

# Exploring the Sustainable Development Strategy of Ancient Towns in Southern Jiangsu Driven by the Homogeneity of Tourism Towns

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**Abstract.** In recent years, local governments have excessively interfered with the development and construction of ancient towns in southern Jiangsu, replacing planning with planning, without considering local conditions and only focusing on economic benefits and political achievements. Local governments have blindly built some high return value projects, leading to the homogenization of tourist ancient towns in various regions. How to effectively coordinate the contradiction between the protection of ancient towns and tourism development has become an urgent focus of attention. This article attempts to explore the sustainable development strategies of ancient towns in southern Jiangsu under the drive of homogenization of tourism towns. Comprehensively combine the internal resources of the ancient town in southern Jiangsu to form a unique style, gradually build and open related tourism projects, and after the overall construction is completed, launch a new image to avoid hardware being unable to keep up with the software situation. The sustainable development of tourism in ancient towns requires scientific and professional planning in order to effectively avoid any possible damage to the town. The tourism development planning of ancient towns should not be blindly carried out and rushed forward. The feasibility of tourism development should be evaluated and carried out in stages and batches. Improving the cultural quality of local residents and gaining their support is the key to achieving sustainable resource development.

**Keywords:** Tourism Ancient Town; Homogenization; Ancient Town in Southern Jiangsu; Sustainable Development Strategy.

## 1. Introduction

The development of ancient towns has learned from the previous experience and made innovations. With the development of urbanization, there are more or less problems in ancient towns, such as the decline of cultural landscape, excessive tourism development and disorderly construction. As a result, the phenomenon of "homogenization" in ancient towns is becoming more and more serious, and the voice of "one side of a thousand towns" is also increasing. The homogenization of ancient tourist towns means the lack of differences in tourism products [1]. According to relevant theories, the differences of tourism products can be attributed to material differences and cognitive differences, and the former can be divided into horizontal differences and vertical differences. From the perspective of vertical differences, the grades of tourism products, project facilities, restaurants and other related industries in the ancient tourist town are not much different, and the quality is generally low. Moreover, the commercialization of the ancient town is strong, with a large number of shops and similar products, and hotels all operate the same dishes [2]. How to effectively coordinate the contradiction between ancient town protection and tourism development has become the focus of urgent attention. Driven by these ancient towns that developed tourism earlier, rising stars such as Dongshan, Xishan, Jinxi, Qiandeng, Shaxi, Liuhe and Zhenze in Suzhou have also joined the ranks of ancient towns in southern Jiangsu [3]. However, there are still many shortcomings in the process of tourism exhibition in the ancient water towns in southern Jiangsu, which need to be improved. Jinxi Town, Kunshan, Suzhou, Jiangsu, you will find that she is a small town with great personality. The key is that the town has endowed the "soul" with the eastern and western cultural connotations. Jinxi Town not only reflects its own personality through tangible surface material elements, but also highlights its cultural characteristics through intangible deep local spirit. In this regard, this paper attempts to explore the sustainable development strategy of ancient towns in southern Jiangsu driven by homogenization of tourist towns [4]. Comprehensively combine the internal resources of ancient

towns in southern Jiangsu to form a unique style, gradually build and open related tourism projects, and then launch a new image after the overall construction is completed, so as to avoid the situation that the hardware can't keep up with the software. In the process of development, it should be integrated with modern agriculture, service industry, industry and other industries to form an industrial cluster with local characteristics. Such a characteristic ancient town is difficult to be copied and surpassed by ancient towns in other regions in a short time [5].

## **2. The Causes and Effects of Homogenization in Ancient Towns in Southern Jiangsu**

### **2.1. The Reasons for the Homogenization of Ancient Towns in Southern Jiangsu**

There are three modes for the ancient town to start: government-led mode, government-led project company mode and management right transfer mode. However, some local governments excessively interfere in the development and construction of ancient towns in southern Jiangsu, replacing planning with planning, ignoring local conditions and only paying attention to economic benefits and political achievements. Local governments blindly build some projects with high return value, which leads to the homogenization of ancient tourist towns around the country [6]. In order to develop tourism, in the process of transforming ancient houses and blocks in southern Jiangsu, the principle of "repairing the old as the old" was not grasped enough, and some modern building materials such as ceramic tiles and aluminum alloy doors and windows were added to many houses. Some ancient towns have even been demolished and built, and the residential buildings have been rejuvenated, creating a lot of "fake antiques", which seriously damaged the authenticity and overall aesthetic feeling of the ancient towns [7]. Many people don't realize the value of ancient buildings, traditional blocks and ecological environment. On the other hand, they generally lack successful experience to learn from, and management regulations, rules and administrative measures are not in place. Therefore, they are easily driven by short-term economic interests and utilitarian thoughts, and regard the cultural heritage left by their ancestors as a "cash cow" and as cheap operating capital, and they develop tourism without restraint through market business operation. The ancient towns in southern Jiangsu lack the necessary tourism joint. Reflected in the tourism organization, there is a lack of linear tourist routes connecting several ancient towns in series, or radial tourist routes radiating from one ancient town to other ancient towns. In actual tourist routes, ancient town tourism is basically "independent" and "scattered" [8]. Because the designers of tourism products industry have low requirements and consciousness for product innovation in the design process, and blindly pursue the maximization of benefits, which leads to the relative lack of innovative design of ancient towns in southern Jiangsu, which makes the ancient towns in southern Jiangsu completely imitated or designed with high similarity, resulting in the homogenization of ancient towns in tourism [9].

### **2.2. Influence of Homogenization of Ancient Towns in Southern Jiangsu Province**

According to economic principles, when the choice space of a certain product is limited, the consumer's choice range generally decreases. Therefore, the homogenization of tourist ancient towns will be difficult to meet the ever-changing and growing tourism needs of tourists; Furthermore, the lack of high-quality ancient towns in southern Jiangsu will affect a significant portion of consumers' potential tourism needs that cannot be met. As shown in Figure 1, Luzhi, the oldest water town in southern Jiangsu, is known for its "small bridges, flowing water, and homes", as well as several famous people's former residences, which make it difficult for tourists to recognize and experience the differences[10]. Watching too much often leads to aesthetic fatigue and low revisit rates; At the same time, it also leads to a diversion of tourists, and tourists who have visited one ancient town are often unwilling to go to other ancient towns, believing that they are all similar.



**Figure 1.** Luzhi an ancient town in southern Jiangsu.

With the high homogeneity of tourism products, the competitiveness between ancient towns has gradually lost. In terms of the development of tourism commodities, the ancient towns are also similar and single. When you step into Zhouzhuang town, you will see that the streets are full of so-called authentic "three hooves", which makes it difficult to distinguish between true and false, and it is boring to swim [11]. "An authentic local product shop", antique shop, handicraft shop and silk quilt shop appear repeatedly on a street. Consumers can't judge the differences between ancient tourist towns, so they have to blindly follow the trend, which leads to two extreme situations, namely, the sudden surge in the number of tourists or the cold. This result has a great impact on ancient towns in southern Jiangsu, which not only wastes resources, but also limits the development of regional economy.

### **3. Countermeasures for Sustainable Development of Tourism in Ancient Towns in Southern Jiangsu**

#### **3.1. Creating a Distinctive Ancient Town**

In order to better form its own tourism characteristics and break free from the influence of landscape substitution effects, the ancient town of southern Jiangsu must break through tradition, open up its thinking, deepen its understanding of historical and cultural activities, grasp the characteristics of the ancient town of southern Jiangsu, and create a distinctive new ancient town of southern Jiangsu. As a cultural tourism resource, the addition or modification of its cultural elements should be more in line with the overall cultural environment. Firstly, buildings that embody the characteristics of a water town are products of a long historical and cultural influence, either independent or clustered. They not only reflect the characteristics of the water town in their own structure and appearance, but also match with other surrounding buildings, forming an overall form of water town residential; Secondly, the quaint and peaceful ancient town of southern Jiangsu has also nurtured a unique local culture. The cultural relics carrying cultural inheritance are deeply imprinted with the water town logo under the influence of the unique atmosphere. Seeing them, one can see the living culture and the diverse life of the people in the water town for thousands of years. In addition, the scenic area should also provide unified and rich tourism information to tourists in conjunction with high-end hotels, large and medium-sized hotels, residential inns, and express hotels in the area. The specific information not only includes the food, accommodation, transportation, tourism, shopping, and entertainment of the ancient town, but also folk characteristics and performances, as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Performance of the Ancient Town in Southern Jiangsu

As an ancient water town, its popularity is also higher than that of other water towns. Eating dishes such as Wan San hoof, San Wei Yuan, and White Clam Soup, enjoying small bridges and flowing water, watching Shen Hall and Zhang Hall, and participating in traditional folk festival activities such as dragon lantern dancing, fast boat rocking, and light boat rowing, all of which reflect the characteristics of the water town in southern Jiangsu.

### **3.2. Emphasize the Participation of Community Residents**

According to the life cycle theory of tourist destinations, some ancient towns in southern Jiangsu have entered a mature market stage for tourism development. To extend the life cycle of ancient town tourism and achieve sustainable development, it is necessary to enrich the tourism content of ancient towns and innovate the types of tourism products. The sustainable development of tourism in the ancient town of southern Jiangsu must pay attention to the participation of community residents and their interests. In this regard, residents can sell goods in the ancient town, forming a commercial area in the town, as shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Commercial District of Sunan Ancient Town

Improve the living conditions and quality of life of residents in ancient towns in southern Jiangsu. On the basis of protecting traditional residential buildings, transform their internal structures such as kitchen and bathroom to meet the convenience of residents in ancient towns and narrow the gap

between ancient towns and modern life. The second is to encourage residents of ancient towns in southern Jiangsu to participate in the tourism development of ancient towns in southern Jiangsu, to fundamentally solve their employment, increase their income, ensure that they get tangible benefits, and make residents realize the value of cultural relics and traditional folk customs. Within the scope of the ancient town protection coordination area, we should combine traffic organization and parking facilities to build special commercial blocks, set up tourist attractions with different contents, divert and decompress, reduce the pressure on the core protected areas during peak hours, and provide convenience for local residents' marketing to develop the ancient town tourism economy in an orderly manner. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the service consciousness of the service personnel in each position in the scenic spot, and train them according to the work content, so that they can achieve inner beauty, image beauty and language beauty, enhance their closeness with tourists, and serve tourists from all directions with good mental state and professional quality.

### **3.3. Planning and Developing Ancient Towns**

Plan the tourist attractions of the ancient town in southern Jiangsu as first level protected areas, second level protected areas, and third level protected areas based on their value. Manage the protected areas at different levels, reasonably control the number of visitors, and avoid damaging the peaceful and pristine overall environment of the ancient town. Although the problems that arise in the tourism of ancient towns in southern Jiangsu are stage by stage issues in development, it is not surprising that the second urgent task cannot be ignored is to avoid tourism damage to the heritage, curb further erosion and damage, and further awaken the indigenous people's awareness of heritage protection through publicity and education, so that they can realize that excessive tourism development and commercialization are no different from fishing out of the swamp. The sustainable development of tourism in ancient towns requires scientific and professional planning in order to effectively avoid any possible damage to the town. The tourism development planning of ancient towns should not be blindly carried out and rushed forward. The feasibility of tourism development should be evaluated and carried out in stages and batches. Improving the cultural quality of local residents and gaining their support is the key to achieving sustainable resource development. Key protected areas refer to the direct environmental protection scope and other necessary key protected areas outside the cultural relics protection unit. All types of buildings should comply with the requirements of cultural relics and historical sites protection, and their form, number of floors, materials, and colors should strive to be consistent with traditional buildings. At the same time, enhancing environmental education and making tourists and residents aware that protecting the resources of ancient towns is a prerequisite for achieving economic benefits. The sustainable development of tourism resources in ancient towns in southern Jiangsu can achieve sustainable development of tourism economy.

## **4. Conclusion**

To speed up the transformation and upgrading of cultural tourism, it is important to innovate ideas. As long as we effectively protect the cultural heritage of ancient towns in southern Jiangsu and avoid excessive commercial development, we can get out of the low-level stage of tourism products, thus achieving win-win and sustainable development of heritage protection and cultural tourism. Driven by the homogenization of ancient tourist towns, this paper explores the sustainable development strategy of ancient towns in southern Jiangsu. Cultural inheritance is another major aspect of human environment and resource protection. Most of the cultures of ancient towns in the south of the Yangtze River belong to folk culture, which originated from the people, with rich types, unique contents and small spread. Therefore, it is urgent to excavate, inherit and protect them, otherwise it is likely to be gradually submerged in the waves of history. Therefore, in the future development, we can increase some activities with strong participation to enhance the activity of tourists. For example, the manual wood carving workshop and the blacksmith workshop in Jiezi ancient town have different flavors, so we can consider letting tourists personally participate in the experience of wood carving and blacksmith. Educate local residents in a hierarchical way, so that interested tourists can have a further

understanding through intuitive feelings. In addition, in tourism propaganda and cultural propaganda, it keeps pace with the times, so that more Chinese children can understand the cultural homeland of Jiangnan. Therefore, in the development of ancient towns, only reproducing the historical buildings and monuments of that year cannot be used as a single development option.

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