

# KEY ELEMENTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF CULTURAL-TOURISM INTEGRATION ALONG THE ZHEDONG TANG POETRY ROAD: A GROUNDED THEORY ANALYSIS

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**Abstract:** Cultural-tourism integration serves as a primary driver of industry innovation and local economic growth, concurrently meeting the increasing aspirations for a better life. This study, grounded in network text analysis and data from various interviews, employs grounded theory to construct a multidimensional integrated model for the development of cultural tourism on the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. The research systematically reveals key elements and theoretical logic behind the integration of cultural tourism on the poetic route. Findings include: (1) Key elements of Cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, encompassing integration connotations (resource integration, product integration, factor integration), integration subjects (government, enterprises, residents, tourists, and resources as the five major subjects), integration paths (conceptual integration, industrial integration, market integration, service integration), and integration models (poetic route tourism routes, poetic route experiential activities, poetic route brand construction). (2) The internal dimensions of these four elements are mutually independent, not only individually influencing the Cultural-tourism integration but also partially overlaying to collectively impact its development. This study contributes to understanding the theoretical logic underlying the Cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, offering insights and references for the high-quality development of cultural tourism on poetic routes.  
**Keywords:** Zhedong Tang Poetry Road; Cultural-tourism integration; Grounded theory; Key elements; Theoretical framework

## 1 INTRODUCTION

As a significant cultural heritage of China, the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road not only preserves rich cultural memories but also provides a unique resource foundation for the integration of culture and tourism in the region[1]. In recent years, with the deepening implementation of the cultural and tourism integration strategy, the Tang Poetry Road has gradually become a crucial driver for local economic development and cultural heritage preservation. In 2019, the Zhejiang provincial government explicitly proposed the goal of establishing the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road as a “golden tourism belt,” further accelerating the rapid growth of the regional cultural tourism industry. According to statistics, in 2022, the number of tourists received along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road exceeded 50 million, with a total cultural tourism revenue surpassing 30 billion yuan, making it a significant growth engine for Zhejiang’s cultural and tourism economy[2]. Despite the remarkable achievements in the integrated development of culture and tourism along the Tang Poetry Road, several challenges persist in practice, including insufficient cultural resource development, product homogenization, and an underdeveloped industrial chain. These challenges have constrained the sustainable development of the region’s cultural and tourism sector.

Compared with its rapid development in practice, academic research on the cultural and tourism integration of the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road remains relatively limited. Existing studies primarily focus on cataloging and evaluating cultural resources or designing and promoting tourism routes, often adopting a single-dimensional perspective. There is a lack of systematic discussion on the key factors and internal logic driving the integration of culture and tourism. Although some scholars have proposed preliminary frameworks for integrating cultural and tourism resources and fostering industry collaboration, these studies tend to overlook the multidimensional and dynamic nature of cultural and tourism integration. They fail to uncover its core driving mechanisms and theoretical underpinnings. In essence, cultural and tourism integration is a complex, systemic practice involving the interaction of multiple factors, such as cultural resources, tourism products, market demand, and policy support. Only through systematic theoretical analysis can scientific guidance be provided for the high-quality development of cultural tourism integration.

To address these practical challenges and gaps in theoretical research, this study focuses on the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road and employs grounded theory methodology to explore the following key questions: What are the critical elements driving the cultural and tourism integration of the Tang Poetry Road? How do these elements interact? What theoretical framework supports the sustainable development of cultural and tourism integration? By collecting and analyzing multi-source data, this study systematically identifies the key factors and their interrelationships, constructing a corresponding theoretical framework. On one hand, this study advances the theoretical understanding of the complexity and dynamics of cultural and tourism integration, offering a new analytical perspective for related research. On the other hand, the findings provide practical insights for the cultural and tourism integration of the Tang Poetry Road and other cultural heritage routes, contributing to the high-quality development of regional cultural and tourism economies.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, as a tourism route with profound historical and cultural heritage, has emerged as a focal point in academic research. Scholars have explored various aspects, including cultural dissemination, policy planning, and resource development, thereby establishing a preliminary research framework for the Tang Poetry Road[3]. However, systematic studies on its integrated cultural and tourism development remain insufficient, particularly concerning the key elements of integration and their theoretical underpinnings. This section provides a review of existing research from three main perspectives.

### 2.1 Cultural Dissemination and Brand Development in the Context of Convergent Media

In the era of convergent media, the cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road has become critical research directions. Scholars have employed diverse media formats to concretize the cultural essence of the Tang Poetry Road, creating a distinctive cultural symbol. For instance, Xi Xuesong et al., in their article the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road: A Poetry-Oriented Cultural Route published on Guangming Online, systematically reviewed the cultural value and dissemination strategies of the route. Li Dian, in a report by China News Service, emphasized the historical significance and contemporary revitalization potential of the Tang Poetry Road. Additionally, Zhang Guangming and Xi Xuesong discussed preservation and revitalization strategies in an article published on People's Daily Online. Moreover, the Zhejiang provincial government has actively promoted the cultural dissemination and branding of the Tang Poetry Road through policy documents such as The Launch of Zhejiang's Grand Garden Initiative: Witnessing the Culturally Rich "Poetic and Picturesque Zhejiang" and Zhejiang: Jointly Building the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road (2019)[4]. Furthermore, national and international academic conferences—such as the Tang Poetry Road Symposium held in Xinchang—alongside extensive media coverage by People's Daily and Guangming Daily, have further expanded the cultural influence of the Tang Poetry Road.

### 2.2 Policy Planning and the Development of the Cultural-Tourism Industry

The Zhejiang provincial and local governments have prioritized the cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road and have introduced a series of policy initiatives. In 2018, The Action Plan for the Inheritance and Development of Zhejiang's Outstanding Traditional Culture explicitly proposed the creation of a "Tang Poetry Road Landscape and Cultural Tourism Project" as a key component of Zhejiang's cultural heritage enhancement initiative. Subsequently, The Action Plan for the Construction of Zhejiang's Grand Garden and The Development Plan for the Poetry Road Cultural Belt in Zhejiang Province further delineated the overall framework and implementation pathways for the construction of the Poetry Road Cultural Belt[5]. The release of The Three-Year Action Plan for the Construction of the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road (2020–2022) in 2020 marked a substantive phase in the cultural and tourism integration of the Tang Poetry Road. In 2021, The Three-Year Action Plans for the Grand Canal Poetry Road, the Qiantang River Poetry Road, and the Oujiang River Landscape Poetry Road (2021–2023) further refined the development goals and key tasks for the Poetry Road Cultural Belt. These policies have provided a robust institutional foundation for the cultural and tourism integration of the Tang Poetry Road.

### 2.3 Cultural-Tourism Resource Development and Integrated Development Strategies

Scholars have explored the cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road from various perspectives. Zhang Yameng (2021) proposed that the cultural significance of the route should be transformed from academic research into public cultural products, emphasizing the deep integration of tourism, culture, publicity, industry, and commerce. This approach, according to Zhang, would facilitate rural tourism, holistic regional tourism, and international cultural exchanges. In Exploring the Cultural-tourism integration of the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, Xiao Weige and Lilian (2020) analyzed the integrated development strategies of the Tang Poetry Road within the broader context of cultural and tourism integration in the Yangtze River Delta. Their study proposed measures such as consolidating cultural tourism resources, co-developing a shared cultural tourism community, and jointly promoting tourism projects along the route. Additionally, Zhu Man (2020), in *Current Status and Reflections on the Development of the Tang Poetry Road from a Cultural-tourism integration Perspective*, examined issues and inconsistencies in the development of the route, offering strategic recommendations based on cultural-tourism integration frameworks. Meanwhile, Chen Hui analyzed the branding of the Tang Poetry Road from a big data perspective, though the study's depth and systematic approach require further refinement.

### 2.4 Research Review and Prospects

Despite the progress made in research on the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, several limitations remain: (1) Existing studies predominantly focus on cultural dissemination and policy planning, while discussions on the key elements and theoretical logic of cultural and tourism integration remain fragmented and lack systematic analysis. (2) Research perspectives tend to be singular, with limited attention to the multidimensional and dynamic aspects of cultural and tourism integration along the route. (3) Most studies rely on qualitative descriptions, with insufficient in-depth analysis based on grounded theory or other qualitative methodologies. To address these gaps, this study applies

grounded theory to systematically analyze the key elements of cultural and tourism integration along the Tang Poetry Road. These elements include integration connotations, integration stakeholders, integration pathways, and integration models. By constructing a theoretical framework, this study aims to provide theoretical insights and practical guidance for policymakers at various levels, facilitating the high-quality development of cultural tourism along the Tang Poetry Road.

### 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 3.1 Research Methods and Data Collection

At the present stage, the cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road has evident real-world context and local features but lacks qualitative theoretical research. Qualitative research allows for a comprehensive exploration of all potential categories. Grounded theory, through in-depth analysis of qualitative data, effectively reveals causal relationships and constructs new theories. Therefore, this study adopts a qualitative research approach grounded in the grounded theory. It systematically synthesizes and logically refines the elements of the cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road based on multi-source interview data and Nvivo11 software[6].

#### 3.2 Data Sources

In the context of the internet era, traditional qualitative data sources in China are increasingly expanding towards online platforms. This study's data collection is primarily based on online platforms, supplemented by on-site interviews. Information obtained from multiple data sources can complement and verify each other, helping to avoid issues arising from a single data source and enhancing the credibility and validity of the research results.

The main data for this study fall into two categories: The first is Online Texts. It includes 89 documents related to the integration of culture and tourism, such as online materials, government policies, and academic papers. They serve as experiential materials for this study. Additionally, personal judgments are made by combining online materials with previous research results, actively absorbing diverse perspectives from the texts, fostering a rich interaction between the researcher and the original data and literature. The second is On-site Interview Texts. Shaoxing is selected as a case study for on-site interviews. Considering the entire Tang Poetry Road, Shaoxing's counties constitute more than half of the total poetry road nodes. Geographically, Shaoxing is a hub and a necessary passage along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. Therefore, It was selected as a typical case for its representative nature. On-site interview data not only reflects key factors but also supplements online text information.

In 2020, the Three-Year Action Plan for the Construction of Shaoxing's "Three Major Cultural Belts" (2020–2022) was issued, outlining five Tang Poetry routes: "aerial, mountainous, land-based, waterborne, and cloud-based." [7] Additionally, the 14th Five-Year Cultural Tourism Plan of Shaoxing City was developed. The eight cultural and tourism "golden name cards" jointly cultivated by the Zhejiang Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism and the Shaoxing Municipal Government further enhanced the city's cultural-tourism brand.

Therefore, the case study is representative. The field interview data not only provide an in-depth reflection of the key factors but also supplement online textual information effectively.

#### 3.3 Data Collection

This study collected 89 online texts from January 2019 to December 31, 2023. To control sample quality, authoritative online platforms such as *Guangming Daily*, *Zhejiang Publicity*, *Zhejiang Culture and Tourism*, and *Shaoxing Culture and Tourism* were further utilized to collect relevant reports on the integrated development of cultural-tourism along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road for triangulation. Through comprehensive reading of online materials, the study gained a general understanding and organized government policy planning documents, reports on cultural-tourism integration, news reports, the Tang Poetry Road and Shaoxing cultural industry development summit conference proceedings, academic journal papers, and more. After thorough comparisons and adhering to the principles of information completeness and theoretical saturation, 89 high-quality online texts were finalized, totaling 329,200 words.

To enhance data reliability and avoid issues related to a single-channel data source, four trained members of the research team conducted on-site interviews in Shaoxing's Yuecheng District, Keqiao District, Shangyu District, Xinchang City, and Shengzhou City from August 1 to 30, 2023. Twelve leaders from scenic spots were purposefully interviewed. Sample selection followed principles of typicality, representativeness, and heterogeneity. Firstly, based on Shaoxing's 2021 introduction of the "Twelve Scenes of Zhejiang East Tang Poetry Road in Shaoxing," the planned 12 scenes were selected as research samples. Secondly, efforts were made to cover the three districts, one county, and two cities of Shaoxing as much as possible, involving different cultural and tourism resources and product content. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with the Deputy Director of Shaoxing City Bureau of Culture and Broadcasting, and the President of Shaoxing East Zhejiang Tang Poetry Road Research Association. Due to limitations related to entrepreneurs' work affairs, time schedules, and information guidance, after confirming basic information such as the willingness and social identity of the interviewees, the research team used a semi-structured interview approach, referring to online materials and flexibly asking questions related to the research topic, with each interview lasting 30 to 60 minutes. Subsequently, the on-site interview recordings were transcribed, and additional relevant

information was supplemented using OTA information. Fifteen on-site interview texts were finalized, totaling over 76,100 words.

Finally, the study uses the identified 89 online texts and on-site interview texts for grounded theory analysis, totaling over 405,300 words. All of these constitute samples for the study of the integrated development of cultural tourism along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road.

### 3.4 Coding Process

Following grounded theory principles, the research team used Nvivo11 software to sequentially assign codes (T1-T89) to the selected texts. The extracted codes underwent open, axial, and selective coding. During the coding process, through expert consultations, repeated reflections, and comparisons of extracted conceptual categories, core categories were refined. Finally, combining the relationships between categories, a theoretical model was constructed from the bottom up.

#### 3.4.1 Open Coding

Open coding involves conceptualizing and categorizing qualitative data gradually. Initially, interview texts were conceptualized sentence by sentence without subjective bias or preconceptions, encoded as free nodes while preserving the original meaning as much as possible. Subsequently, nodes with less relevance to the integration of cultural tourism along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road and a frequency of occurrence less than three were removed. Redundant nodes were merged, resulting in 119 initial categories. Due to space limitations, an example of open coding is provided in Table 1.

**Table 1** An example of open coding (arranged in the order of interview material numbers)

Initial Category	Partial Original Sentences (Initial Concepts)
<b>Resource Exploration</b>	The culture of the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road is a Chinese cultural treasure that integrates Confucianism, Buddhism, poetry, calligraphy, tea culture, opera, pottery, folklore, dialects, myths, and legends. The natural landscapes and cultural heritage along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road are diverse and colorful...
<b>Government Involvement</b>	Participants in the symposium included functional departments from various districts and counties, such as the Cultural, Radio, Television, and Tourism Bureaus, Development and Reform Bureaus, Natural Resources and Planning Bureaus, Water Conservancy Bureaus, Ecological Environment Bureaus, Agriculture and Rural Affairs Bureaus, Construction Bureaus, and Administrative Enforcement Bureaus. Additionally, representatives from cultural and tourism enterprises, village and community representatives, and research experts were also present...
<b>Brand Construction</b>	Building a new tourism brand, "Reading Tang Poetry, Touring Shaoxing," involves collaborative efforts from districts, counties, and cities to launch five Tang Poetry routes: aerial, mountainous, land, water, and cloud...
<b>Cultural Tourism Experience</b>	Designing distinctive tourism routes under the theme "Tang Poetry+," including ecological tours of Zhedong Tang Poetry, village-style tours, folklore and cultural tours, health and wellness vacations, leisure ancient road tours, and celebrity footsteps tours...
<b>Academic Research</b>	Think tanks can leverage the professional expertise of their members to provide advice and suggestions for the cultural tourism research along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, the integrated development of cultural tourism resources, and the organization and excavation of cultural heritage along the route...
<b>Industrial Integration</b>	Utilizing the "Five-Star Standard, 3A Striving" village construction, integrating with homestays, rural guesthouses, and fishing guesthouses, enables various local customs, rituals, pilgrimages, performances, and festivals along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road to become a scenic and enjoyable landscape...

#### 3.4.2 Axial coding

Axial coding aims to further summarize and rearrange the categories obtained from open coding. It establishes connections between different categories through cluster analysis and develops main categories. The specific approach involves developing the nature and aspects of the categories to make them more rigorous. Independent categories are related to discover potential logical relationships between them. At this stage, combining the similarity and potentiality of concept dimensions from existing entrepreneurial research results, the initial categories are summarized, resulting in 15 subcategories and 4 main categories ( Table 2).

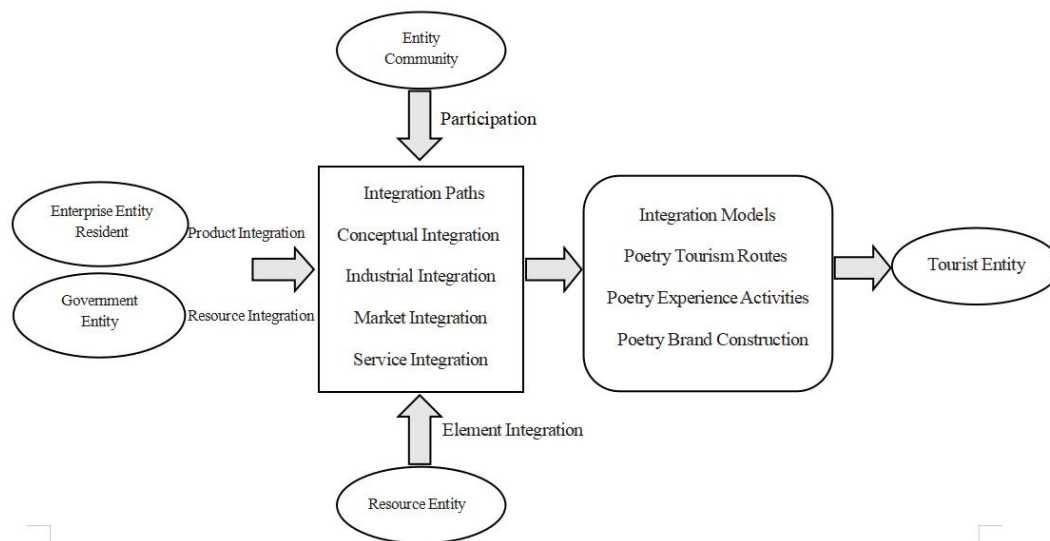
**Table 2** Axial Coding Analysis

Main Categories	Subcategories	Subcategory Content
Integration Content	Resource Integration	Resource Exploration, Resource Integration
	Product Integration	Product Development, Transformation Innovation
	Element Integration	Element Optimization, Element Aggregation
Integration Entity	Government Entity	Government Promotion, Infrastructure, Efficiency of Affairs
	Enterprise Entity Resident	Operation Management, Market Attraction, Talent Development

	Entity Community	Participation, Cultural Conflicts, Interest Conflicts
	Tourist Entity	Cultural Tourism Experience, Tourist Behavior, Consumption Upgrade
	Resource Entity	Talent Supply, Education Consultation, Platform Support
Integration Paths	Conceptual Integration	Theoretical Construction, Academic Research, Education and Training
	Industrial Integration	Format Integration, Resource Integration, Product Integration (IP Identification and Development)
	Market Integration	Industrial Innovation, Marketing Integration, Regulatory Integration
	Service Integration	Service Advancement, Resource Coordination, Technical Services
Integration Models	Poetry Tourism Routes	Following Tang Poetry for Gourmet Food, Following Tang Poetry for Scenery, Following Tang Poetry for Study Tours
	Poetry Experience Activities	"Tang Poetry+" Homestay Experience, "Tang Poetry+" Wine Tasting Experience, "Tang Poetry+" Costume Experience
	Poetry Brand Construction	Digitization, Professionalization, Popularization

**3.4.3 Selective coding**

Selective coding aims to delineate the data storyline after confirming the saturation of conceptual categories in axial coding. It involves selecting core concept categories, establishing systematic connections between these core categories and others, and thereby distilling the process of building the theoretical model. The storyline of the “Integrated Development Mechanism Model of Zhedong Tang Poetry Road Cultural-Tourism” is as follows: the enterprise entity and the government entity, through product integration and resource integration, and the resource entity through element integration, interact in the process of Cultural-tourism integration. This results in the formation of four major integration paths: conceptual integration, industrial integration, market integration, and service integration. Ultimately, a cultural-tourism integration model is established by creating poetry-themed tourism routes, experiential activities, and brand building along the poetry road, attracting tourists to actively engage in the integration of the cultural and tourism industries(Figure1). The various entities collaborate to mutually promote the penetration and integration of the cultural-tourism industry.



**Figure 1** Integrated Development Mechanism Model of Zhedong Tang Poetry Road Cultural-Tourism

**4 RESULTS**

This study, based on grounded theory, has constructed a multidimensional integration model. It systematically elucidates the key elements and theoretical logic of the Cultural-tourism integration development along Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. The research findings are as follows:(1)Four elements, namely integration content, integration subjects, integration paths, and integration models, have a significant impact on the Cultural-tourism integration development along Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. Enterprise and government entities influence the Cultural-tourism integration process through product and resource integration. Resource entities play a role through element integration, while resident entities participate and coordinate in the integration process. This forms four integration paths: conceptual integration, industrial integration, market integration, and service integration. Ultimately, it attracts tourist entities to participate in the integrated development of cultural tourism through the model of creating premium tourist routes and strengthening poetry route experiential activities.(2) Each dimension within the four elements is mutually independent and not only individually affects the Cultural-tourism integration along Zhedong Tang Poetry Road but can also

partially overlay, producing a collective impact. (3) Integration paths and integration models have a dynamic cyclic promotion effect on the Cultural-tourism integration along Zhedong Tang Poetry Road.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The constituent dimensions of Cultural-tourism integration encompass integration connotation, integration subjects, integration pathways, and integration modes. The amalgamation of cultural tourism industries, influenced by the relaxation of regulatory constraints and the heightened spiritual aspirations of the populace, operates within the external conditions of regulatory leniency and an elevated pursuit of cultural experiences[8]. In the post-pandemic era, as epidemiological control measures gradually ease, there is a burgeoning public demand for tourism experiences, transforming from an initial inclination towards nature-centric activities to a nuanced interest in cultural tourism that satiates spiritual yearnings. The erstwhile singular scenic tourism paradigm has been supplanted by a more intricate cultural and scenic tourism model. The subjects involved in Cultural-tourism integration are evolving towards increased diversification, and the connotative dimensions of Cultural-tourism integration continue to unfold.

### 5.1 Connotation of Cultural-tourism integration

Cultural-tourism integration comprises resource amalgamation, product fusion, and element synthesis. Resource amalgamation further bifurcates into resource excavation and resource consolidation. The emphasis lies in excavating the essence and profundity, integrating diverse resources, and accentuating distinctive features. Along Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, this entails consolidating elements of traditional Tang poetry culture, including ancient cities, pathways, architecture, gastronomy, language, music, dance, craftsmanship, rituals, and more. Particular emphasis is placed on amalgamating Tang poetry elements with tangible mediums, transforming intangible elements into tangible artifacts. Through vivid tourism design and exhibition, the goal is to shape the distinctive brand of Zhedong Poetry Road, enticing visitors and propelling tourism industry development[9]. Simultaneously, the development of local tourism can expedite the growth of the cultural industry, serving as a conduit for cultural manifestation through travel. Product fusion further delineates into product development and transformative innovation. Product development involves the introduction of cultural and creative products related to the poetry road and the expansion of cultural tourism experiential projects. The cultural connotation of the poetry road provides valuable benchmarks for product development. Transformative innovation relies on modern technology to elevate tourism projects along the poetry road based on existing tourism resources. Illustratively, this includes introducing projects that revisit the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road and incorporating cultural experiential projects at scenic spots. This approach effectively reinvigorates local cultural industries. Element synthesis bifurcates into element optimization and element aggregation. Element optimization concentrates on enhancing service elements, optimizing elements in the industrial chain, and configuring market elements. Element aggregation involves integrating business types, fostering sustainable development of comprehensive benefits, and restructuring the “three chains” of the industrial chain, value chain, and innovation chain. Overall, the cultural industry complements the tourism industry, establishing a mutually reinforcing relationship. The former contributes creativity to the latter, while the latter provides a market for the former. Cultural-tourism integration propels the high-quality development and structural reconfiguration of Tang poetry culture and the tourism industry in Zhedong, giving rise to novel formats and configurations. It serves as an efficacious approach and optimal decision-making strategy for rural revitalization.

### 5.2 Cultural-tourism integration Subjects

In the practice of Cultural-tourism integration, the government and enterprises assume primary leadership roles in the integration mechanism. Resource entities and resident entities serve as providers in the integration mechanism, while tourists act as the audience and catalysts for Cultural-tourism integration.

The government primarily serves as the “guiding force” in the construction of poetry road culture. This guidance manifests in two main dimensions. Firstly, it involves establishing overall construction goals and formulating macro plans. This includes clarifying the overall goals and stage tasks of poetry road culture construction, proposing the basic ideas and strategic layout of poetry road culture construction, and planning the implementation content and practical pathways of poetry road culture construction. Secondly, it encompasses formulating and implementing relevant policies. This includes adjusting cultural policies, industry policies, and social policies related to poetry road culture construction. It also involves exploring specific education policies, talent policies, and propaganda policies, forming effective mechanisms for driving and overseeing the implementation of these policies. Simultaneously, the government's guiding role needs to be scientific and rational, establishing inherent linkage mechanisms that combine and coordinate actions across government levels and various administrative departments[10].

Enterprise entities collaborate with the government by managing scenic areas along the poetry road, enhancing the market appeal of scenic areas by creating poetry road tourism brands, and cultivating professionals in cultural tourism, among other activities. Resource entities, such as the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road Research Association and various city cultural tourism research associations, contribute by providing hubs for integrating Tang poetry cultural resources, offering platforms for communication, and supporting the transfer of talents to facilitate Cultural-tourism integration.

In the context of Cultural-tourism integration, resident entities need to accept the cultural differences of external tourists and the impact of poetry road tourism policies on the local area. They participate in Cultural-tourism integration by

resolving conflicts through integration and engaging in community participation. Only when residents understand, value, and accept poetry road culture, accurately grasp the tradition of poetry road culture, and integrate it with their social lives, can effective protection, scientific inheritance, and contemporary rejuvenation of poetry road culture be achieved. Tourist entities, as the audience of Cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Poetry Road, participate by experiencing poetry road tourism, encountering cultural conflicts in different regions, and providing feedback on their experiences. On one hand, tourists' understanding and acceptance of poetry road tourism development affect the government's direction and progress in Cultural-tourism integration. On the other hand, tourists' level of fondness for poetry road tourism directly impacts economic benefits, thereby driving Cultural-tourism integration efforts along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road.

### 5.3 Cultural-tourism integration Paths

Cultural-tourism integration is a systematic endeavor requiring collaborative efforts to advance the integration of cultural tourism industries in terms of concepts, industries, markets, and services.

#### 5.3.1 Conceptual integration path

Concepts serve as the wellspring of practical action, and only through the integration of diverse departmental perspectives can local cultural tourism achieve high-quality development. The government and relevant cultural enterprises, based on tourist interest orientation, determine market demands and construct integration concepts aligned with local development. By using culture to promote tourism, this process elevates local views on the development of Tang poetry culture and tourism industry, promotes local residents' cultural confidence, embodies the value guidance of integrated cultural tourism concepts, and facilitates the symbiosis of culture and tourism. It involves nurturing research teams and establishing an academic hub for Zhedong Tang Poetry research. Firstly, Conducting Academic Activities: This includes hosting academic seminars and forums centered around Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, creating highly recognized poetry road academic forums, with the aim of making them branded and regularized, convening workshops or think tanks one to two times annually. Secondly, Leveraging Government and Academic Institutions: Utilizing the mobilization capacity of government departments and the appeal of academic institutions, attracting experts and scholars familiar with Tang poetry culture, and reinforcing the research team for Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. Thirdly, Encouraging Youth Scholars: Cultivating a group of young scholars dedicated to the research of Zhedong Tang Poetry Road for the intergenerational inheritance of poetry road research. Wide Involvement in Basic Research: Engaging experts and scholars in comprehensive research on Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, aiming to establish a group of influential experts nationally and create an academic hub for Zhedong Tang Poetry research. Conceptual construction, as the foundation, should be disseminated to the general market through diverse channels, thereby fostering related Cultural-tourism integration industries.

#### 5.3.2 Industrial integration path

Guided by the market, the industrial integration path combines the unique features of Tang poetry culture with the design of Cultural-tourism integration concepts. It is supplemented by investments in high-tech for real-time market trend updates, with government and enterprises leading the implementation of industrial integration. Firstly, Business Model Integration: Responding to market demands, engage in cross-industry initiatives and nurture new business models to create or enhance standards and systems for Cultural-tourism integration. Establishing an Industry Alliance: Consider a collaborative think tank approach that combines "Tang Poetry + Industry," connecting universities, research institutions, cultural tourism industry groups, and establishing the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road Cultural Tourism Industry Alliance. This alliance facilitates effective dialogue mechanisms among the government, think tanks, industry, and market, offering decision guidance for the integrated development of cultural tourism along Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. Regularly Releasing Industry Development Reports: Publish regular blue books on cultural tourism industry development, conduct professional performance evaluations, and provide intellectual support for the formulation of policies and measures supporting the development of cultural tourism industries, thereby contributing to the overall tourism development of Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. Secondly, Resource Integration: Effectively integrate the regional features of the poetry road, protect poetry road resources, and strategically plan resource distribution to fully leverage unique resource advantages. Thirdly, Product Integration: Develop and identify Tang poetry cultural IPs along Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. Conduct in-depth exploration of market potential and valuable cultural resources within seemingly chaotic cultural tourism resources. Identify Tang poetry elements and cultural symbols through multiple iterations, leading to the development of Tang poetry cultural IPs and establishing a distinctive Tang poetry cultural tourism IP system[11].

#### 5.3.3 Market integration path

An orderly, effective, and vibrant market is the prerequisite and foundation for the integrated development of cultural tourism along the poetry road. Market integration necessitates industrial innovation, marketing integration, and regulatory integration. Industrial Innovation: Use tourist attractions as spatial carriers to explore growth points in the cultural tourism industry through Tang poetry tourism research, introducing new consumption hotspots and experiences, and creating a new industry chain after integration. Fostering an Enabling Business Environment: Foster a conducive business environment, optimize business services, and cultivate and strengthen Tang poetry cultural tourism brand enterprises with strong core market competitiveness. These exemplary projects, such as Tang poetry cultural stations, ancient Tang poetry villages, Tang poetry towns, and Tang poetry theme parks, can drive Cultural-tourism integration, leading to the development of new growth points in cultural tourism industries. Developing Marketable Cultural

Tourism Products: Responding to market changes and consumption trends, develop cultural tourism products that resonate and innovate effective marketing methods, cultivating new cultural tourism consumption hot spots. Leveraging “Internet+” Technology: Make full use of the advantages of “Internet+,” construct a multidimensional communication system, strengthen the promotion and publicity of Tang poetry road brand image, and utilize the superiority of the “Internet+” era to create a comprehensive and three-dimensional communication path for the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, shaping its brand image[12]. Government’s Role in Market Supervision: The government should strengthen market supervision, maintaining the harmonious and stable development of the cultural tourism market along the poetry road.

#### 5.3.4 Service integration path

Service industry operations inherently involve coordinating multiple functional entities in the market to meet diverse market demands. Service integration requires resource coordination as a preliminary condition, integrating government, enterprise, and talent resources, considering resources related to food, accommodation, transportation, and entertainment. Tailoring Experiences for Different Audiences: Customize experiential packages for different audience groups, such as residents, tourists, and youth, integrating Zhedong Tang Poetry Road cultural project construction with various needs, fully meeting the diverse requirements of different groups. Coordinated Provision of Public Services: After resource integration, various functional departments should collaborate to provide public cultural services, tourism public services, and high-quality tourism services to advance service integration. Scientific Management with Advanced Technologies: The government should engage in scientific management, using advanced technologies like digital information technology as managerial support, enhancing overall technical service content and service levels.

### 5.4 Cultural-tourism integration Models

In alignment with the paths of Cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, several key models for Cultural-tourism integration development have been established: Poetry Tourism Routes, Poetry Experience Activities, and Poetry Brand Construction.

#### 5.4.1 Tang poetry tourism routes

The success of regional tourism development is closely related to the quality of local tourism resources, economic competitiveness, infrastructure levels, marketing strength, and the proactiveness of government tourism policies. Regardless of the type of regional tourism development, the design of tourism routes is crucial for successful tourism industry development. Taking eleven sites along the Poetry Road with rich poetry content as examples, combined with relevant popular attractions, thematic routes such as culinary routes, scenic routes, and study routes are designed based on travel needs, creating dedicated tourist routes for the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road[13].

(1) Following Tang Poetry for Culinary Delights (Table 3): With the flourishing development of “experiential tourism,” there is a growing trend among tourists to visit different places primarily to enjoy and experience local cuisine, seeking aesthetic and pleasurable experiences. Therefore, designing culinary routes along the Poetry Road is essential. For example, introducing the “Tianmu Poetry Feast” in Xinchang, known for the renowned Tianmu Mountain. Tianmu Mountain is not just a mountain or a scenic area but also a cultural landmark. Poetry written by poets like Li Bai has inspired Xinchang’s development. The feast, integrated with Tang poetry themes, showcases the unique local flavors and cultural heritage of Xinchang[14].

**Table 3** Gastronomy Tours

Tour Theme	Specific Route	Features	Recommendations
Gastronomy Tour	Tianmu Mountain-Chuanyan Nineteen Peaks-Wozhou Road-Xinchang Great Buddha Temple-Gushan Park	Focused on gastronomy, this route connects major attractions within Xinchang, offering a shared experience of cuisine and scenic beauty.	Visit Tianmu Mountain, Nineteen Peaks, Great Buddha Temple, Gushan Park, and the Tang Poetry Road Museum. Enjoy a Tang Poetry Banquet at Tianmu Mountain and savor local specialties along Wozhou Road.

(2) Following Tang Poetry for Scenic Exploration (Table 4): Each important point along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road has poetry describing the local scenery. Therefore, each site can integrate Tang poetry culture into its promotion, incorporating the landscapes described in Tang poems and the cultural landscapes behind them into the development of Cultural-tourism integration[15]. Tourism routes can be categorized into mountain and water scenic routes.

**Table 4** Mountain and Waterway Scenic Tours

Tour Theme	Specific Route	Features	Recommendations
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Mountain Scenery Tour	Dongshan-Houshan-Kuaiji Mountain-Nineteen Peaks-Tiantai Mountain	This route mainly focuses on important mountain ranges such as Kuaiji Mountain, Tiantai Mountain, and Dongshan, as mentioned earlier.	Given the significant distances between some of the mountains, it is recommended to use a combination of helicopter or self-driving travel. This route is ideal for young people who enjoy hiking and fitness, allowing them to experience fresh mountain air and nurture both body and mind.
Waterway Scenery Tour	Ruoye Stream-Donghu Lake-Jianhu Wetland Park-Xiaocao Canal-Cao'e River-Shanxi Stream	This route primarily focuses on important rivers and lakes such as Ruoye Stream, Cao'e River, Jianhu Lake, and Donghu Lake. The journey starts from Ruoye Stream, then moves to Donghu Lake, followed by Jianhu Lake, and then travels upstream along Cao'e River to Shanxi Stream.	A combination of car and boat travel is recommended, making the route suitable for a wide range of travelers. The journey offers scenic views along the shores, allowing visitors to appreciate the natural beauty of the waterways.

(3) Following Tang Poetry for Study Tours (Table 5): Study tours decode and reorganize the Tang Poetry Road in Zhedong, incorporating the literary genes, infusing Tang poetry cultural connotations into tourism. This not only promotes the development of tourism in Zhedong but also enhances the cultural-tourism industry [16]. Learning during travel and improving through learning deepen the integration of cultural-tourism industries, making the integration more profound and the products more creative.

**Table 5** Study Tours

Tour Theme	Specific Route	Features	Recommendations
Tang Poetry and Calligraphy Study Tour	Lanting Scenic Area-Yunmen Temple-Jinting Temple	This route connects key cultural landmarks in Shaoxing, focusing on calligraphy culture. It's a cultural sacred site where Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism converge. It is also the place where the calligraphy master Wang Xizhi spent his later years in seclusion.	Visit the Orchid Pavilion, Lanting Stele, and the Wang Xizhi Memorial Hall to experience the beauty of calligraphy and soak in the influence of Buddhist culture.
Tang Poetry Road Celebrity Study Tour	Jianhu Lake - Yue Wang Terrace - Dayu Tomb - Lanting - Kuaiji Mountain - Ruoye Stream - Wozhou Lake - Tiantai Mountain	The "Immortal Poet" Li Bai visited the Shanzhong area three times, exploring many attractions in Shaoxing. This route follows in Li Bai's footsteps, offering visitors a chance to appreciate the natural beauty and local customs of Shaoxing.	The route offers a blend of scenic landscapes and historical landmarks, allowing travelers to not only admire the beauty of Shaoxing but also engage with the legacies of figures such as King Yue.

#### 5.4.2 Tang poetry experience activities

Using Tang poetry as a development script for the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, the "Tang Poetry+" model is employed to promote joint development with tourism. Relevant departments simultaneously activate Tang poetry resources, drive local tourism development and operations, create poetry brand integration, promote the cultural-tourism integration and establish the "Tang Poetry Road" brand in Zhedong. The model is also used for the development of poetry experience activities. Based on different tourism themes, activities like "Tang Poetry+" home-stays, "Tang Poetry+" cuisine, and "Tang Poetry+" wine tasting are designed. Guided by Tang poetry culture, these activities facilitate a cross-millennial dialogue with the Tang dynasty.

"Tang Poetry+" Home-stay Experience: Leveraging the advantages of "humanities + green mountains + clear waters" in Zhedong, major cultural tourism platforms and projects are developed. Exploring the development path of the middle and high-end home-stay industry with Zhedong Tang Poetry characteristics, quality home-stays become windows to showcase Zhedong culture, landscapes, lifestyles, and stories, leaving visitors with unforgettable experiences, impressions, and memories of Zhedong. For example, the Shangshitan Tang Poetry Hall in Xinchang, a boutique cultural home-stay, is located in Tianmu Mountain along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. Tianmu Mountain, known for being a spiritual home for literati and monks over the ages, is said to be "a mountain, a scenic area, and half of all Tang poems." [17] In this home-stay brand development, Shangshitan proposes the concept of "Five Types of Home-stays," with cultural experiential types integrating "Tang Poetry+." The home-stay provides visitors with an unforgettable journey into Tang poetry culture through features like "Tang Poetry-themed room design", "Tang Poetry interpretation and guidance" and "Tang Poetry-themed cultural activities".

"Tang Poetry+" Wine Tasting Experience: In the year 353 AD during the Yonghe reign of Emperor Mu of Jin Dynasty, the renowned calligrapher Wang Xizhi, along with literati Xie An and Sun Chuo, held a gathering of friends at the Orchid Pavilion in Shanyin County. Seated around, they floated wine cups down a stream, each participant composing poetry. To record this event, Wang Xizhi was nominated to write a preface, giving birth to the Preface to the Orchid

Pavilion known as the “first running script in the world”. When people recall this history, they not only appreciate the ancient ink marks but also admire a moment in time, a sentiment, and an irreplaceable gathering. The “Tang Poetry+” wine tasting experience explores how to combine the refined sentiments of ancient literati with modern wine culture, providing a richer and deeper cultural tourism experience. Through poetry-themed wine gatherings, visitors can profoundly experience the cultural connotations of Zhedong Tang poetry while savoring Huangjiu (Chinese yellow rice wine). This experience allows visitors to taste the poetic and thoughtful era while enhancing the richness and diversity of Cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road[18].

“Tang Poetry+” Costume Experience: The “Tang Poetry+” costume experience presents a profound and unique fusion of literature and fashion. This experience not only pays homage to Tang Dynasty literature but also represents a perfect combination of tradition and modernity, with significant academic value. The design inspiration for “Tang Poetry+” costumes comes from classic Tang Dynasty poems. Designers skillfully incorporate these ancient verses into clothing through exquisite design and craftsmanship. For example, on a flowing robe, the unique embroidery technique presents the landscapes described in Libai’s *Dreaming of the Lantian Mountains and Parting Words*. This design not only demonstrates respect for Tang Dynasty literature but explores new creative spaces in the fashion field. Moreover, “Tang Poetry+” costumes go beyond artistic expression in appearance; attention is also paid to technology and comfort. Advanced fabrics, craftsmanship, and comfort designs ensure that these costumes not only possess artistic beauty but also meet the demands of modern life. Throughout the costume experience, the theme of Tang poetry culture is consistently present. Participants can appreciate the exquisite design of the costumes and feel the immersion of Tang poetry culture. The activity is decorated with elements of Tang Dynasty art, guiding customers into an environment full of classical atmosphere. The activity cleverly integrates classical and modern music, creating a cultural feast that blends the beauty of different eras. This experience not only injects new fashion vitality into Tang poetry culture but also provides new development impetus for the cultural tourism industry in Zhedong.

### **5.4.3 Tang poetry brand construction**

Under the deep integration of culture and tourism, constructing the tourism brand of the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road requires emphasizing digitalization and professionalization to provide visitors with a profound cultural experience during their travels.

#### **5.4.3.1 Digitalization**

The branding of the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road must keep pace with the times and foster innovative development. Leveraging the advantages of “Internet+” technology, a multidimensional dissemination system should be established to enhance the promotion of the brand’s image. The abundant cultural assets along the Tang Poetry Road—artistic treasures, folk culture, legends, renowned villages, and historical sites—provide rich materials and practical significance for shaping the brand. The promotional efforts should capitalize on the advantages of “Internet+” by integrating the authoritative reach of traditional media like newspapers and television with the rapid, concise, and accessible nature of new media platforms, including WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin. This multidimensional approach will facilitate comprehensive and immersive promotion of the cultural “pearls” along the route, thus constructing a distinctive and impactful brand image for the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road.

One aspect involves using big data to establish “Digital Poetry Road” e-terminal experience centers, promoting intelligent sightseeing and the creation of a “Digital Poetry Road” museum. A database dedicated to the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road can support multidimensional promotion through websites, public accounts, and promotional videos, fostering the dynamic inheritance and preservation of Tang poetry. Marketing strategies can combine online platforms like websites, apps, WeChat, and Douyin with offline channels such as travel agencies and scenic spot ticket offices. Online services, such as QR codes, electronic guides, and audio tours, should complement physical experiences, creating a “Digital Tang Poetry Road in Eastern Zhejiang” and enhancing the brand image of related scenic areas. Additionally, employing virtual reality (VR) technologies to enrich the presentation of the Poetry Road with artistic scenes and holographic images can vividly recreate its historical glory. This approach facilitates human-machine interaction and bridges ancient and modern experiences. By integrating virtual and real elements, visitors can immerse themselves in the charm of the Poetry Road and experience its cultural essence through an engaging, multisensory journey[19].

#### **5.4.3.2 Professionalization**

Professionalization emphasizes in-depth exploration, analysis, and understanding of the cultural, historical, artistic, and tourism values of the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, ensuring these elements are effectively integrated into brand development.

To achieve this, the first step is to establish a high-level think tank comprising government bodies, academic institutions, cultural organizations, and industry experts. This think tank would provide professional insights and recommendations in areas such as poetry road culture, history, art, and tourism, guiding the direction of brand construction[20]. Experts would contribute their specialized knowledge and research outcomes to ensure the cultural value of the Poetry Road is thoroughly explored and preserved. Second, a dedicated research team should be formed to deepen professional studies on the Tang Poetry Road. This team would undertake extensive field surveys and investigations, gathering comprehensive research materials and data. Third, academic forums and seminars should be regularly organized to facilitate the exchange of ideas. These events would attract scholars, experts, and researchers from domestic and international spheres to discuss issues related to the Tang Poetry Road. Topics could encompass various aspects of the Poetry Road, such as its historical evolution, cultural heritage, artistic expression, and tourism development. Finally, the outcomes of professional research should be disseminated through academic publications, research reports, and

scholarly journals. This will share the findings on the integration of culture and tourism along the Tang Poetry Road with academia and the broader public, further solidifying its cultural and academic significance.

## 6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### 6.1 Main Conclusions

This study, based on grounded theory, constructs a multidimensional integration model for the Cultural-tourism integration development of the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. It systematically explains the key elements and theoretical logic of this development. The findings are as follows. First, four elements—integration content, integration subjects, integration paths, and integration models—have a significant impact on the Cultural-tourism integration development of the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. Among them, enterprises and government entities influence the integration process through product and resource integration, resource entities affect it through element integration, and resident entities participate by coordinating and cooperating. This forms four major integration paths: conceptual integration, industrial integration, market integration, and service integration. Ultimately, the model of developing premium tourist routes and enhancing experiential activities along the poetry road attracts tourist entities to participate in the integrated development of cultural tourism. Second, the dimensions within the four elements are mutually independent. Not only do they individually influence the Cultural-tourism integration development along the Tang Poetry Road, but they can also partially overlap, producing a collective impact. Third, integration paths and integration models exert a dynamic, cyclic promoting effect on the Cultural-tourism integration development of the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road.

### 6.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study employs grounded analysis using diverse sources, such as interview data, to construct a multidimensional integration model for the Cultural-tourism integration development of Zhedong Tang Poetry Road—comprising integration subjects, integration content, integration paths, and integration models. Existing research on the Cultural-tourism integration of Zhedong Tang Poetry Road has primarily adopted a single perspective, such as tourism, culture, promotion, industry, and business. These mainstream Cultural-tourism integration theories often provide fragmented descriptions of the influencing factors in the development of Cultural-tourism integration along Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, lacking a systematic analysis of the relationships between these factors. In contrast, this study, based on grounded theory and utilizing both online text and on-site interview data, constructs a multidimensional integration model for the development of Cultural-tourism integration along Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. It systematically reveals the logical relationships and chains of logic between the elements. From a systems theory perspective, this research offers a more comprehensive theoretical framework for the development of Cultural-tourism integration along Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. The model outlined in this study contributes to a more thorough understanding of how integration entities influence the integration process, what integration paths are formed, and how Cultural-tourism integration development is achieved through specific integration models.

### 6.3 Research Limitations and Future Directions

This study has certain limitations, and further refinement and expansion are necessary for future research. (1) Due to the complexity of the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road concept and its cultural characteristics, this study has only explored some common factors affecting the development of Cultural-tourism integration along the Poetry Road and their logical relationships. In the future, a more in-depth investigation could be conducted by categorizing and exploring case data or through multiple-case comparisons. This approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the specificities and diversities involved in the development of Cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. (2) As a qualitative research method, grounded research based on multi-source interview data is beneficial for discovering new concepts and theories. However, certain aspects such as the reliability and validity need further improvement. Subsequent research could complement and deepen the findings through quantitative empirical studies. For instance, the obtained categories could be further conceptualized and operationalized. Methods such as questionnaire surveys and qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) could be employed to further explore the influencing mechanisms behind the development of Cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road. This would enhance the overall robustness of the research conclusions. In summary, while this study has laid a foundation for understanding the dimensions and dynamics of Cultural-tourism integration along the Zhedong Tang Poetry Road, future research efforts should address these limitations and explore additional avenues to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of this complex phenomenon.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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