

High-quality Development of the Pearl River Night Tour in the Context of Deep Integration of Culture and Tourism

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Abstract Urban night tourism is a new form of urban tourism development and an important driving force for the prosperity of urban night economy. As the most prestigious business card among many night tour projects in Guangzhou, the Pearl River water night tour has contributed to the development of Guangzhou's night economy, which cannot be underestimated. However, in the process of rapid development, there are also problems such as diversified operators, insufficient integration of intangible cultural elements, excessive commercial attributes, issues of tourism facilities and service facilities. Under the new stage of integrated development of culture and tourism, how to use mutual promotion of culture and tourism in the Pearl River night tour to seek innovative paths for high-quality development in the future is the main problem expected to be solved in this paper. Therefore, based on the perspective of culture and tourism integration, this paper analyzes the general situation and development status of the Pearl River night tour, and proposes five development strategies: the overall planning of culture and tourism integration, the deep integration of intangible cultural elements, the balance of commercial attributes and tourism attributes, the high integration of culture, business, tourism and education, and the creation of tourism atmosphere, in order to provide inspiration for the healthy, orderly and high-quality development of the Pearl River night tour.

Key words Integration of culture and tourism; The Pearl River night tour; High-quality development; Intangible cultural elements

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In the 1970s, the development plan for the nighttime economy first appeared in the UK with the aim of addressing the stagnant development of urban centers. Since the concept of developing night economy was proposed, it has become an important component of urban economic development over the past 50 years, and is considered an important means to reverse the industrial decline in urban central areas. Among the various types of night economy, night tourism is an undeniable force. With the development of urban economy and the siphon effect, tourists and more local residents have also begun to enter the night of the city at night to enjoy the unique charm belonging to the urban nighttime, and the market size of night tourism is growing day by day.

From the perspective of market supply and demand, night tourism is highly sought after by domestic and foreign cities. Outside of normal working hours, usually between sunset on the previous day and sunrise on the following day, there are more and more places for sightseeing and leisure experiences that extend their nighttime opening hours. There are museums, art galleries, night markets for food, and water boat tours, which have attracted the attention of some scholars. At the academic level, as a new research field in the theoretical system of tourism development, research on nighttime tourism is still in its early stages. According to the keynote speech given by Dai Bin, President of the China

Tourism Research Institute, at the China Nighttime Economic Forum in October of 2023, there have only been in China for just 5 years from the formal proposing of concept of nighttime tourism to the practice jointly promoted by the market and the government. From existing literature, the research topics of night tourism mainly focus on exploring concept and connotation, studying the economic effects of night tourism, studying the landscape, product development, and development models of night tourism, studying the motivation and behavior of night tourists, and comparing day and night tourism activities. There are not many high-quality studies on night tourism, and there is a lack of attention to micro scale cases in the research space^[1-2].

Therefore, this paper focuses on the integration of culture and tourism. Taking the Pearl River night tour in Guangzhou as a case study, based on the analysis of its development status and existing problems, this paper explores its high-quality development strategies. This paper can not only make up for the shortcomings of current high-quality research on night tourism, but also provide suggestions and references for the development of night tourism in the context of culture and tourism integration.

1 Development of nighttime tourism under the integration of culture and tourism

Culture is the soul of tourism, and tourism is the carrier of culture. There is a internal connection between culture and tourism, which promotes the integration of culture and tourism to become a consensus and practical direction for the development of the tourism industry. In this context, the former National Tourism Administration of China merged with the Ministry of Culture in

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2018, and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China was officially established, marking a new stage in China's integrated development of culture and tourism.

In the new stage of integrated development of culture and tourism, the emergence and development of night tourism has become a positive means and approach to promote integration. In August of 2019, the General Office of the State Council of China issued the *Opinions on further Stimulating the Potential of Culture and Tourism Consumption*, calling for the vigorous development of the nighttime culture and tourism economy. It can be seen that nighttime tourism is seen as a new consumption mode of integrated development of culture and tourism. Indeed, the leisure and entertainment needs of tourists and local residents are met through nighttime tourism. More importantly, with the help of the leisure atmosphere of nighttime tourism, tourists and local residents can have a deeper understanding of the culture and lifestyle of the tourism destination, and work together to inherit the unique culture of the city. According to the 2023 *China Nighttime Economy Development Report* (hereinafter referred to as the report) released by the Nighttime Tourism Research Group of the China Tourism Research Institute at the China Nighttime Economy Forum in October of 2023, nighttime tourism is an important field of culture and tourism integration, and also an important carrier of innovative expression of excellent traditional culture. The report also shows that China has formed a group of night economic clusters with distinctive cultural characteristics in the five years ending in 2023. There are 243 national level night culture and tourism consumption clusters, and night tourism products popular among night tourists include "cultural" food night markets, cultural restaurants, music festivals, night cruise boats, night art festivals, and other cultural products.

With the consensus reached by government departments and industry on the integration of culture and tourism by night tourism, scholars have gradually focused on the development of night tourism from the perspective of culture and tourism integration. Luo Wenbin *et al.* [3] believe that the integration of culture and tourism is a process of promoting tourism through culture and promoting culture through tourism. It is of great significance for promoting the innovative development of urban night tourism. Based on this, combined with the basic conditions of urban night tourism in Hunan and the types of night tourism development models, strategies for promoting the innovative development of Hunan's urban night tourism through the integration of culture and tourism are proposed. Luo Dan *et al.* [4] use the Nvivo 12 qualitative research method to analyze the potential and existing problems of developing night tourism in Guilin City, and propose ways to promote the development of night tourism in Guilin. From the perspective of "culture and tourism integration", the "Guilin Six Nights" model is innovated with culture casting soul and technology empowerment, thereby enhancing the overall competitiveness of Guilin's night tourism. In addition, from the perspective of culture and tourism integration, night tourism in other cities such as Xinyang,

Shanxi ancient city, Hangzhou, as well as different types of night tourism such as the Grand Canal night tourism industry, museum night tourism, firefly night tourism, *etc.*, have also received varying degrees of attention.

It is worth noting that although urban night tourism and night tourism products have received attention from the perspective of culture and tourism integration, research on Guangzhou night tourism products from this perspective is relatively insufficient. Bao Zengting *et al.* [5] propose that it is necessary to rely on the night to showcase their attractiveness for certain local characteristic culture, such as night folk activities, bonfire parties, night entertainment performances, luminescent biotourism, water tours, *etc.* This means that certain types of night tourism products have unique advantages in promoting the revitalization and inheritance of local culture. The Pearl River night tour in Guangzhou is one of the important types. The rich historical and cultural heritage and cultural resources along the river give the Pearl River night tour unique cultural advantages. On the contrary, the development of the Pearl River night tour also plays a decisive role in the inheritance of urban local culture. Therefore, this study focuses on the high-quality development of the Pearl River night tour from the perspective of culture and tourism integration. On the one hand, it helps to make up for the lack of research literature on Guangzhou night tourism from the perspective of culture and tourism integration. On the other hand, it is also based on the practical needs of co promotion of culture and tourism in the Pearl River night tour.

2 Development status of the Pearl River night tour

2.1 Overview of the Pearl River night tour

Urban water night tourism is a type of water tourism that often lasts for a short period of time (usually within 1 to 2 h), and boats often travel on rivers and lakes for sightseeing experience tourism [6]. Urban water cruise boats often travel in bustling areas within specific urban areas, using the urban architectural scenery along the route, cultural history, and leisure experiences of the boats as recreational activities for sightseeing, entertainment, and relaxation. Representative urban water night tours include the water tours of the Seine River in Paris, Osaka, the Singapore River, the Huangpu River in Shanghai, the Pearl River in Guangzhou, and the Haihe River in Tianjin [7].

The Pearl River water night tour is one of the most famous and representative night tours in Guangzhou. The Pearl River night tour has a long history, which can be traced back to the painted boats and flower boats at the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty. However, the organized cruise boat was the first "part-time" cruise boat on the tourist route created by the Guangzhou Passenger Shipping Company in 1960 [8]. Since the reform and opening up in 1987, the core function of cruise boat began to turn to tourism activities. At present, the main navigation section of the Pearl River night tour cruise boat is located in the urban section of Guangzhou, running through the ur-

ban area of Guangzhou from west to east, covering a total length of 23.24 km from the Baietan section of the Pearl River waters to Pazhou section. There are currently 10 docks along the night tour route, including Dashatou Wharf, Official Wharf, Canton Tower Zhongda Wharf, Haixinsha West Area Wharf, Canton Tower Wealth Wharf, Haixinsha East Area Wharf, Xidi Wharf, Provin-

cial General Wharf, Huangsha Wharf, and Pazhou Exhibition Wharf, with a total of 32 different types of themed cruise boats (Table 1). The operating time of the cruise boats ranges from 18:25 to 22:10, with a total travel time ranging from 55 to 90 min. Each ship can accommodate a number of tourists ranging from tens to hundreds.

Table 1 Characteristics of cruise boats at wharf along the Pearl River night tour

Wharf	Cruise boat	Characteristic
Canton Tower Wealth Wharf/ Haixinsha East Area Wharf	Jinjing	The European architectural style consists of three floors, each capable of accommodating approximately 150 people. The first and second floors are indoor, while the third floor is an outdoor observation deck, equipped with advanced facilities such as a large stage
	Pearl River Prince	A pure electric cruise boat with three floors and a maximum passenger capacity of 486 people
	Pearl River Princess	A pure electric antique sailboat with three floors and a maximum passenger capacity of 160 people
	Pearl River Red Boat	The water theater on the the Pearl River has a maximum capacity of 280 people, and there are Guangfu cultural stage plays in the boat
Haixinsha West Area Wharf/	Snoopy themed cruise boat	A double-decker cruise boat with 199 seats, with an air-conditioned lobby on the first floor and a 360° open air unobstructed second floor
	Coca Cola themed boat	
Canton Tower Zhongda Wharf/ Xidi Wharf/Provincial General Wharf	Zhushui Gilded Gold Guangqi	A two-story modern luxury cruise boat built with the concept of "water reception hall"
	Guangzhou Red themed cruise boat	A double-decker cruise boat with 199 seats, with an air-conditioned lobby on the first floor and a 360° open air unobstructed second floor. The appearance of the themed boat features red as the main color tone, showcasing the charm of Guangzhou's red culture
	Kaiyun Damo	184-seat three-story cruise boat, with an air-conditioned lobby on the first and second floors, and a 360° open air unobstructed third floor
	Guangfu	199-seat double-decker luxury cruise boat, with the main hull designed based on traditional tea house architecture
	New type of cruise boat	A double-decker cruise boat with 199 seats, with an air-conditioned lobby on the first floor and a 360° open air unobstructed second floor
	Navigation experience hall	The innovative combination of the Pearl River cruise boat and navigation simulation operating system, with a total number of 156 passengers
	Hear the flowers blooming series of cruise boats	Two themed cruise boats, telling the story of Guangzhou on both sides of the river with flowers as the feature
	White gull series	32 m of fiberglass reinforced plastic two-story cruise boat has 190 seats
Official Wharf	Guangzhou Wealth	Wealth is the flagship boat of Official Wharf. It is a three-storey luxury cruise boat with a total of 380 passengers. Regular China – Chic buffet shipping is available on the boat
	Zhushui Bainian	The 300-seat three-story luxury cruise boat is designed with a combination of traditional style and modern concepts, featuring an antique appearance
	Zhushui Yinxiang	A three-story new energy-saving and environmentally friendly modern cruise boat with a total of 380 seats, positioned as the "Water Culture, Business and Tourism Platform"
	Nanhai Shen Guangzhou Daily	The design combines the characteristics of both Guangzhou and Ming and Qing official ships, with a bottom hold, upper and lower decks, and a dedicated exhibition hall for the Maritime Silk Road and an exhibition hall for ancient ship cargo holds
	Information Times	A three-story cruise boat with 300 seats, featuring a crystal palace style transparent design
	Pearl River Dream Star	A 68-seat double-decker cruise boat with a unique space concept design
	Shuishang Renjia Guangfa Securities	250-seat double-decker cruise boat, Dutch Amsterdam style cruise boat
	Flower City Pearl	A three-story cruise boat with 250 seats, designed primarily in Chinese architectural style and decorated with a strong Guangzhou Xiguan style
	Star Cruise	A three-story cruise boat with 125 seats, incorporating the design concept of yachts, and integrating sightseeing, tourism, leisure, entertainment, and cuisine
	Starlight Cruise	199-seat three-story business luxury cruise boat, integrating tourism, sightseeing, culture, and entertainment
	Star Gull Cruise	70-seat double-decker luxury yacht, integrating sightseeing, tourism, leisure, entertainment, and cuisine

(To be continued)

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Wharf	Cruise boat	Characteristic
Dashatou Wharf	Guangdong Industrial and Commercial Bank of China	The giant cruise boat, with a passenger capacity of 628 people, is mainly decorated with Roman columns
	Guangda Bank	43 m of luxury catamaran cruise boat, with a capacity of 540 passengers, adopts the architectural style of pot ear house, one of the representatives of traditional Lingnan architecture
	Honghualang (Huaxia Insurance)	The appearance of the cruise boat resembles that of the "Liaoning" aircraft carrier, with a total passenger capacity of 392 people. Multiple famous warship models from ancient and modern times, both domestic and foreign, are placed in the cabin, committed to building the first mobile patriotic education base in China
	Golden Dragon Fish	A pure electric cruise boat with a total of 280 seats
	Pearl River Crystal	A high-end cruise boat that is fully transparent, streamlined, and highly fashionable, with a total of 188 seats, earning the reputation of "Water Bird's Nest" and "Water Rolls Royce"
	Jinfang	The overall appearance of the boat adopts the Lingnan courtyard design concept, with red and yellow as the main color tones, and 450 seats on three floors
	Suigang Star	A three-story cruise boat with a novel, fashionable, classic, and atmospheric exterior design, exuding a strong sense of speed and modernity

Note: Arranged according to the information of WeChat official account "the Pearl River Night Tour".

2.2 Current situation of culture and tourism integration in the Pearl River night tour

2.2.1 Foundation of deep integration of culture and tourism in the Pearl River night tour. Urban water night tour activities usually involve two types of spatial experiences; the experience of the cruise boat itself and the experience along the cruise line. The recreational activities of the cruise boat itself include boat leisure, entertainment and relaxation experiences, while the experience along the cruise line mainly includes sightseeing of attractions such as urban architectural scenery and cultural history^[9]. As far as the space of cruise boat itself is concerned, there are more than 30 different types of theme cruise boats in the Pearl River night tour, covering the experience space of different cultural themes from ancient to modern times, both domestically and internationally (Table 1). The hull architecture involves European architecture, traditional Chinese tea house architecture, pot ear house architecture, Ming and Qing official ships, Lingnan courtyard style architecture, and other styles. The cultural themes inside the boat involve various types such as Guangfu culture, red culture, Maritime Silk Road culture, warship culture, and maritime culture. As far as the coast of the tour line is concerned, under the landscape lighting of architectural lights on both sides of the Pearl River, tourists can enjoy the landmark landscape construction of Guangzhou and the bright night view of Guangzhou City along the way, such as Guangzhou Tower, Haixinsha, Guangzhou Bridge, Liede Bridge, Xinghai Concert Hall, Haiyin Bridge, Huacheng Square, Bati, White Swan Hotel, etc.

According to statistics, the Pearl River night tour received more than 3 million tourists every year before the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic. Despite the impact of the shipping suspension and passenger flow control of the COVID-19 from 2020 to 2022, the tourist reception volume should not be underestimated (Table 2). Since entering the post pandemic era in 2023, it has received more than 940 000 tourists in the first quarter, with an average daily reception of nearly 40 000 during the May Day and National Day holidays. It can be seen that the Pearl River night

tour has become a beautiful city card for Guangzhou tourism, which not only enriches tourists' experience of urban night tour projects, but also enhances tourists' recognition of urban culture.

Table 2 Reception number of the Pearl River night tour

No.	Time	Reception of tourists // 10 ⁴
1	2021 May Day	12.3
2	National Day	42.0
3	2022 National Day	11.0
4	2023 May Day	18.0
5	Mid Autumn Festival and National Day	23.0

Note: Due to the epidemic, the data for the National Day holiday in 2022 is missing.

2.2.2 Integrated development mode of culture and tourism in the Pearl River night tour. The existing development model of the Pearl River night tour has integrated culture and tourism linkage, including lighting, folk culture, food shopping, and scenic area linkage (Fig. 1), and certain achievements have been achieved.

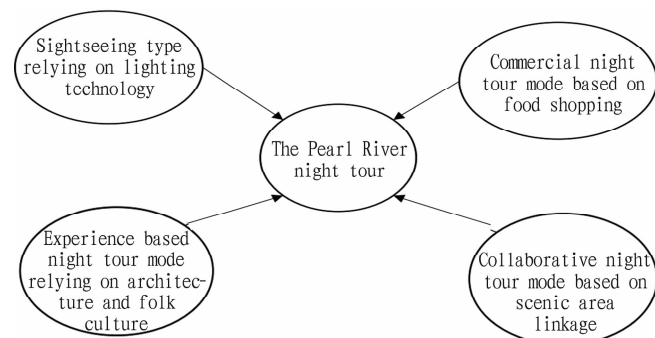


Fig. 1 Integrated development mode of culture and tourism in the Pearl River night tour

(1) Sightseeing night tour mode relying on lighting technology. In night tourism projects, whether it is lighting festival activities and night landscape lighting activities, or night performance activi-

ties based on lighting technology, lighting itself is an indispensable core element. The sightseeing night tour activities of tourists mainly rely on lighting technology. Cities can provide lighting through night scene lighting art, shape the appearance of landscape, create tourism experience space and atmosphere, and enhance tourism charm^[5].

In recent years, Guangzhou has vigorously implemented urban nighttime landscape lighting projects. Regular light sightseeing includes architectural lights on both sides of the Pearl River (such as the twinkling bridges, the colorful Canton Tower, *etc.*), cruise boat lights and music lights, while unconventional light sightseeing includes irregular theme light shows (such as the National Day theme light show, the economic census theme light show, the Spring Festival theme light show, the honor veterans theme light show, *etc.*), and the Guangzhou International Light Festival held regularly. Taking the 12th Guangzhou International Light Festival in 2023 as an example, the light show integrates and innovates light and shadow installations with Lingnan cultural heritage, folk legends, and other elements from multiple dimensions. It injects Guangzhou stories rich in Lingnan culture into the festival, such as the Five Rams Offering Ears, Xiguan Customs, Lingnan Lion Awakening, and the Thirteen Rows of Maritime Silk Road. While bringing a visual feast and shock to millions of tourists, it also allows them to fully enjoy the cultural atmosphere brought by light art.

(2) Experience based night tour mode relying on architecture and folk culture. The development model of cultural experience night tour mainly involves exploring the cultural connotations of tourist destinations, selecting appropriate cultural themes, and using folk festival activities and tourism performance activities as carriers to create representative tourism cultural brand projects^[5]. One of the typical ways of culture and tourism integration in the Pearl River night tour is to develop an experiential night tour mode based on local characteristic folk culture. By relying on tour line space and cruise boat space, the Pearl River night tour provides tourists with an all-round, immersive experience atmosphere of architecture and folk culture. ① The construction and design style of the cruise boat itself (Table 1) integrates various architectural styles from ancient to modern times, both domestically and internationally. ② In addition to the physical space and design style of the cruise boat carrier itself, the folk performances and intangible cultural heritage exhibitions and explanations on the themed cruise boat also provide tourists with an unforgettable culture and tourism experience. ③ More than 20 km of the Pearl River night tour runs through the central area of Guangzhou. During the tour, tourists can not only enjoy the charming night view of Guangzhou, but also enjoy the modern landscape architecture of Guangzhou, such as buildings on both banks, docks, bridges, *etc.*^[10], and fully experience the different architectural forms and their carried history and culture in Guangzhou.

(3) Collaborative night tour mode based on scenic area linkage. One of the important means of integrating culture and tourism consumption in the overall planning and layout of the night economy is to build a gathering area for night culture and tourism consumption. As of now, there are two batches of 243 night culture

and tourism consumption clusters in China. In the second batch of published lists, the top tier tourist attraction in Guangzhou, the Guangzhou Tower Tourist Area, was successfully selected due to its diverse night culture and tourism formats such as night performances, night tours, and night exhibitions.

The most important thrust behind the selection of Canton Tower Tourist Area comes from the linkage with the Pearl River night tour, namely the river-tower joint tour cooperation project of water, land and air three-dimensional sightseeing experience. As early as 2016, Guangzhou launched the "water, land and air" cooperative night tour development model of "Canton Tower + the Pearl River night tour + sightseeing bus", which has been further extended and expanded. ① In the air, all projects of the tourism and sightseeing tower, ranked first in China and third in the world, are open at night before 22:00. ② On the water, tourists can enjoy the city's night scenery along the way while experiencing unique water mobile cultural and tourism projects. ③ On the ground, diverse cultural and tourism products such as "Cantonese Guangzhou" and "window of Lingnan" have promoted the combination of tradition and modernity in intangible cultural heritage exhibitions, and have also become windows for the external promotion of Lingnan culture.

(4) Commercial night tour mode based on food shopping. In addition to the above three modes, the commercial night tour mode relying on food shopping is also one of the important development modes of the Pearl River night tour. ① On the the Pearl River cruise boat, tourists have the opportunity to taste different kinds of food, as well as food packages with different themes. The construction of the "Late Night Canteen" has promoted the spread of the reputation of "Food in Guangzhou" and further promoted Guangzhou's culinary culture. ② In the projects of cruise boat cooperation and linkage, banquets and night shopping are also important highlights. Taking the "Chaoxu" cultural and creative fair along the Pearl River as an example, tourists can not only enjoy the on-site display and cultural exhibition of intangible cultural heritage traditional skills, but also taste authentic Cantonese cuisine, as well as experience the exhibition and sales of one-stop art market products, cultural and entertainment activities. With the Pearl River cruise boat as the moving line carrier, the interaction between the cruise boat and the cultural and creative blocks along the coast (including Chaoxu, Paxing, Hunter Square Style Street, *etc.*) has been strengthened. The integration of culture and tourism has also been further extended, and the cultural and creative tourism experience of tourists has also been strengthened.

2.3 Problems in the integration of culture and tourism in the Pearl River night tour

2.3.1 Diversified operating entities and inability to unify service standards for culture and tourism integration.

As shown in Table 3, there are currently 7 cruise companies participating in the Pearl River night tour. Among the cruise services provided by these 7 companies, tourists can not only choose different docks, cruise companies, and shipping, but also choose different floor heights, seating areas (such as side seats, lobby center, and VIP), and catering services. These choices of space result in varying amounts of night tour ticket slots.

Cruise companies provide tourists with numerous options, but they do not provide them with a unified and centralized information channel for clear comparison, resulting in difficulties in comparison and selection during the purchasing process, as well as confusion in perception during the tour. In addition, the diversification

of night tour operators and excessive pursuit of differentiated services have led to various differentiated service standards on cruise boats, which in turn affects the unified presentation of deep integration of culture and tourism.

Table 3 Ticketing of the Pearl River night tour

Wharf	Cruise company	Number of ticket types	Price//yuan
Official Wharf	Guangzhou Star Cruise Company, Youfengxiang Company, Guangzhou Water Tour Company, Guangzhou Cruise Company	>30	68 – 198
Canton Tower Zhongda Wharf	Youfengxiang Company, Guangzhou Water Tour Company, Guangzhou Cruise Company	>20	98 – 178
Haixinsha West Area Wharf	Youfengxiang Company, Guangzhou Water Tour Company, Guangzhou Cruise Company	>20	68 – 178
Dashatou Wharf	Youfengxiang Company, Guangzhou Water Tour Company, Jinhang Cruise Company, Guangzhou Blue Dolphin Company	>30	98 – 188
Canton Tower Wealth Wharf	Guangzhou Tourism Company	3	98 – 198
Provincial General Wharf	Guangzhou Cruise Company, Youfengxiang Company, Guangzhou Water Tour Company	>10	98 – 178
Xidi Wharf	Guangzhou Cruise Company, Youfengxiang Company, Guangzhou Water Tour Company	>10	68 – 178

Note: Arranged according to information from Dianping.com.

2.3.2 Insufficient integration of intangible cultural elements. The cultural elements of tourism include two categories: material cultural elements and intangible cultural elements. The former is the carrier and foundation of tourism activities, while the latter relies on the former for transmission and is the core and soul of tourism activities. In the cruise space and along the route of the Pearl River night tour, tourists are deeply impressed with the experience of physical cultural elements during the tour, while there is insufficient perception of intangible cultural elements such as Lingnan culture, characteristic customs, *etc.* In addition, the integration of existing intangible cultural elements still relies mainly on static image and text exhibitions, food product sales, cultural and creative products, and on-site sales of calligraphy and painting, lacking a deep level of cultural element integration.

2.3.3 Excessive commercial attributes disrupting the atmosphere of culture and tourism integration. Before 2003, the naming of the Pearl River night cruise boats often highlighted the tourism space attributes of cruise boats and driving areas, which can give tourists and audiences a good imagination. But after 2003, the operating pressure of luxury cruise boats became increasingly high due to fierce market competition, and the commercial attributes of cruise boat naming and its exterior and interior became more and more obvious^[11].

From the small presentation of enterprise names, logos and advertising slogans on cruise boats in the early days to the naming, advertising and internal and external personalized decoration of large LED displays on cruise boats, the cruise boat space of the Pearl River night tour has become a symbolic commercial space^[11]. Tourists are not able to have a better travel experience in this space, but are only potential consumers of commercial spaces. Taking ornamental lighting landscapes as an example, attractive lighting landscapes along the night tour route such as the light advertisements on Canton Tower and cruise boats are all commercial, which greatly affects tourists' perception of the tourism atmosphere and undermines the experience effect of culture and

tourism integration.

2.3.4 Facilities and service supporting issues during the tourism process affecting tourists' perception and experience of culture and tourism. There are more than 5 500 comments on "Official Wharf of the Pearl River Night Tour" on Dianping.com, of which more than 400 comments are poor, accounting for more than 7%. Tourists gave feedback in negative reviews about various facilities and service supporting issues related to the cruise boat experience they perceived during the travel process, such as overcrowded seating arrangements, chaotic management of tourists between different floors, inadequate ticketing management, commercial promotion and publicity on the cruise boat affecting the viewing experience, high photography fees, lack of service awareness and unfriendly service attitude, *etc.* The existence of these issues greatly affects the perceived satisfaction of tourists with the travel experience, and also indirectly affects their perception of the effect of culture and tourism integration.

3 High-quality development strategy of the Pearl River night tour in the context of culture and tourism integration

3.1 Breaking spatial boundaries and achieving coordinated planning for culture and tourism integration The development of the Pearl River night tour involves many subjects. In addition to many cruise companies involved in the Pearl River night tour operation, it also involves community residents, tourism development supervision departments and other stakeholders along the line. To realize the long-term sustainable development of the Pearl River night tour and the deepening development of culture and tourism integration, it is far from enough to rely on the promotion of the Pearl River night tour cruise companies. Instead, it is necessary to gather the cooperation of all stakeholders along the night tour on the basis of the overall planning of the government, and be promoted by the overall deepening of culture and tourism integration in the whole tour area to form the gathering effect of "urban living

room" in Guangzhou.

First of all, in terms of overall planning of operators, all operators should strengthen communication and exchange. It need to establish the only officially certified the Pearl River Night Tour Ticketing Center, and provide a unified, open and comparable information channel. All operators should focus on their own culture and theme characteristics to carry out differentiated operations. At the same time, they should make unified planning for the presentation form of culture and tourism integration and service standards, enabling tourists to make horizontal comparisons and predict their experience perception in advance, in order to make consumption decisions more quickly.

Secondly, at the macro level, in combination with the existing one point (Canton Tower) and one line (the Pearl River night tour) cooperation and linkage mode, the government should make overall planning. On the one hand, it should introduce urban-level high-quality development support policies for the culture and tourism industry to strengthen support for the construction of key culture and tourism projects in the areas along the night tour. On the other hand, it should take the lead in preparing and implementing the economic development plan for the night tour, promote regular communication and coordination among various stakeholders within the area, establish a government led social support system for the development of urban night tourism, break through regional restrictions, and create a culture and tourism cluster. Ultimately, a new version map of the culture and tourism integration combining point (key project), line (night tour route), and area (area along the route) will be formed, forming a unique urban immersive experience area.

Finally, it need to break through the offline consumption space of night tour and attach importance to the unified planning of online and offline culture and tourism consumption. Usually, people tend to focus more on consumption in offline culture and tourism scenarios, but ignore economic forms such as online e-commerce, live broadcast, and online social networking. In the the Pearl River night tour, it can try to carry out the "virtual-real interaction" innovation of cruise live broadcast, combine online tour, cultural display and live broadcast sales, and creatively explore the integration of culture, tourism and business. At the same time, it can also try to make community residents, tourists, *etc.* become tour guides in the form of tourism applet or APP cultural networking, and improve the public's awareness of Guangzhou and the Pearl River by sharing their own unique urban culture and tourist attractions.

3.2 Synchronous integration of material and intangible cultural elements At present, the Pearl River night tour has included the Pearl River Night Tour, the Pearl River Red Boat Tour, River Tower Tour and other tourism products. Among these products, the natural environment of the Pearl River and the urban nighttime landscape on both sides of the river, such as lighting landscape, architectural landscape, cruise boat landscape, bridge landscape, dock landscape and other material and cultural elements, can be directly perceived by tourists, with high satisfaction. However, in the perception of cultural symbols, the humanistic environment image of the Pearl River night tour is not promi-

nent. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen its own unique intangible cultural elements according to the local cultural characteristics, historical traditions, cultural IP implantation and other means in the future development of the Pearl River night tour, to enhance tourists' perception of intangible cultural elements.

(1) All parties involved brainstorm and work together: the intangible cultural elements should be integrated into the night tour projects and routes, and it should involve local residents and tourists, educational research institutions, mass media and other social groups. The cultural tourism products launched on this basis can be more recognized by consumers. At the same time, Tiktok, Xiaohongshu, Weibo, official account and other media can be used to promote the products.

(2) Strengthening the integration of intangible cultural elements: the Pearl River night tour should take the local culture as the core and soul, making the the Pearl River a classic route to perceive the essence of regional culture. In terms of cultural integration, Lingnan culture, Guangfu culture, Hong Kong style culture, Chinese and Western blend culture and other cultural forms that reflect Guangzhou's vitality and open and inclusive city image should be further strengthened through the Pearl River night cruise boat and route. Tea drinking, snacks, Cantonese cuisine, local seasonal vegetables and fruits, and other culinary cultures and customs should also be creatively presented in depth. The historical and cultural elements of the Pearl River tributary waters can also be integrated into tourism products, expanding the geographical scope of the Pearl River Cantonese charm.

(3) Internalization of ecological and cultural elements: the green development of the Pearl River tourism has made substantial progress since 2021, creating a new mode of water leisure tourism featuring low noise, zero emission of air pollution, environmental protection and comfort. In the future, it should continue to promote the green and low-carbon transformation of boat power in the development of the Pearl River tour, and further promote the integration of ecological culture and tourism development.

3.3 Balancing the relationship between tourism and commercial attributes in night tour products The naming, appearance and interior decoration of night cruise boats, the landscape lighting advertisements along the cruise line, and the excessive commercial attributes of commercial projects such as auctioning calligraphy and painting, and promoting products on cruise boats require reasonable and standardized development. The Pearl River basin in the urban area of Guangzhou bears the history of urban development over 2 000 years since the establishment of the city, runs through the traditional, modern and contemporary urban axis of Guangzhou, is an important symbol of the historical precipitation and urban image of Guangzhou, and has the characteristics of urban landmark landscape public space. Therefore, whether it is the naming of the cruise boat, the design of the exterior and interior, the presentation of advertisements along the cruise line, or the launch of commercial projects on the cruise boat, all should have deeper and more long-term strategic considerations. On the one hand, it is necessary to carefully select partners to avoid the negative impact of too strong business atmosphere on tourists' sense of experience. On the other hand, it is necessary to use the corporate

image of partners to add value to the publicity and recognition of the Pearl River tour line and Guangzhou city image.

3.4 Breaking functional boundaries and achieving a high degree of integration of culture, commerce, tourism, and education

In order to achieve high-quality development, the Pearl River night tour must break the functional boundaries on the basis of breaking the spatial boundaries, and achieve the integrated development of tourism elements and cultural, commercial and educational elements. The water area of the Pearl River night tour has unique natural resources, but it is not enough to rely only on the advantages of water tourism resources. It still needs to carry out the reorganization and cooperation of natural resources and artificial resources development^[12]. In the restructuring of resources, it is necessary to break through functional boundaries and attempt to elevate the material needs of the night economy in "eating, drinking, and playing" to cultural and artistic, social, and parent-child activities at the spiritual needs level, achieving a high degree of integration of culture, business, tourism, and education.

(1) Creating the cultural display of the Pearl River night tour as a stage for tourists to experience culture and identify with culture; to meet tourists' demands for cultural element experience, the various cultural types presented in the Pearl River night tour, such as Lingnan culture, intangible cultural heritage, Marine Silk Road culture, theme culture, *etc.*, should deepen tourists' understanding and identification of culture in the experience process through performing interaction^[13], festival participatory experience, curriculum education discussion, DIY production, *etc.*, elevating the process of tourism into a subtle educational process.

(2) During night tours, the activity space and scope of tourists are affected, and the activity space is relatively concentrated^[1]. To maximize the length of tourist experience, the scope of night tour activities must extend beyond the cruise space, especially the adjacent spaces along the route. Commercial facilities such as boarding docks, nearby shopping malls, cultural and creative blocks could be used to create commercial consumption venues, and cultural exhibitions, light shows, festival activities and performances are used to attract tourists to visit and consume. In addition, the commercial consumption field can be extended to the on-line visitor base, attempting to integrate commercial live broadcast, cultural and creative products, social interaction, and online tourism.

3.5 Creating a good tourism atmosphere and laying the foundation for culture and tourism experience perception

The duality of the cruise experience determines that tourists not only focus on the leisure experience of the cruise space itself, but also value the tourism experience of the cruise line space^[12]. The perception effect of tourists' culture and tourism experience depends on the comprehensive atmosphere perception of the above two aspects of experience.

To create a good tourism atmosphere, the key is to: ① improve the social support system for the development of night

tourism, continuously improve the infrastructure construction of night tourism transportation, accommodation, catering, *etc.*, especially to reasonably plan public transportation routes connecting cruise boat docks, scenic spots, adjacent cultural and creative blocks, main commercial and leisure areas, and residential areas, and enhance the convenience of tourist travel. ② It needs to further regulate the business behavior of cruise boat companies, supervise the management of cruise boat ticket prices and photography project fees on cruise boats, strengthen the safety management of cruise boats, enhance the awareness of service personnel, improve service levels, to enhance the satisfaction of tourists with the leisure experience within the cruise boat space.

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