

An Inquiry into the Development of Cultural Educational Tourism based on SWOT-PEST Analysis: A Case Study of Yongzhou's Cultural Educational Tour

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Abstract

Amidst the burgeoning growth of tourism, especially in the context of the great development of cultural study tours, this study integrated SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) with PEST analysis (Political, Economic, Sociocultural, Technological) to scrutinize the internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats, pertinent to the operation of cultural pedagogical tourism in Yongzhou City. The aim is to identify deficiencies in the development of Yongzhou's cultural educational travel sector and to delineate focal points for future endeavors. This approach will furnish strategic recommendations for the advancement of cultural educational tourism in Yongzhou City, thereby contributing to a sustainable developmental strategy blueprint for similar initiatives in other regional cities.

Keywords

Cultural Educational Tour; SWOT-PEST Analysis; Hunanese Culture.

1. Introduction

The adage "Reading ten thousand books and travelling ten thousand miles" not only underscores the paramount importance of both scholarly pursuits and experiential learning but also delineates their sequential relationship-wherein reading precedes travelling; where reading lays the foundation and travelling serves as a vital support. Educational travel acts as a bridge between "reading" and "travelling," serving as a significant supplement to mainstream schooling. It targets the youth demographic, with moral cultivation at its core, emphasizing scientific inquiry and practical spirit. This form of travel broadens the horizons of primary and secondary school students, enriches their knowledge, and deepens their understanding of local, municipal, provincial, and national conditions. Moreover, it nurtures in young people a sense of patriotism and a readiness to shoulder societal responsibilities, shaping them into culturally confident individuals with a profound love for their country. Achieving these objectives hinges upon the influence of culture. Professor Chen Xianda of the School of Philosophy, Renmin University of China, elucidates that in cultivating cultural confidence, equal emphasis must be placed on traditional culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture. Building a major cultural nation and a powerful cultural state necessitates the inheritance and innovation of these two traditions [1].

Yongzhou boasts a rich tapestry of culture resource. The series of lectures titled "Interpretation of the Ten Major Historical and Cultural Phenomena of Yongzhou" offers the most comprehensive overview, encapsulating ten thematic areas: "Ancient Human Sites at Fuyandong and Chinese Anthropological History," "Neolithic Rice Cultivation at Yuchanyan and Stone Age Culture," "Yu-Shun Ancient History and the Origins of Chinese Civilization," "Lianxi School of Neo-Confucianism and the Revival of Traditional Culture," "Rock Carvings and the

Splendid Achievements of Chinese Civilization," "Grass Script Calligraphy and the Prosperous Tang Dynasty," "Yongzhou Eight Records and Mountain-Water Travelogues," "Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang and the Human Living Environment," "Jiangyong Nüshu and Female Society," and "Jiuyi Qin School and Elegant Music of the Xiao and Xiang."

Presently, the tourism industry in Yongzhou is in its nascent stages of development, and the city's cultural distinctiveness remains relatively obscure to the public. Consequently, the vast cultural resources of Yongzhou have yet to be fully tapped or utilized. Against the backdrop of the burgeoning growth of tourism, particularly in the realm of cultural educational travel, applying the SWOT-PEST model to analyze the internal and external factors affecting the operations of cultural educational travel in Yongzhou City provides a strategic decision-making framework. This approach aims to further guide the sustainable development of cultural educational travel strategies for regional cities, including Yongzhou.

2. SWOT-PEST Analysis

The SWOT analysis method, initiating from an introspective perspective, involves a comprehensive understanding of one's own Strengths and Weaknesses, while simultaneously taking into full consideration the external Opportunities and Threats. The PEST analysis method, rooted in macro-environmental considerations, identifies and analyzes factors from four dimensions: Politics, Economy, Society, and Technology. This primarily focuses on external influencing elements. The integration of SWOT and PEST (as depicted in Table 1) entails a dual structural approach from both internal and external standpoints, dissecting macro- and micro-environments. This allows for a more profound analysis of cultural educational travel in Yongzhou City, leading to the formulation of targeted development strategies that are more precisely tailored to the unique circumstances of the region.

Table 1. SWOT-PEST Matrix Analysis for Cultural Educational Travel in Yongzhou City

SWOT \ PEST	Political	Economic	Social	Technological
Strengths	National and local policy support	Steady economic growth, increase in tourism revenue	Abundant historical and cultural resources	Promotion of digital environments
Weaknesses	Lack of unified and reasonable regulatory documents	Single source of funding, weak resilience	Inadequate supporting facilities, weak brand image	Shortage of specialized professionals
Opportunities	Positive policy developments	Pursuit of high-quality development	Seeking external cooperation and exchange	Incorporation of scientific elements
Threats	Policies prove challenging to enforce and detail	Low economic returns	Weak competitiveness due to homogenization	Shockwave of Technological Progress

2.1. Strengths Analysis

2.1.1. Political Strengths Analysis

Commencing from 2013, the central government has sequentially enacted a plethora of policy measures designed to catalyze the growth of educational travel (as detailed in Table 2). These directives have served as a robust underpinning for the dissemination and guidance of educational travel initiatives, exerting a significant influence on the advancement of cultural educational travel development in Yongzhou City.

Table 2. Successive Policies, Opinions, and Guidelines Issued by the State Pertaining to Educational Travel

Document Date	Issuing Authority	Document Title	Relevant Content
February 2013	State Council General Office	National Tourism and Leisure Outline (2013-2020)	Gradual implementation of educational travel for primary and middle school students
August 2014	State Council	Several Opinions on Promoting the Reform and Development of Tourism	Actively carrying out study tours; utilization of educational travel, summer camps, winter camps, etc., as significant vehicles for youth patriotism education, revolutionary tradition education, and national conditions education
August 2015	State Council General Office	Several Opinions on Further Promoting Tourism Investment and Consumption	Incorporation of educational travel into the scope of student comprehensive quality education
December 2016	Jointly Issued by the Ministry of Education and 11 Other Departments	Opinions on Promoting Educational Travel for Primary and Middle School Students	1. Incorporation into primary and secondary school teaching plans; 2. Strengthening the construction of educational travel bases; 3. Standardization of educational travel organizational management; 4. Establishment of a financing mechanism; 5. Development of a safety responsibility system
January 2017	State Council	Notice on Printing and Distributing the National Education Development Plan for the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan	Encouragement for regions with conditions to carry out educational travel for primary and middle school students and various forms of summer camps, winter camps; construction of a batch of exemplary educational tourism bases and destinations with strong demonstration effects
March 2018	State Council General Office	Guidance on Promoting the Development of All-for-All Tourism	Active development of educational tourism products themed around patriotism and revolutionary tradition education, national conditions education, etc.; enhancement of tourism product quality, in-depth exploration of historical culture, regional characteristic culture, ethnic folk culture, traditional agrarian culture, etc.
December 2021	State Council	Notice on the 14th Five-Year Plan for Tourism Industry Development	Advancement of cultural power building, adherence to the principle of letting culture shape tourism and highlighting culture through tourism, promoting the integrated development of culture and tourism; inclusion of more cultural relics and cultural resources into tourist routes and scenic spots; active dissemination of fine traditional Chinese culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture

Under the guidance and support of national policies, various departments of the Hunan Provincial Government have also successively promulgated policy documents aimed at advancing the development of cultural educational travel (refer to Table 3). The Yongzhou Municipal Education Bureau established the Yongzhou Educational Affairs Center to oversee

matters pertaining to educational travel, thereby creating an excellent policy environment for the advancement of cultural educational travel in Yongzhou City.

Table 3. Policies, Opinions, and Guidelines from Various Departments of the Hunan Provincial Government Promoting Cultural Educational Travel

Document Date	Issuing Authority	Document Title	Relevant Content
January 2018	Department of Education of Hunan Province and 11 Other Departments	Implementation Opinions on Promoting Educational Travel for Primary and Middle School Students	To place educational travel in a position of greater importance, driving its healthy and rapid development; to incorporate educational travel into the school's teaching and education plan;
March 2021	General Office of the People's Government of Hunan Province	Notice on Printing and Distributing the Several Measures for Further Stimulating the Potential of Cultural and Tourism Consumption	To promote the creation of demonstration zones for the integrated development of cultural and tourism industries, introduce new business models for cultural and tourism consumption, and establish platforms for cultural and tourism consumption.

2.1.2. Economic Strengths Analysis

According to the statistical bulletin on the national economy and social development of Yongzhou City in 2021 (refer to Figure 1), the gross regional product (GRP) of Yongzhou City has been steadily increasing from 2016 to 2021. In 2021, Yongzhou City achieved a GRP of 226.108 billion yuan, representing a year-on-year increase of 7.5%. This steady economic growth provides financial backing for the development of cultural educational travel in Yongzhou City.

Yongzhou is a historic cultural city with a rich heritage, attracting numerous visitors to experience its charm. Statistics show that over the past five years, Yongzhou has signed contracts for the introduction and construction of 196 key cultural tourism projects, receiving a total of 270 million domestic and international tourists, with comprehensive tourism revenue reaching 218.11 billion yuan. Specifically, in 2020, Yongzhou received 594.36 million domestic and international tourists, marking a 40.2% increase compared to 2016, with an annual average growth rate of 8.7%.

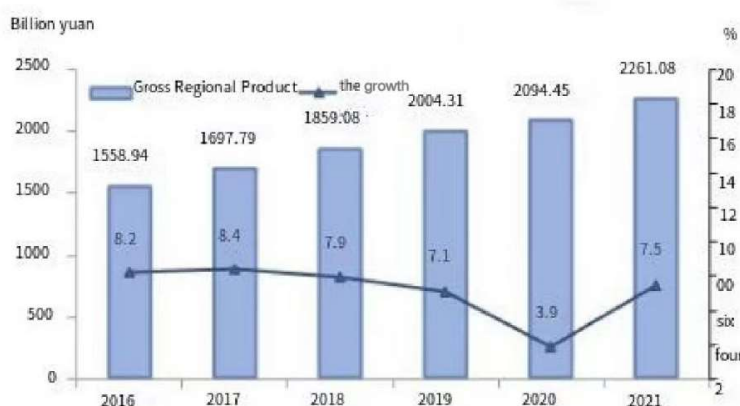


Figure 1. Gross Regional Product of Yongzhou City and Its Growth Rate from 2016 to 2021

The data originates from the Yongzhou Statistical Information Network, specifically the 2021 Statistical Communique on the National Economy and Social Development of Yongzhou City.

2.1.3. Societal Strengths Analysis

Yongzhou, a city renowned for its millennia-old historical and cultural heritage, is not merely a scenic destination steeped in antiquity but also a cherished site of enduring appeal across the ages. This locale has been graced by literary luminaries and artistic virtuosos spanning various epochs. Notably, Emperor Shun's southern expedition culminated in his eternal repose at Jiuyi Mountain; Yuan Jie, during his tenure as the Prefect of Dao Prefecture, authored the monumental work "Ode to the Mid-Tang Dynasty Revival". Liu Zongyuan, indulging in the natural splendor of Yongzhou, bequeathed to posterity a rich corpus including "River Snow" and the "Eight Records of Yongzhou". Xu Xiake, the celebrated geographer, devoted over two months to exploring the region's scenic attractions, while Zhou Dunyi, serving as the Vice Magistrate of Yongzhou, visited landmarks such as Dan Rock, Hanhui Rock, Chaoyang Rock, Huayan Rock, and Jiulong Rock, leaving behind inscriptions as indelible marks of his visit.

Among the Eight Scenic Spots of ancient Xiaoxiang, the foremost view, "Xiaoxiang Night Rain", is situated on Ping Island, north of Lingling District, where the Xiao and Xiang rivers converge. This location is also home to Pingzhou Academy, which upholds the traditional ethos of Tang and Song dynasty academies, and is the site of one of the Eight Views of Yongzhou, known as "Spring Floods of Pingzhou". The Eight Views of Yongzhou encompass: "Chaoyang Sunrise", "Sunset over Hui Long", "Spring Floods of Pingzhou", "Incense Zero in Mist and Rain", "Lotus Fragrance under the Breeze of En Yuan", "Snowy Gaze over Foolish Creek", "Banana Shadows under Green Skies", and "Evening Bell of Mountain Temple".

2.1.4. Technological Strengths Analysis

The domestic tourism industry has consistently expedited its digital transformation, intensifying the integration of "Internet + Smart Tourism" models. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years has necessitated stringent epidemic control measures, which have, in turn, accelerated the application of internet technology for comprehensive data collection and information consolidation. This has resulted in the establishment of an effective supervisory platform that ensures full coverage and continuous tracking, thereby enhancing the efficiency of regulatory mechanisms. In alignment with this trend, Yongzhou City has been proactively exploring digitalization across various sectors. Initiatives include organizing intelligent digital job fairs, constructing digitized courtrooms within the judicial system, developing a cadre integrity management system, and implementing smart vaccination clinics. These endeavors contribute to optimizing the social digital environment, encouraging broad participation in digital advancement, and fostering an atmosphere conducive to the enhancement of digital literacy among the populace. Consequently, these actions provide a robust technological foundation for the growth of cultural study tours in Yongzhou.

2.2. Weaknesses Analysis

2.2.1. Political Weaknesses Analysis

Effective institutional guidance is essential for the thriving development of cultural study travel. Currently, in Yongzhou, this type of travel is still in its infancy, with insufficient normative documents and no unified planning for resource sharing and mutual assistance among districts and counties. Cultural bases operate independently without coordination, hindering the integration of different regional cultures and ecologies. [2]Existing policies lack clarity, practicality, and operability, requiring further refinement and implementation.

2.2.2. Economic Weaknesses Analysis

While Yongzhou's push for cultural study travel has stimulated economic growth in western Hunan, geographical constraints have led to a noticeable gap in its development and growth

compared to other regions. Development disparities are particularly evident among the various districts and counties under Yongzhou's jurisdiction. Funding for tourism development is predominantly reliant on government investment, with private investment in education and culture accounting for less than 7% in the first half of 2022. Under current economic pressures exacerbated by the global pandemic, Yongzhou's tourism resources remain underdeveloped, limiting the sector's potential to drive economic growth.

2.2.3. Social Weaknesses Analysis

Despite a wealth of scenic spots, Yongzhou's tourist attractions are poorly connected and lack adequate supporting facilities. Some sites are small in scale, low in grade, and offer subpar service, resulting in low visitor satisfaction and a weak brand image. The development model for cultural projects is monotonous, lacking depth and engagement for students and tourists. Promotion of cultural tourism sites is insufficient, targeting a narrow audience and lacking effective promotional platforms. As a result, the essence of Yongzhou's culture remains obscure to many.

2.2.4. Technical Weaknesses Analysis

Cultural study travel is an optimal medium for preserving and promoting Yongzhou's rich historical and cultural heritage, and an effective means for cultivating cultural confidence in young people. However, the city faces a severe shortage of professional cultural study guides and tour guides with the requisite humanistic qualities and professional expertise. There is a notable gap in the skills and service quality of tourism workers, indicating that the overall proficiency of the industry workforce does not meet the growing demand for high-quality personnel in cultural tourism, which is becoming increasingly popular [3].

2.3. Opportunity Analysis

2.3.1. Political Opportunity Analysis

Culture is the root and soul of a nation. China, as a cultural powerhouse with a history stretching back over 5,000 years, boasts a rich tapestry of interwoven traditions, inclusivity, profundity, and continuity. However, the relentless march of economic, social, and technological progress has led to the gradual disappearance of many cultural heritages and a waning understanding and appreciation of traditional culture. In addition, countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France have intensified their cultural influence on China, posing a significant challenge to the preservation of Chinese traditional culture. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, President Xi Jinping has consistently emphasized the importance of cultural confidence, asserting that it is the most fundamental, profound, and enduring force in the development of a country and a nation.

For the rich tapestry of Chinese and Yongzhou's historical cultures, this is the opportune moment to project them onto the global stage. Recently, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council have issued a series of directives to actively promote educational travel, underscoring the integration of culture into tourism and vice versa. These directives aim to educate students about Chinese traditional culture and revolutionary traditions while they explore the vast landscapes of the country. This presents a prime opportunity to engrain culture deeply within the hearts of the people.

2.3.2. Economic Opportunity Analysis (E-O)

Over the past decade, Yongzhou has strived for excellence and pursued high-quality development with determination. Economically, the region's gross product has surged from 105.96 billion yuan a decade ago to surpass the 200 billion yuan mark, reaching 226.108 billion yuan. Serving as a gateway to the Greater Bay Area, Yongzhou has officially recognized 116 agricultural production bases in the region as suppliers to the "vegetable basket" of the Greater Bay Area, with over 80% of large-scale bases adopting standardized production methods. With

a massive population and strong demand, the economic output of the Greater Bay Area creates substantial opportunities for economic growth in Yongzhou.

2.3.3. Social Opportunity Analysis (S-O)

Strategically located adjacent to the Greater Bay Area and at the convergence of Hunan, Guangdong, and Guangxi provinces, Yongzhou is a pivotal point in the dual-city economic circle of Chengdu-Chongqing, the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, and the rise of central China, all of which are identified as key economic zones in China's 14th Five-Year Plan. Yongzhou's unique geographic advantage vis-à-vis the Greater Bay Area offers tremendous potential for increased tourist traffic. To capitalize on this, Yongzhou should leverage its regional, cultural, and ecological strengths to actively integrate into the 90-minute high-speed rail economic circle of the Greater Bay Area. For Yongzhou, these factors represent advantageous opportunities to promote economic development and cultural openness.

2.3.4. Technical Opportunity Analysis (T-O)

Educational travel emphasizes experiential and practical learning, but limitations exist in physically experiencing historical contexts such as the Lianxi Academy or truly comprehending the hardships and dangers of the Red Army's Long March. However, as society advances and technology evolves, an increasing number of scientific elements are being integrated into educational travel, enriching the modes of cultural educational travel and infusing new vitality into the experience. For instance, Virtual Reality (VR) technology simulates three-dimensional environments through computers, encompassing visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile sensations. It responds in real-time to human behavior, immersing users in a world so vivid that reality and simulation blur together, offering unparalleled experiential learning opportunities.

2.4. Threat Analysis

2.4.1. Political Threat Analysis (P-T)

While the Yongzhou municipal government has released documents to promote the integration of culture and tourism, and has designated two batches of primary and secondary school student educational travel practice bases (camps), aiming to foster the development of cultural educational travel in Yongzhou, it has fallen short in fully implementing and detailing the policies. This lack of transparency and fairness has led to numerous complaints from parents. Specific implementation issues have arisen, including questions about the approval process for educational travel plans, the qualifications required for hosting organizations, the suitability of destinations for educational activities, the responsibility for safety, and the fee structure and standards [4].

2.4.2. Economic Threat Analysis (E-T)

Yongzhou's cultural educational travel has yet to establish signature programs, and its advantages in cultural educational and tourism resources have not effectively contributed to economic growth. The scarcity of funds impedes the improvement of basic services such as access, recreation, and entertainment in scenic areas. Inadequate development of scenic areas reduces their attractiveness and popularity. The development and maintenance of projects within educational travel destinations depend heavily on funding, but the government's investment is limited, [5] failing to meet the needs for the expansion of cultural educational travel in Yongzhou. This could lead to a vicious cycle, making it even more difficult to sustain the sector.

2.4.3. Social Threat Analysis (S-T)

On a national scale, Shandong, the cultural center during the era of the Hundred Schools of Thought and the birthplace of Confucius and Mencius, who laid the foundation for Chinese culture; Henan, the cradle of Chinese civilization, boasting over 350 nationally protected

cultural relics; Shaanxi, the representative of Han culture and the capital of five dynasties, are all considered the pinnacle of Chinese culture. Within Hunan Province, Changsha, the land of Qu Yuan and Jia Yi, is home to the Yuelu Academy, Orange Isle, and cultural institutions like the "Three Museums and One Hall"; Xiangtan, the cradle of Chinese red culture, where figures like Zeng Guofan, Mao Zedong, and Peng Dehuai were born; and Yueyang, with its famous Yueyang Tower and the literary and political sites of Du Fu's tomb and Qu Yuan's shrine, all showcase a rich cultural heritage. These provinces and cities have already established their brands in cultural tourism, with larger scales and more complete supporting facilities, as well as better transportation, posing considerable threats and challenges to the cultural educational travel in Yongzhou.

2.4.4. Technological Threat Analysis (T-T)

Technological development poses a double-edged sword to traditional culture. The proliferation of digital networks profoundly impacts our lives, subtly influencing and altering our self-awareness. Digital media creates a virtual world that introduces a sense of detachment from reality, gradually undermining the transmission and development of traditional arts. When digital cultural products disrupt the traditional cultural experience, conventional cultural goods are marginalized. In the context of global economic integration, the digital technology shock wave leads to the erosion of ethnic, local, and historical cultures, presenting significant threats and challenges to the future of culture.

3. Development Strategy and Recommendations

As an innovative educational activity that integrates teaching with travel, study tours have recently gained popularity as a form of student practice education that bridges school and extracurricular education. Cultural study tours are an integral part of domestic study tours and a crucial measure promoted by the state for patriotism education, revolutionary tradition education, and national conditions education. The successful implementation of study tours requires collaborative efforts from both society and schools.

3.1. Society

3.1.1. Strengthen Leadership

The market for cultural study tours is substantial, yet there is currently a lack of standardizing regulations, resulting in various cultural study institutions operating independently with inconsistent standards and formats. At the national level, there should be an expeditious release of guiding documents for cultural study tours to regulate the market, ensuring that cultural study tours quickly enter a regulated phase and realize their value.

3.1.2. Base Construction

Presently, cultural study tours have not been widely promoted. Most cultural study bases, such as the homes of famous figures, martyrs' cemeteries, and red-themed museums, still adhere to outdated standards designed for regular tourists, and activities follow traditional models. This approach no longer aligns with the educational nature of study tours, the student-centric focus, and the research-oriented methodology. Therefore, the state should increase investment in the construction of cultural study bases to genuinely harness the positive role of cultural study tours.

3.2. Schools

3.2.1. Course Development

Study tours are a significant component of comprehensive practical activity courses, an innovative format connecting school and extracurricular education, a critical element of teaching and learning, and an effective pathway for comprehensive practical education. Schools

should delve deep into local tourism resources, incorporating cultural study tours into practical courses at various educational levels. This involves creating a course system for cultural study tours with local characteristics and establishing a curriculum-based management model for study tours.

3.2.2. Training Study Guides

Study tours feature universality, curricular integration, educational value, experiential learning, and public welfare, which differ significantly from traditional subject teaching. Teachers cannot simply apply the model of subject teaching to study tours. Instead, they must closely align with the characteristics of study tours, nurturing study guides who possess solid educational knowledge, guide skills, and a thorough understanding of related cultural content. This ensures the quality and effectiveness of cultural study tours.

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