information of respondents

| sports event                     | form                    | frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| distinguishing between the sexes | male                    | 12        | 41.38          |
|                                  | women                   | 17        | 58.62          |
| educational attainment           | primary and below       | 8         | 27.59          |
|                                  | junior high school      | 5         | 17.24          |
|                                  | high school             | 7         | 24.14          |
|                                  | university and above    | 9         | 31.03          |
| political profile                | communist Party member  | 5         | 17.24          |
|                                  | communist Youth League  | 3         | 10.34          |
|                                  | democratic party        | 0         | 0              |
|                                  | the masses              | 21        | 72.41          |
| careers                          | schoolchildren          | 6         | 20.69          |
|                                  | business personnel      | 3         | 10.34          |
|                                  | institutional personnel | 5         | 17.24          |
|                                  | retirees                | 7         | 24.14          |
|                                  | freelancer              | 4         | 13.79          |
|                                  | (sth. or sb) else       | 4         | 13.79          |

### 4.2 Information Collection and Data Coding

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 29 people, including Langtou Village tourism practitioners, village committee members and villagers, focusing on the tourism development situation of Langtou Village and the effectiveness of the construction of Langtou Village. The data collection and coding of the study are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2** Collection and coding of research data

| formality                  | data object  | thrust   | encodings |
|----------------------------|--|--|-----------|
| Semi-structured interviews | Heads of tourism enterprises (4)                                       | Status of tourism development in Langtou Village         | A1        |
|                            | Local village committees (3)   | Tourism development in Langtou Village                   | A2        |
|                            | Local residents or employees (9)                                       | Personal Development and Construction of Langtou Village | A3        |
| Participatory observation  | In-depth field experience observation, photography, etc.               | Langtou Village and its Construction                     | B1        |
| internal information       | Information provided by local village committees and other authorities | Political, economic, social and other developments       | C1        |
| External information       | Integrated media materials and periodical                              | Development effectiveness of Langtou                     | D1        |

## 5 ANALYSIS OF FACTORS INFLUENCING THE HAPPINESS OF RESIDENTS IN LANGTOU VILLAGE

### 5.1 Historical and Cultural Continuity

Historical culture refers to the past history and culture of a country or region[8]. The continuation of the historical culture of Langtou Village will enable the residents of Langtou Village to have a cultural heritage that is uniquely their own. It can also enhance the people's sense of pride in their own culture, which in turn can make the residents feel a sense of well-being. An interviewee mentioned, "Our place is situated in the north and facing the south, with very good feng shui and outstanding people! During the Ming and Qing dynasties, many people had high school entrance examinations, and there were many talented people. In the area, there were seven sons and five students, and two township scholars from father and son, and nearly 10 kilometer stones are still preserved, which are the best witnesses of the people of Langtou Village who have returned to their hometowns with their clothes on their backs, and at the same time, it also makes Langtou Village become a village of scholars that is known far and wide. As our ancestors worked as officials at the imperial court in the olden days, and they had made a great achievement, averting a catastrophe and saving a side of the people, the emperor gave five rewards to our ancestors!. After the construction of the culture of honesty and integrity, the popularity of our village has increased, and sometimes foreigners come to learn about our culture here! (A3-5)". Meanwhile, when interviewing the residents about their knowledge of the village's history and culture, some interviewees also mentioned, "There is a poem of Huang's recognition of relatives in our Langtou Village, and at the critical moment of fleeing from the disaster, the parents said that they recognized each other with this poem. This poem embodies the expectation of our ancestors for their offspring (A3-4)". The interviews revealed the pride that the interviewees gained from their own history and culture, contributing to the well-being of the residents.

### 5.2 Cultural Transmission of Genealogy

Genealogy has a long history and rich cultural connotation[9]. The inheritance of genealogy can promote the connection and cohesion between family members, and inherit the family virtues and family training education. Through the research of genealogy, you can also understand your own life and the relationship between family members, and enhance the sense of identity and belonging among each other. At the same time, genealogy, as an important historical record, can help family members trace the origins of their families and find their own family roots, fulfilling this desire to trace their roots. An interviewee mentioned, "All the male members of our Langtou Village are surnamed Wong. In this aspect of genealogy writing, it is some of the elders in the village who are continuously updating the genealogy, which is now stored in the museum at the village balcony outside the village (A3-8)". This shows the importance of the Huang genealogy to the residents and the enhancement of the residents' well-being brought to them by the genealogical heritage.

### 5.3 Cultural Continuity of Festivals

Traditional festivals are a kind of national customs and habits, as well as an important carrier for the transmission of history and culture. The formation of traditional festivals is a process of long-term accumulation and cohesion of the history and culture of a nation or country. The continuation of festival culture not only can make people in the festival to increase knowledge, be taught, but also help to show culture, promote virtue, cultivate sentiment, promote tradition. At the same time, traditional festivals condense the spirit and emotion of a nation, carry the cultural lineage and ideological essence of a nation, and are the spiritual bond of unity of a nation. Langtou Village has been continuing many traditional festivals, such as the Lantern Festival in the Lantern Festival and the Burning of Wo Lo in the Mid-Autumn Festival. An interviewee mentioned, "Around the 15th day of the first month of the year, our village holds the Lantern Festival, which is mainly composed of two parts, namely the lantern parade and the lantern throwing, and it is a very grand event with a very lively scene. At the Mid-Autumn Festival on August 15 every year, there will be a "Wo Lou burning" activity, which is also one of the more lively festivals on our side of Tanbu, that is, burning firewood in the Wo Lou, and then sprinkle salt when it burns vigorously, and then the fire goes up with a bang, which represents a red-hot fire ( A3-2)". This represents the red-hot fire ( A3- 2)". It can be seen that the continuation of the festival culture is of great significance to the residents, and therefore, it contributes to a certain extent to the enhancement of the residents' sense of well-being.

### 5.4 Economic and Social Development

The construction of cultural tourism in Langtou Village has improved the infrastructure inside the ancient village, such as road construction, water and electricity facilities. For the residents involved in the tourism activities in the ancient village, some employment opportunities have been created, which have increased the employment rate of local residents to a certain extent, effectively improving their living standard and further enhancing their sense of well-being. Some interviewees mentioned, "Employment opportunities have increased some positions for sanitation at the village balcony, maintenance of the Lotus Pond environment, etc., as well as some income from the lectures I sometimes give (A3-3)."

However, at the same time, some residents reflected that the construction of cultural tourism in Langtou Village could not boost the local economy, "the economy is not boosted at all, just a little bit of subsidy every year (A3-4)". "The cultural tourism construction cannot effectively drive the village economy (A3-5)". Therefore, it is evident that residents perceive economic and social development differently, and they value the economic benefits that are closely related to it.

### **5.5 Changes in Social Life**

Destination popularity along with the development of tourism can enhance the sense of belonging and pride of local residents, which will make them experience a different kind of happiness[10]. The construction of cultural tourism in Langtou Village has increased the visibility of the area to a certain extent. "After the construction of LCS, the number of tourists has increased compared with the previous one, and during weekends and holidays, more people will come to visit than usual (A1-1)". It can be seen that when the construction of cultural tourism expands the popularity of Langtou Village and increases the number of tourists visiting the village, it can affect the local residents' own pride to a certain extent.

Dr. Bruce Headey of the University of Melbourne followed 60, 000 Germans for 25 years and found that lifestyle changes can have a long-lasting effect on a person's life satisfaction[11]. Unfortunately, however, most of the interviewees said that the CIVICUS did not change their lifestyle and had no impact on their normal life. Some interviewees said, "The cultural construction inside the village seldom has the village collective expropriating private space, and the arrival of tourists does not reduce our private space, nor does it affect us, all the cultural tourism construction has no impact on our life (A2-1)". It shows that the visits of foreign tourists do not affect the lifestyle of local residents, and there are no major fluctuations in the residents' well-being, both psychologically and behaviorally.

### **5.6 Habitat Change**

The construction of the cultural tourism in Langtou Village has not only improved the local environment, but also improved the service facilities for local public life and enhanced the residents' sense of well-being. Some interviewees mentioned, "The construction of cultural tourism has not only not polluted our environment, but on the contrary, our environment has been improved after the construction because the government has spent money to hire some people to take care of the ponds and other places on a regular basis, which has led to the continuous improvement of the environment (A1-4)". It can be seen that the government's emphasis on the cultural and tourism construction in Langtou Village has enhanced the residents' sense of well-being to a certain extent. "There is a cultural room under construction in the theme park here, and there are also places for children to play, such as basketball court, table tennis, etc. The facilities over at the end of the village are more complete, and in addition to that, there are also some public facilities that are being improved (A3-7)". Through the interviews, it can be seen that the improvement of the environment by the cultural and tourism construction has really contributed to the improvement of the residents' sense of well-being.

## **6 CULTURAL TOURISM HELPS OPTIMIZE THE PATH OF RESIDENTS' WELL-BEING**

### **6.1 Build a Benefit-Sharing Mechanism with the Help of Multiple Forces**

Local governments should formulate and improve relevant plans and policies to promote the rational development and utilization of resources. This includes formulating land-use planning, resource management policies, environmental protection policies, etc., and clarifying the direction, methods and standards of resource development. In addition to this, diversified financing channels should be sought, such as the introduction of social capital and the launching of cooperative projects, in order to increase financial support and investment in resource development. By cooperating with enterprises or social sectors, we can jointly develop resources and share risks and benefits. Most importantly, publicity and education should be strengthened to raise the awareness and importance of resource development among villagers and decision-makers. Relevant training and lectures should be organized to raise villagers' awareness of the potential of resource development, encourage them to participate actively and give full play to their creative abilities, and drive them to create happiness with their hands.

### **6.2 Introducing the Principle of Democratic Participation and Improving the Rights and Interests Protection and Compensation Mechanism**

Organize resident participation surveys and symposiums to respond effectively to residents' needs and expectations. At the same time, effective community participation mechanisms should be established to ensure that residents can fully participate in the planning process and form cooperative relationships with the Government and planning organizations. Establish a mechanism for protecting and compensating residents in cases where their rights and interests are affected by planning changes. Ensure that residents receive a fair share of the benefits of the planning process and provide the necessary safeguards and support.

### **6.3 Relying on the New Media Medium to Build Cultural Inheritance Paths**

The transmission of culture begins with the strengthening of cultural education for local residents and young people. Through cultural courses and training programs, opportunities are provided for people to understand and learn about local cultures, traditions and values, and to stimulate their interest in and identification with culture. In response to the phenomenon of labor exodus, we can build local brand characteristics and create cultural enterprises to promote the development and innovation of local cultural industries. This will attract talents to stay in the local area and promote the prosperity and development of culture. In addition, relying on modern technology and social media platforms, establish a cultural exchange network. Through the network platform, the sharing and dissemination of cultural information to the outside world can be carried out to promote cultural exchanges and cooperation and reduce the impact of geographical distance on cultural transmission.

#### 6.4 Enhance Resident Participation and Optimize Tourism Products and Services

Strengthening residents' sense of participation and responsibility and involving them in the development and management of the tourism industry. Conduct training and education programs to enhance residents' sense of service and professionalism, and increase their employment opportunities and income in the tourism industry. Transform single tourism products into diversified and high-quality tourism products to meet the needs of tourists. Attract the interest of more tourists while enhancing the competitiveness of the local tourism industry through the development of unique tourism resources and the introduction of special activities and experiences.

#### 7 CONCLUSIONS

Rural tourism development needs to examine the elements of culture and resources, organically unify the theme image, industrial development and product supply, and aim to create a differentiated and distinctive rural cultural tourism development model[12]. This study takes the rural cultural tourism development of Langtou Village in Guangzhou, one of the national traditional ancient villages, as a case study, and explores the impact of the development model of "tourism + cultural tourism" on residents' happiness from the perspective of residents' happiness. Four optimization paths are proposed to assess the well-being of Langtou Village residents. This is a rare achievement in the existing research on ancient villages that focuses on cultural and tourism resources and industries to help villagers' happiness, and it has a good guiding effect on the research on ancient villages.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

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