

Research on Brand Image Design for Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area in Zhaoqing City through the Lens of Cultural and Tourism Integration

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Abstract: As cultural and tourism integration emerges as the core strategy for national cultural and tourism development, the significance of brand image design for scenic areas has become increasingly important. Focused on the Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area in Zhaoqing City, this study examines the current state, challenges, and enhancement strategies of brand image design for scenic areas from the standpoint of visual communication design. Through a combination of literature review, on-site investigations, and case analyses, this paper delineates the brand positioning of Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area. Additionally, it puts forth strategic recommendations such as cultural symbol extraction, visual image reconstruction, the establishment of culturally immersive experiences, and the construction of a comprehensive multi-channel brand communication framework. The primary objective is to furnish theoretical underpinning and practical directives for the brand image design of Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area, while also serving as a valuable reference for similar natural scenic areas nationwide.

Keywords: Cultural and Tourism Integration; Brand Image Design; Zhaoqing City; Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area

1. Introduction

Cultural and tourism integration has emerged as the core strategy for the national development of culture and tourism. At the policy level, there is a push for scenic areas to transition from being merely “sightseeing-oriented” to becoming “experience-oriented”, demanding that the brand image of these areas encapsulate dual values of culture and tourism. Leveraging the resources of “mountains, lakes, cities, and rivers”, Zhaoqing City has been developing its cultural and tourism

industry. Dinghu Mountain, as one of the “Four Famous Mountains of Lingnan”, stands as the central carrier of cultural and tourism development in Zhaoqing. However, its brand image has yet to fully align with the demands of cultural and tourism integration. Currently, domestic scenic areas face common issues such as severe homogenization in brand image design, superficial exploration of culture, and low levels of tourist engagement. Dinghu Mountain needs to break free from traditional design paradigms. In this context, this study focuses on the Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area in Zhaoqing City. It examines the current status, challenges, and optimization strategies of brand image design from a visual communication design perspective, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for Dinghu Mountain’s brand image design, while also serving as a reference for similar natural scenic areas in China. By delving deeply into the brand image design of Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area, this study aims to explore new ideas and approaches for brand image design of natural scenic areas under the backdrop of cultural and tourism integration. Furthermore, it seeks to enhance the research framework for brand image design of natural scenic areas under the lens of cultural and tourism integration, providing theoretical references for the brand construction of similar natural scenic areas. The brand image design strategies proposed in this study are intended to offer concrete guidance for the brand construction of Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area, aiding in clarifying brand positioning, enhancing the recognition and visitor loyalty of the scenic area, enabling it to stand out in the competitive tourism market, and driving the high-quality development of the cultural and tourism industry in Zhaoqing.

2. Theoretical Overview of Cultural and Tourism Integration and Brand Image Design

2.1 Definition of Cultural and Tourism Integration

Cultural and tourism integration entails a deep integration of cultural resources and tourism elements. It emphasizes that “culture enhances tourism experiences, and tourism promotes cultural dissemination”, leading to mutual empowerment in both areas. In the context of scenic areas, cultural and tourism integration is primarily manifested at the cultural level (exploration of regional and ecological culture), the product level (development of cultural experiential tourism projects), and the image level (integration of cultural symbols into brand visuals). The concept not only represents a strategic consideration for the coordinated development of cultural and tourism industries but also serves as a practical exploration of how to better integrate cultural connotations into tourism products and services to enhance the overall tourist experience[1].

2.2 Theoretical Overview and Development

The components of scenic area brand image design include visual imagery (LOGO, color schemes, wayfinding systems), cultural imagery (regional culture, historical narratives of the scenic area), and experiential imagery (visitor interactive projects, service quality). Design principles entail distinctiveness (to avoid homogenization with similar scenic areas), correlation (alignment with the natural landscapes and cultural connotations of the scenic area), and communicability (ease of dissemination on social media and travel platforms) [2]. Digital technologies have evolved, leading brand image design to transition from traditional graphic design to multimedia and interactive design. This shift places greater emphasis on user experience and emotional connections. Against the backdrop of cultural and tourism integration, the significance of brand image design is increasingly highlighted. It serves not only as a crucial means for attracting tourists to scenic areas but also as a key medium for cultural dissemination. Brand image design must emphasize regional characteristics while showcasing the uniqueness of the brand image design to enhance the brand’s competitiveness in the market [3].

2.3 The Influence of Cultural and Tourism Integration on Brand Image Design in Scenic

Areas

Cultural and tourism integration has brought forth new opportunities and challenges for brand image design in scenic areas. On one hand, the integration of cultural elements provides rich materials and meaning for brand image design, imbuing it with cultural depth and allure. On the other hand, it requires designers to delve deeper into and comprehend local culture, skillfully integrating it into brand image design to achieve the organic fusion of culture and tourism. Furthermore, cultural and tourism integration has propelled brand image design from mere visual communication to multidimensional experiential design, emphasizing the enhancement of tourists’ cognitive recognition and memory of scenic area brands through multisensory experiences [4]. In the context of cultural and tourism integration, brand image design for scenic areas needs to place greater emphasis on the exploration and presentation of cultural connotations. For instance, through the brand image design driven by cultural and tourism integration, the Tang Tombs in Guanzhong delved deeply into Tang cultural connotations, transforming cultural elements into visual symbols applied in cultural and creative products, wayfinding systems, and promotional materials [5]. This design not only enhances the uniqueness of the brand but also strengthens cultural soft power, fostering the sustainable development of cultural tourism industries.

2.4 Current Development Status of Brand Image Design in Scenic Areas

Currently, there are common issues in Chinese scenic area brand image design, such as severe homogenization, superficial cultural exploration, and low levels of visitor engagement. Many scenic areas excessively focus on the form of brand image design while neglecting the exploration and transmission of cultural connotations, resulting in brands lacking individuality and depth [6]. With the continuous development of the tourism market and the increasing diversification of tourist demands, brand image design for scenic areas needs constant innovation and optimization to adapt to market changes and visitor needs.

In the context of cultural and tourism integration, some scenic areas have begun exploring the use of cultural intellectual properties (IP) and digital tools to enhance brand image and market competitiveness. However, many scenic areas

still lack in brand image design professionalism, visual system development, and planning, keeping brand image design at a rudimentary stage of creating a brand atmosphere. The trend in the development of scenic area brand image design is to focus more on the exploration and presentation of cultural connotations and the enhancement of user experience. Through cultural and tourism integration, scenic areas can better transform cultural resources into tourism products, enhancing brand allure and market competitiveness. Simultaneously, scenic areas need to continuously innovate and optimize brand image design to adapt to market changes and tourist demands.

3. Current State and Problem Analysis of Brand Image of Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area in Zhaoqing City

3.1 Current Research

The brand image of Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area shows shortcomings in visual representation, cultural exploration, and visitor perception. Although the existing visual identity includes logo design, color schemes, and wayfinding systems, it fails to integrate core features like the “Oasis on the Tropic of Cancer (Northern Tropic)” and the “Southern Ecological Barrier”. The logo design is simplistic, the color schemes lack distinction, and there is a lack of representation of unique ecological and cultural elements. Additionally, the exploration of “Duan Inkstone Culture (a renowned type of Chinese inkstone)”, “Zen Culture”, and “Lingnan Folk Customs” is limited, with cultural significance inadequately conveyed in brand communication, lacking systematic depth, and failing to create compelling cultural experiential projects. Furthermore, the awareness and satisfaction of visitors towards the brand image of Dinghu Mountain are relatively low, perceiving the brand image as obscure, lacking uniqueness and cultural depth. Moreover, there is a scarcity of cultural interactive projects within the scenic area, failing to meet visitors’ needs for cultural experiences [7].

3.2 Core Problem Analysis

The brand image design of Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area is plagued by various issues that hinder its development in the realm of cultural and tourism integration. Primarily, the brand positioning is ambiguous, lacking a clear dual

positioning of “ecology + culture”. This lack of differentiation from surrounding attractions like Zhaoqing Seven-Star Crags and Qingyuan Danxia Mountain makes it challenging for visitors to form a distinctive brand impression [7]. Secondly, there is insufficient cultural integration as the current brand image predominantly focuses on showcasing natural landscapes, neglecting the exploration and presentation of regional cultural symbols, resulting in low cultural identification. Cultural displays within the area largely comprise simplistic textual introductions, lacking vibrancy and interactivity. Additionally, there is a severe homogenization in visual imagery, with the logo and promotional materials design resembling that of many other natural scenic areas, failing to create a distinctive identity and struggling to stand out in the tourism market. Furthermore, there is a disconnect between experience and image, as brand promotion emphasizes “ecological experiences”, yet the actual cultural interactive projects within the area are scarce, leading to a significant disparity between visitor experiences and brand image promotion. Finally, there is a reliance on a singular communication channel, predominantly traditional tourism platforms, with inadequate dissemination on short video platforms, resulting in low reach among younger audiences, limiting the brand’s reach and influence. These combined issues constrain the development of Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area within the context of cultural and tourism integration, necessitating improvements through strategies such as clarifying brand positioning, delving deeper into cultural connotations, innovating visual image design, enriching experiential projects, and expanding communication channels.

4. Brand Image Design Strategy for Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area from the Perspective of Cultural and Tourism Integration

4.1 Clarifying the Dual Core Brand Positioning of “Ecology + Culture”

The brand image design strategy for Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area should commence with a clear focus on the dual core brand positioning of “Ecology + Culture.” Centered around the theme of “an ecological oasis along the Tropic of Cancer, a natural carrier of Lingnan culture”, the strategy highlights the essence of Dinghu Mountain as a convergence of “ecological rarity”

and “cultural uniqueness”. This strategic positioning not only showcases the natural ecological advantages of Dinghu Mountain but also emphasizes its rich cultural heritage, providing a definitive direction for brand image design. In contrast to surrounding attractions, the strategy accentuates the combination advantages of “ecology + Zen Culture + Duan Inkstone Culture”, establishing a distinctive edge in competition against attractions like Seven Star Crag with its “karst lakes” and Danxia Mountain with its “red culture”. Through this differentiated positioning, Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area can distinguish itself in the tourism market, attracting a broader array of visitors.

4.2 Extraction of Cultural Symbols and Reconstruction of Visual Image

Integrated brand image design is driven by the core principle of deeply extracting, precisely translating, and adeptly integrating unique cultural elements as the “soul” of brand recognition [8]. Within the brand image design strategy for Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area, the extraction of cultural symbols and the reconstruction of visual imagery stand as pivotal components. Firstly, in exploring cultural symbols, Dinghu Mountain boasts a wealth of cultural resources, such as the “water ripple pattern” of Duan inkstones, the “lotus pattern” of Zen Culture, and the “plant totems” of Lingnan folk customs (such as banyan trees and kapok trees). These cultural symbols not only possess distinct regional characteristics but also effectively convey the cultural essence of Dinghu Mountain, offering rich source material for brand image design.

In terms of optimizing visual imagery, the integration of the “oasis silhouette” with the “Duan inkstone pattern” in the logo design embodies the fusion concept of “ecology + culture”. This design not only delivers a unique visual impact but also effectively communicates Dinghu Mountain’s brand positioning. Concerning the color scheme, the primary color is “Dinghu Mountain green” to reflect ecological characteristics, with complementary colors of “Duan inkstone black” and “Danxia red” to signify cultural connotations. This color system not only showcases distinct regional features but also enhances the brand’s visual recognition. Furthermore, the design of the wayfinding system incorporates cultural symbols, such as using lotus patterns to adorn seats and

incorporating Duan inkstone patterns in ground signage. These detailed designs not only enhance visitors’ perception of Dinghu Mountain’s culture but also elevate the overall cultural ambiance of the entire scenic area.

Through the extraction of cultural symbols and the reconstruction of visual imagery, the brand image design for Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area not only highlights its unique ecological and cultural value but also establishes distinctive brand characteristics in the tourism market, enticing a greater number of visitors.

4.3 Building a Brand Scene with Integrated “Culture + Experience”

To establish a brand scene with integrated “Culture + Experience”, Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area embarks on two key aspects: the development of cultural experience projects and the optimization of service image. In terms of cultural experience project development, the creation of the “Dinghu Mountain Cultural Gallery” serves as a platform to vividly showcase the craftsmanship of Duan inkstone production, Zen stories, and more, enhancing visitors’ understanding of Dinghu Mountain’s culture. For instance, the Cultural Gallery can illustrate the entire process of Duan inkstone production—from stone selection and carving to the finished product—as well as the origins and development of Zen Culture, allowing visitors to delve deeper into the cultural essence of Dinghu Mountain. Additionally, interactive projects like “Duan inkstone rubbings”, “tea ceremonies with Zen aesthetics”, and “Lingnan folk performances” are introduced to engage visitors in cultural creation. Under the guidance of skilled artisans, visitors can personally experience the process of Duan inkstone rubbings, create their own rubbings, and thereby enhance their sense of participation and cultural immersion. These interactive projects not only increase visitor engagement but also effectively convey Dinghu Mountain’s cultural richness. In the optimization of service image, specialized training is provided to scenic area staff, enabling them to narrate Dinghu Mountain’s cultural stories and offer “cultural guide” services, thereby enhancing visitors’ perception of Dinghu Mountain’s culture. Staff members can introduce visitors to the historical and cultural background of Dinghu Mountain, its natural landscape features, and relevant folk legends, allowing visitors to better grasp the cultural value of Dinghu Mountain

during their exploration. By crafting a brand scene with integrated “Culture + Experience”, cultural experiences for visitors are elevated, creating a tourism brand with cultural depth and interactivity.

This approach bears similarities to the brand shaping strategy of the Kunlun Pass scenic area, which also focuses on leveraging local cultural resources to develop tourism products and services imbued with cultural significance, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of the area. The Kunlun Pass scenic area, by hosting the “Guanyu’s Knife-Grinding Festival (a folk event commemorating the legend of Guan Yu grinding his knife)” folk cultural tourism festival, merges local folk culture with tourism products, crafting a distinctive festival event [9]. Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area can draw inspiration from this model by integrating local cultural elements such as Duan Inkstone Culture and Zen Culture into tourism products, developing experiential projects with cultural significance to enhance visitors’ cultural experiences.

4.4 Establishing a Multi-Channel Brand Communication System

In the digital era, online communication is a crucial means of brand promotion. Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area has taken advantage of this by creating a series of short videos titled “Exploring the Culture of Dinghu Mountain”, showcasing the connection between cultural experience projects, natural landscapes, and cultural symbols. By leveraging short video platforms, the scenic area aims to enhance the brand’s reach and influence. Additionally, the initiation of the hashtag #DinghuMountainCulturalCheck-in encourages visitors to share photos and videos of their cultural experiences, fostering user-generated content (UGC) dissemination. This social media interaction not only enhances visitor engagement but also boosts brand loyalty. For instance, Chishanhu Wetland Park has successfully promoted itself through platforms like Douyin and WeChat, attracting a significant following and increasing brand awareness.

In offline communication, a strategy involving cross-industry collaboration and regional cooperation is adopted. Collaborative partnerships with Duan inkstone brands and Lingnan cultural and creative brands have led to the introduction of a range of Dinghu Mountain-themed cultural and creative products.

These products not only include traditional Duan inkstone ornaments and cultural T-shirts but also cleverly integrate Dinghu Mountain’s natural landscapes and cultural symbols, such as “Oasis on the Tropic of Cancer” and “Lingnan Ecological Barrier”, infusing the products with greater cultural significance and regional charm. Similar to the tourism cultural and creative product design strategy in Jinan, Shandong, which integrates Confucian culture, Grand Canal culture, and Water Margin culture into their rich cultural resources, Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area can draw inspiration from this model [10]. By combining local Duan inkstone culture and Zen Culture with cultural and creative products, they can develop items such as landscape ornaments carved from Duan inkstones and tea sets featuring elements of Zen Culture, thereby enhancing the cultural value and market appeal of these cultural and creative products.

5. Conclusion

By delving into the brand image design of Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area, this study elucidates the core logic from a cultural and tourism integration perspective. With a dual focus on “ecology + culture”, the systematic design—covering positioning, visual elements, experiences, and communication—establishes brand differentiation and conveys cultural value. By identifying strategic design elements across four dimensions - positioning, visual aesthetics, experiential essence, and communication strategies, this research aims to address issues such as ambiguity in brand image, insufficient cultural integration, and homogeneity faced by Dinghu Mountain. These strategies not only offer specific guidance for brand development at Dinghu Mountain Scenic Area but also serve as a reference for similar natural scenic spots within the country, particularly those endowed with both ecological and cultural resources. Against the backdrop of cultural and tourism integration, scenic areas are urged to transcend traditional notions that prioritize nature over culture. By deeply delving into regional heritage, redefining brand aesthetics, and optimizing experiential realms, the transition from a mere “scenic spot” to a prominent “brand” is envisioned. This transition seeks to elevate the core competitive edge of the scenic area within the tourism market landscape.

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