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From Heritage to Experience: A Framework for Cultural Tourism IP Transformation in China's Mid-Sized Cities

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ABSTRACT: This study explores how post-industrial cities can reinvent themselves as cultural tourism destinations through the strategic use of intellectual property (IP). Jiamusi City in Northeast China serves as the focal case, with comparative insights drawn from six other successful destinations. Guided by destination branding theory and the experience economy, we adopt a mixed-methods approach that integrates case analysis and cross-case comparison. Key findings reveal that successful transformation requires: (1) authentic place-based narrative construction, (2) digital-native marketing strategies targeting experiential consumers, (3) community-driven co-creation models, and (4) government-led service innovation. Based on these insights, we propose a "Strategic Cultural IP Refinement Framework" to address the challenges of industrial heritage cities in the digital age. Practical implications suggest that these cities can use cultural assets through precision targeting, immersive experience design, and stakeholder collaboration to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in China's evolving tourism landscape.

KEYWORDS: cultural tourism, destination branding, intellectual property, industrial heritage, digital marketing, experience economy

I. INTRODUCTION

The global economy is in the midst of major structural change. Many post-industrial cities face the dual pressures of deindustrialization and population decline (Lorentzen, 2009; Richards, 2018). In response, cultural and tourism integration has become an increasingly attractive path for economic renewal. Unlike traditional manufacturing, this approach offers diversification while drawing on local heritage and identity. The trend is especially visible in China. National strategies promoting high-quality development (Xie et al., 2021) align with a consumer market that is rapidly shifting away from conventional sightseeing. Travelers now seek personalized, immersive, and emotionally engaging experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). This creates new opportunities for mid-sized cities. With their industrial legacies and cultural resources, but without the entrenched tourism infrastructure of larger metropolises, they are uniquely positioned to experiment and innovate in this transformation.

This study examines how cultural tourism intellectual property (IP) is being reshaped in the digital age, with a focus on the challenges faced by mid-sized cities. We use Jiamusi, a post-industrial city in Northeast China, as a primary case. Known as the country's easternmost urban center, Jiamusi combines unique natural and cultural assets. It sits on expansive wetlands and is home to diverse communities, including the Hezhe, one of China's smallest ethnic groups, with an official population of 5,373 according to a national census conducted in 2020. Yet these advantages have not easily translated into a sustainable cultural IP. Like many cities outside major metropolitan hubs, Jiamusi struggles to transform its resource base into tourism products that resonate with today's digital-savvy consumers. This tension, between rich heritage and limited branding capacity, captures the broader dilemma facing many mid-sized cities in China's evolving tourism landscape.

While the literature on destination branding has extensively explored image creation for major tourism hubs (Anholt, 2010; Kotler & Gertner, 2007) and the adaptive reuse of industrial heritage (Xie, 2006), it offers limited guidance for mid-sized, post-industrial cities. These cities face unique challenges that demand a more specific strategy. Successful cultural tourism IP development in this context goes beyond simply leveraging existing resources; it requires careful IP refinement, digital-native marketing, and innovative service delivery. Moreover, this approach must balance the preservation of authentic local culture with active community co-creation in a digitally connected environment. Many existing models fall short in addressing the distinctive features of the Chinese context, where government involvement is often decisive and digital fluency is crucial for

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overcoming geographic isolation and engaging digitally savvy visitors (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Our study seeks to fill this gap by proposing a Strategic Cultural IP Refinement Framework, derived from a mixed-methods research approach. This framework is based on a case study of Jiamusi and comparative analysis of six other successful Chinese cultural destinations. We argue that sustainable cultural IP transformation in mid-sized cities does not hinge on large-scale capital investment alone, but rather on the strategic refinement of intangible cultural assets. These assets must be transformed into emotionally engaging, digitally shareable experiences that benefit from collaborative stakeholder models and participatory innovation.

Research Objectives

This research aims to:

- Diagnose the strategic and operational challenges in cultural tourism IP development and digital engagement, specifically within the context of post-industrial mid-sized cities.
- Identify and critically analyze the success factors from comparative Chinese case studies (e.g., community-driven events, landmark architectural reuse, innovative government services).
- Develop and validate a Strategic Cultural IP Refinement Framework that integrates destination branding theory with the practical demands of the experience economy and digital marketing in the context of industrial heritage.
- Provide empirically-grounded, actionable policy recommendations for destination managers and local governments seeking to leverage cultural assets for sustainable economic development and competitive advantage.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Destination Branding and IP Development

Destination branding remains the foundational paradigm for regional competitiveness, underscoring the necessity of creating a distinctive and emotionally resonant place identity (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Classic models, such as Anholt's (2010) Nation Brand Index, emphasize systematic brand development to enhance competitiveness, often focusing on high-level attributes like governance and perceived quality. While powerful, these macro-level approaches are often insufficient for mid-sized, post-industrial cities where the challenge is not just image projection, but the creation of tangible, marketable assets from latent cultural capital.

This gap has given rise to the emerging field of Cultural Tourism IP Development. Unlike traditional destination branding, which has a broad focus, tourism IP emphasizes the careful commodification and experiential transformation of specific cultural symbols, narratives, and visual identities into economic value (Wang & Pizam, 2011).

A key challenge in this process is the Authenticity Paradox, as Chhabra (2010) describes: cities must turn intangible cultural assets into marketable products while avoiding cultural dilution. Our study addresses this challenge through the lens of Strategic IP Refinement. We argue that the success of mid-sized cities depends on a process-oriented framework that balances narrative coherence with market appeal. In particular, effective models integrate cultural IP with experiential design, a factor that is increasingly central to modern tourism consumption.

2.2 Experience Economy and Cultural Tourism

The theoretical necessity for IP refinement is magnified by the shift to the Experience Economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). This paradigm mandates that competitive firms—and, by extension, destinations—must stage memorable, transformative encounters that engage all senses and forge deep emotional connections, moving beyond mere service provision.

This experiential shift is inseparable from Digital Transformation. Social media and mobile technologies have fundamentally altered the consumption lifecycle, positioning online platforms as central to both decision-making and post-visit experience sharing (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). We adopt the concept of "Digital Fluency" in tourism marketing, defined as the brand's organizational capacity to produce content that is native to digital platforms, thereby maximizing user-generated content (UGC) and viral reach. Recent literature highlights that this fluency is not merely a marketing tool but a prerequisite for emotional resonance among young, digitally-native consumers (Gretzel et al., 2024). For cities like Jiamusi, digital fluency is critical to overcoming the informational disadvantages of geographic remoteness.

2.3 Post-Industrial Tourism Transformation

The literature on Post-Industrial Tourism Transformation primarily analyzes Western, often European, cities' efforts to leverage industrial heritage (e.g., former factory sites) for cultural and

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leisure use (Lorentzen, 2013). These studies underscore the importance of creative adaptation, community engagement, and authentic storytelling (Xie, 2006) in transforming industrial liability assets into cultural attractors.

However, the application of these models to the Chinese context is challenged by three unique characteristics:

- Speed and Scale of Urbanization: The rapid pace necessitates fast, top-down policy integration.
- Centralized Governance: The strong role of the local state as the primary catalyst and service innovator introduces a unique non-market factor critical for infrastructure and service excellence (Zhang et al., 2022).
- Distinct Heritage Mix: Chinese post-industrial cities often feature a complex layering of industrial legacy with deeply rooted minority ethnic heritage (Hezhe) and recent historical narratives, requiring a multi-layered IP strategy that Western models do not fully account for.

Therefore, our study seeks to bridge the gap between classic destination branding theory and the digital/experiential demands of the modern market, providing an empirically informed framework specifically for mid-sized cities navigating the complex economic and cultural landscape of post-industrial China.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to explore the strategic development of cultural tourism IP in post-industrial mid-sized cities. The research integrates content analysis of social media posts, mid-scale data analysis analysis of tourism statistics, and digital engagement metrics.

3.1 Case Selection

We selected Jiamusi City as our primary case due to its representative characteristics as a post-industrial city with significant cultural assets. Comparative cases include:

- Xiamen Joy City: Urban commercial transformation through cultural and experiential tourism.
- Guizhou "Village Super League": Rural cultural tourism and the revitalization of local communities.
- Hebei Province tourism campaign: Regional branding and the development of cultural tourism at a provincial scale.
- Aranya Community: Premium experiential tourism driven by community engagement and brand differentiation.
- Tianjin Dongjiang Music Festival: Reuse of industrial sites for cultural events and tourism.
- Chongqing Rongchang District: Government-led service innovation in cultural tourism and heritage preservation.

These cases were selected to provide a diverse set of models for cultural tourism IP development across different urban and regional contexts.

3.2 Data Collection

Data were collected using a combination of content analysis and mid-scale data analysis analysis:

- Content Analysis: We conducted content analysis on over 500 social media posts related to the selected destinations. This analysis focused on capturing trends in digital engagement, audience sentiment, and the effectiveness of online branding and marketing strategies. Social media platforms were particularly important for understanding how cultural tourism destinations are perceived by the public and how their digital strategies resonate with consumers.
- Tourism and Digital Metrics: mid-scale data analysis were gathered from official tourism reports, social media platforms, and digital marketing campaigns. These data provided quantitative insights into tourism statistics, visitor demographics, online interactions, and the relative success of various cultural tourism strategies. The analysis of digital engagement metrics allowed us to evaluate how effectively destinations engage with potential tourists and build brand awareness in a digital context.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analysis was grounded in cross-case analysis to identify patterns and critical success factors across the various case study destinations. The research employed theoretical coding, with an emphasis on integrating theories of destination branding (Anholt, 2016; Kotler & Gertner, 2007) and the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Thematic categories were developed from the data and linked to key constructs such as authenticity, digital engagement, community co-creation, and government involvement. These constructs informed the development of the Strategic Cultural IP Refinement Framework, which outlines how post-industrial cities can strategically develop cultural tourism IP.

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IV. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section presents findings from our multi-stage qualitative analysis. We synthesize challenges observed in the primary case, Jiamusi, with success mechanisms drawn from six comparative destinations. The discussion proceeds in two steps. First, we identify strategic bottlenecks that hinder the development of cultural tourism IP. Second, we examine solutions from the comparative cases, leading to the proposed Strategic Cultural IP Refinement Framework.

4.1. Strategic Bottlenecks in mid-sized City IP Development

Our initial findings, primarily based on the thematic analysis of official policy documents and social media content, highlight five persistent strategic bottlenecks that impede the conversion of cultural resources into sustainable tourism IP. These issues represent inefficiencies in market signaling, asset utilization, and service delivery often found in evolving economies.

4.1.1. Target Market and Resource Allocation Ambiguity

Destination positioning in Jiamusi frequently suffers from a Vague Target Set (VTS), attempting to appeal simultaneously to all demographic segments. This fundamental lack of precision targeting leads to dissipated marketing expenditure and ineffective content creation, confirming a challenge in resource allocation. While current visitor data, such as migration flows during the 2025 May Day holiday, show the top five source regions are confined to adjacent cities within the province, confirming its primary service to the immediate surrounding market, the strategic path for elevating national visibility and attracting broader, higher-spending demographic groups remains unclear. Crucially, existing IP and brand communication lack the necessary digital acumen to deliver precise messaging or customized content to high-potential experiential consumers (young, middle-class tourists). This operational failure results in dispersed communication resources and a lack of focal point. Fundamentally, the strategic bottleneck stems from a failure to transition from a resource-centric approach ("*What resources do we possess?*") to a customer-centric approach ("*What deep needs does our core segment seek?*"). Defining the precise service recipient is the essential precondition for IP refinement.

To overcome the VTS bottleneck, strategic focus must be placed on the most active, forward-looking, and high-potential consumers who are easily activated by creative, emotionally resonant IP and most likely to amplify brand voice on social platforms. We define this group as the Core Experiential Consumer (CEC), comprising young adults, the emerging middle class with demonstrable spending power and lifestyle preference, and urban professionals prioritizing personalized, high-quality life experiences. Their consumption is characterized by higher education, advanced information literacy, a strong desire for individual expression, and a willingness to pay a premium for unique, high-quality experiences over simple price sensitivity. Winning this segment is central to achieving breakout success and high-quality IP development.

Analysis reveals four critical demands defining the CEC's consumption behavior. First, they exhibit a profound Demand for Authenticity and In Situ Experience, demonstrating resistance to standardized, artificial attractions. Instead of being mere onlookers, they actively seek to transition to active participants, craving genuine interaction with the unique cultural landscape, original nature, and unadulterated local life. Second, their motivation centers on Emotional Value and Psychological Return, viewing travel as a search for emotional release, stress relief, self-discovery, or spiritual resonance. They demand spaces and experiences that provide comfort, provoke thought, deliver surprise, or foster a deep sense of belonging and understanding. Third, this segment displays a high sensitivity to Aesthetic Quality and Detailed Craftsmanship. This preference extends beyond unique architecture to encompass product packaging, service protocols, and environmental cleanliness. They expect a refined aesthetic, even in authentic "slice-of-life" scenes, viewing meticulous attention to detail as the primary indicator of care and service excellence. Finally, they demonstrate Digital Dependency and Content Co-Creation, relying heavily on social media for travel decision-making while remaining highly motivated to become a brand's content creator and disseminator. The ability of a destination to provide easily shareable, topic-worthy scenes and experiences is therefore a core determinant of visibility and viral amplification. Recognizing and addressing these needs necessitates a policy shift, using these consumer insights as the creative foundation for developing refined, emotionally resonant cultural tourism products and services.

4.1.2. Authenticity vs. Commercialization

A central challenge for Jiamusi is navigating the tension between authentic cultural representation and economic viability. In Jiamusi, many cultural tourism products remain at the stage

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of "surface replication," failing to transform deeper cultural logic into meaningful visitor experiences. A prominent example is found in tourism projects themed around the Hezhe people, who constitute one of China's smallest officially recognized ethnic minorities and whose cultural identity is deeply tied to fishing-hunting traditions. These projects often rely on the superficial reproduction of cultural symbols: reconstructed dwellings such as the *cuoluozi* (a traditional conical hut once used as a portable shelter during seasonal fishing expeditions), displays of fish-skin garments and fish-bone carvings, and culinary experiences like the so-called "Whole-Fish Feast." The latter, rooted in the Hezhe subsistence economy, consists of dishes sourced from the Songhua and Heilongjiang river systems and prepared in diverse ways, steaming, braising, frying, while in some cases retaining the tradition of cooking fish immediately after it is caught. Such offerings provide sensory access to food culture but do not extend into the underlying survival wisdom or ecological worldview.

What remains absent is a systematic presentation of the cultural and social dimensions that sustain Hezhe traditions, seasonal fishing techniques, the crafting of tools adapted to specific river conditions, or collective distribution practices that embody community cooperation. Equally overlooked are the affective dimensions embedded in festivals such as *Wurigong* (a Hezhe summer celebration featuring communal singing and wrestling competitions), which convey identity and collective memory. Visitor participation is strikingly limited: fish-skin making is usually staged as a passive demonstration rather than an interactive workshop where tourists might engage in key processes such as skin selection, tanning, and cutting; traditional fishing is presented as spectacle, without immersive opportunities to paddle birchbark canoes or use spears and nets, both of which were historically central to subsistence life.

As a result, visitors encounter Hezhe heritage primarily through visual and culinary contact with cultural symbols, without access to intangible practices such as UNESCO-recognized *Yimakan* (the Hezhe oral epic tradition performed in chant-like narration) or the craftsmanship of birchbark boat-making, both of which express ecological adaptation and intergenerational knowledge transmission. The absence of emotional depth, narrative coherence, and participatory design transforms what could be a vivid cultural encounter into a hollow performance. This outcome resonates with Chhabra's (2010) "Authenticity Paradox," in which commodification strips culture of its lived meanings. In Jiamusi, shallow replication may create the illusion of cultural recognition, but it fails both to satisfy tourists seeking experiential authenticity and to contribute to the long-term transmission of Hezhe intangible cultural heritage.

4.1.3. Asset Homogenization

Despite possessing significant resource heterogeneity, the region's cultural tourism products often exhibit widespread homogenization, leading to competitive entropy. This failure to translate unique, high-value assets into distinct experiential formats diminishes destination distinctiveness and prevents the city from achieving non-substitutability, a core metric in destination branding theory (Anholt, 2016; Kotler & Gertner, 2007). Jiamusi possesses a high concentration of differentiated endowments, including the *Hezhe Yimakan* oral traditions, the extensive Sanjiang Wetland ecosystem, and unique geographic markers. However, our analysis identifies three distinct patterns of asset homogenization which we term 'landmark visitation convergence.'

The first pattern is Geographic IP Degradation at Heixiazi Island. Heixiazi Island, located at the border between China and Russia, is a landmark with both cultural and geopolitical significance. The island is divided between the two nations, with the portion administered by China representing the country's easternmost point. Situated within Fuyuan County of Jiamusi, it is geographically significant as China's furthest eastern territory. However, the tourism product has devolved into highly congruent experiences, such as "climbing the island to view the boundary marker" and "visiting the wetland park," mirroring generic border tourism models globally. This approach fails to excavate the deeper historical narratives, like early cross-border folk trade, or develop differentiated ecological experiences, such as dedicated photography routes for wetland mist observation or comparative ecology programs for educational tourism.

The second pattern is Experiential IP Dilution at the Fuyuan Easternmost Point (*Dongji*). This IP suffers from similar superficiality; the core experience is restricted to 'sunrise viewing' and 'checking in at the landmark sculpture. The surrounding Sino-Russian themed streets are dominated by standardized shops selling goods indistinguishable from those in major border cities like Suifenhe, Heihe or Manzhouli. This failure to integrate the vibrant Dongji Fish Market or the authentic Hezhe fishing culture transforms the rare geographic label into a mere coordinate check-in

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activity, preventing its conversion into a meaningful cultural narrative.

The third pattern is Cultural Narrative Underutilization in Jiansanjiang Agriculture. Jiansanjiang holds premium agricultural assets on the world-renowned Black Soil zone, which is a major national grain base. Furthermore, it embodies the "Great Northern Wilderness Spirit", a powerful historical narrative detailing the challenging but successful transformation of barren land into China's key food production area. Yet, tourism remains trapped in a 'stereotypical agricultural sightseeing' frame. Core products, like visiting the smart farm machinery center or observing rice field art from a tower, are largely indistinguishable from other modern agricultural parks, failing to achieve the deep cultural translation required to market the "Black Soil" legacy or the heroic "North Wilderness" social history as a special form of cultural IP.

4.1.4. Digital Engagement Gaps

A critical operational deficit exists in the region's adoption of digital-native marketing strategies, leading to a measurable shortfall in network engagement and market penetration. Traditional, one-way communication methods—characterized by generic informational "dumps" and non-interactive broadcast approaches—predominate, systematically failing to embrace the User-Generated Content (UGC) models and dynamic formats favored by Millennial and Gen Z travelers. This inertia is particularly acute in Jiamusi, where official tourism messaging often defaults to merely listing resources rather than framing them as emotionally compelling, shareable experiences.

This deficit in digital fluency limits the brand's organizational capacity to produce content possessing "networked sensibility", the intuitive understanding of digital aesthetics and platform-native storytelling necessary for virality. Consequently, Jiamusi's cultural tourism IP is unable to achieve the rapid, self-sustaining social media penetration required for contemporary success. The absence of compelling, UGC-driven narratives results in a low return on marketing investment, as promotional efforts fail to spark the organic diffusion that defines breakout destinations.

For mid-cities like Jiamusi, which suffer from the structural disadvantage of geographic remoteness (as opposed to major tourism hubs) and a lack of established brand infrastructure, this failure to leverage digital platforms is especially detrimental. The digital sphere is the primary mechanism for overcoming physical isolation and signaling quality to the high-potential experiential consumer. By neglecting interactive engagement and UGC co-creation, Jiamusi remains effectively invisible to its target market, severely limiting its ability to build national recognition and convert resource potential into competitive advantage. This operational lag directly impedes the transition from a traditional industrial legacy to a modern cultural destination.

4.2. Mechanisms of IP Refinement

To address the strategic bottlenecks identified in Jiamusi, specifically Target Market Ambiguity, the Authenticity-Commercialization Dichotomy, Asset Homogenization, Digital Engagement Gaps, and implicit Service Delivery Inefficiencies, we conducted a rigorous cross-case analysis of six comparative destinations. This analysis sought not merely to catalog successful tourism stories, but to disaggregate the core mechanisms that effectively convert dormant cultural resources into refined, competitive IP. These six identified mechanisms represent proven, strategic solutions that offer direct pathways for Jiamusi to overcome its structural challenges in market signaling, asset utilization, and service delivery. Collectively, they define the operational logic for our proposed Strategic Cultural IP Refinement Framework, showing that success is determined less by the volume of historical assets and more by the organizational capacity to translate those assets into emotionally resonant, network-ready consumer experiences.

4.2.1. Mechanism A: Emotional Resonance and Social Gravity

This mechanism directly addresses the IP Authenticity-Commercialization Dichotomy (4.1.2) by using social authenticity to drive commercial success. The Xiamen Joy City project converted a standard commercial space into a potent "youth social gravity field" by radically prioritizing emotional expression and photo-sharing aesthetics over traditional retail density. Its success was built on creating highly stylized, temporary pop-up scenes and installation art that resonated with the emotional needs of young, urban consumers. The core function is to generate an atmosphere where the act of visiting is intrinsically shareable and visually rewarding, thereby bypassing the need for deep historical or cultural authenticity in favor of social and experiential authenticity. For Jiamusi, this suggests a strategy of transient aesthetic installation and event-based emotional mapping to rapidly attract the Core Experiential Consumer (CEC).

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4.2.2. Mechanism B: Grassroots Authenticity and Participatory IP

As discussed in Section 4.1.3, this mechanism is the direct solution to Asset Homogenization. The Guizhou "Village Super League" (VSL), a rural, community-organized football tournament, achieved global viral success by offering genuine, low-barrier, community-driven events. Its strategic function is to maximize grassroots cultural capital and User-Generated Content (UGC) through the "everyone as performer and audience" model. Crucially, its authenticity stems from the fact that it is villager-led and managed, ensuring the cultural displays such as ethnic minority singing and dancing are organically integrated and non-staged. This participatory model provides a concrete blueprint for Jiamusi to transform its own unique, non-replicable assets, like the Hezhe fishing culture or the "Great Northern Wilderness Spirit," into locally-owned, differentiated experiences.

4.2.3. Mechanism C: Precision Targeting and Saturation Signaling

This mechanism directly solves Market Positioning Ambiguity (4.1.1) and resource dispersion. The Hebei Tourism Campaign successfully overcame its regional branding challenges by clearly defining a narrow Core Experiential Consumer (Beijing-Tianjin weekend travelers). It then deployed a highly efficient saturation marketing strategy ("*So Close, So Beautiful*") across high-frequency consumer touchpoints, such as subway lines, high-speed rail stations, and digital commuter media. The strategic function is to achieve high recognition efficiency and brand salience within a defined, high-spending geographical segment. For Jiamusi, this approach provides a scalable model for shifting resources away from vague national promotion toward a precise, high-impact campaign targeting specific high-value urban cohorts such as Shanghai or Shenzhen urban workers with a focused, emotionally resonant message.

4.2.4. Mechanism D: Values-Based Community Co-Creation

This mechanism resolves Experiential Erosion (linked to both 4.1.2 and 4.1.4) by focusing on building a high-fidelity, high-value brand based on shared aesthetic and emotional values. The Aranya project, a premium coastal destination, did not just build landmarks (such as the famed "Lonely Library"); it fostered an active values-based community centered on owner-feedback driven iteration and the creation of "spiritual landmarks." The function is to move beyond simple consumption by establishing a high-bar IP that attracts consumers seeking belonging and shared purpose. This deep engagement ensures continuous UGC and brand loyalty, directly counteracting the superficiality of "landmark visitation convergence" seen in Jiamusi's border sites.

4.2.5. Mechanism E: Creative Industrial Adaptation

This mechanism addresses the challenge of converting obsolete industrial heritage (part of Asset Homogenization, 4.1.3) into modern, shareable attractors. The Tianjin Dongjiang Music Festival repurposed a unique industrial port setting by leveraging its industrial aesthetic to create a powerful, contrastive, and shareable setting for cultural events. The strategic function is to use creative contrast, the juxtaposition of contemporary music and heritage infrastructure, to solve the problem of visual differentiation and provide unique content opportunities. Simultaneously, the organizers systemically solved key logistical friction points (transportation, facilities) that typically plague events held in non-standard venues. This offers Jiamusi a model for transforming its own industrial assets, such as the Jiansanjiang modern agricultural base, into visually dynamic and emotionally relevant IP.

4.2.6. Mechanism F: Government Service Innovation and Barrier Removal

This mechanism directly overcomes Service Delivery Inefficiencies and organizational fragmentation (an implicit bottleneck in mid-sized city governance). The Chongqing Rongchang District achieved widespread acclaim by using its local cuisine IP (Braised Goose) and having the local state act as the primary service facilitator. This involved removing significant service barriers by openly sharing government resources, such as explicitly permitting tourists to use official government canteens and parking lots. The function is to demonstrate an immediate, tangible commitment to service excellence and authentic hospitality. This visible effort generates powerful, authentic narratives about local care and efficiency, directly countering the cynicism and low service expectations often associated with mid-sized tourism markets.

Based on the disaggregated analysis above, which details how six comparative destinations strategically overcame key market and structural failures, Table 4.2 provides a synthesized summary

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of these mechanisms, their strategic functions, and the specific bottlenecks in Jiamusi they are designed to address.

Table 4.2. Strategic Success Mechanisms and Their Mapping to Jiamusi's Bottlenecks

Success Mechanism	Case Study (Primary IP)	Strategic Function & Challenge Addressed
A. Emotional Resonance and Social Gravity	Xiamen Joy City (Urban Social Hub)	Function: Converts commercial space into a "youth social gravity field" that prioritizes emotional expression and photo-sharing aesthetics. Addressed Challenge: IP Authenticity-Commercialization Dichotomy (by leveraging a specific niche of social authenticity).
B. Grassroots Authenticity and Participatory IP	Guizhou "Village Super League" (Rural Sports)	Function: Solves the Homogenization challenge by offering genuine, low-barrier, community-driven events. The success mechanism is the "everyone as performer and audience" model, maximizing grassroots cultural capital and UGC.
C. Precision Targeting and Saturation Signaling	Hebei Tourism Campaign (Regional Branding)	Function: Solves Market Positioning Ambiguity by clearly defining the core consumer (Beijing-Tianjin weekend travelers) and deploying a saturation marketing strategy ("So Close, So Beautiful") across high-frequency touchpoints, achieving high recognition efficiency.
D. Values-Based Community Co-Creation	Aranya (Premium Cultural Destination)	Function: Resolves Experiential Erosion through continuous, owner-feedback driven iteration and the creation of "spiritual landmarks" (e.g., Lonely Library). The mechanism builds a high-fidelity, high-value brand based on shared aesthetic and emotional values.
E. Creative Industrial Adaptation	Tianjin Dongjiang Music Festival (Industrial Port Reuse)	Function: Addresses the challenge of converting industrial heritage into modern attractors. The mechanism involves leveraging the unique industrial aesthetic to create a contrastive and shareable setting, while simultaneously solving logistical friction points (transportation, facilities) that usually plague large events.
F. Government Service Innovation and Barrier Removal	Chongqing Rongchang District (Braised Goose IP)	Function: Directly overcomes Service Delivery Inefficiencies and organizational fragmentation. The mechanism involves the local state acting as the primary service facilitator (e.g., opening government canteens and parking lots), demonstrating an immediate commitment to service excellence that generates powerful, authentic hospitality narratives.

4.3. The Strategic Cultural IP Refinement Framework

Synthesizing the four bottlenecks (Section 4.1) and the six success mechanisms (Section 4.2), we propose a four-dimensional Strategic Cultural IP Refinement Framework designed to guide mid-sized cities through the post-industrial tourism transformation process. This framework is grounded in the imperative for differentiation (Authenticity) and reach (Digital Fluency).

Dimension I: IP Narrative Deepening and Authentication

This dimension focuses on resolving the Authenticity-Commercialization Dichotomy. It moves beyond superficial cultural display to deep cultural asset excavation and the construction of emotionally resonant IP narratives. Key mechanisms include integrating place-based identity with contemporary relevance and designing multi-sensory narrative delivery across digital and physical touchpoints to ensure fidelity.

Dimension II: Experiential Product Transformation and Co-Creation

Addressing Homogenization and Experiential Erosion, this dimension centers on product innovation. It demands a shift from passive observation to immersive, participatory experience design (Mechanism B), alongside the creative

adaptation of industrial heritage (Mechanism E). The creation of "Spiritual Landmarks" (Mechanism D) is central to building emotional anchors and high-fidelity sharing opportunities.

Dimension III: Digital-Native Marketing and Precision Engagement

This dimension is directly aimed at overcoming the deficits in Digital Fluency and Market Positioning Ambiguity. It requires the implementation of platform-specific content creation and the prioritization of User-Generated Content (UGC) encouragement and amplification (Mechanism A). Data-driven precision targeting (Mechanism C) ensures resources are efficiently deployed to the most valuable experiential consumer segments.

Dimension IV: Integrated Stakeholder Collaboration and Service Governance

This operational dimension focuses on institutionalizing the success of Mechanisms B and F. It mandates a Government Service Innovation model, moving the state from a regulator to a service enabler who actively removes logistical and service barriers. Crucially, it involves the systematic engagement and empowerment of community residents and academic institutions for sustained creative input and service delivery excellence.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate several important patterns relevant to destination management and policy formulation. Firstly, the research highlights the importance of clearly defined visitor segments. Successful cultural tourism is not typically driven by a one-size-fits-all approach; rather, it is closely linked to data-driven segmentation strategies that enhance marketing efficiency. When tourism marketing is tailored to specific target consumer groups, resources can be more effectively allocated, leading to higher levels of visitor satisfaction, engagement, and ultimately, loyalty. This precision in targeting enables destinations to cater more directly to the needs and preferences of distinct consumer segments, making it easier to forge deeper connections between visitors and the destination.

Secondly, the concept of authenticity emerges as a central pillar in destination development. Destinations that use genuine cultural assets and integrate local community participation in both product and experience design are more likely to establish meaningful emotional connections with visitors. These authentic experiences foster a sense of belonging and a deeper understanding of local culture, which not only encourages repeat visitation but also facilitates organic promotion through social networks and word-of-mouth. The authenticity of cultural offerings enhances the perceived value of the destination, creating an atmosphere where visitors feel motivated to share their experiences and advocate for the destination. This organic, community-driven promotion is a key factor in reinforcing the cultural IP of a destination, making it not just an attraction, but an experience that resonates deeply with visitors.

Third, digital competence emerges as a critical factor in the performance of contemporary destinations. The ability to create engaging digital content, manage social media platforms effectively, and build online communities correlates directly with enhanced visibility and broader reach. In today's increasingly digital world, destinations that fail to use digital platforms risk becoming irrelevant, as potential visitors turn to online channels for inspiration, planning, and decision-making. The use of digital tools to communicate a destination’s unique cultural narratives plays an integral role in creating lasting impressions and engaging modern consumers, particularly those who are part of the digital-native generation.

Finally, the role of government in cultural tourism development is evolving from a purely regulatory function to a more active facilitative role. Institutional support that reduces barriers, provides enabling services, and fosters coordination among various stakeholders contributes not only to the quality of visitor experiences but also to the long-term development of local cultural tourism. Governments that engage in this manner can ensure that cultural assets are not only preserved but also integrated into tourism strategies in a way that benefits local communities, businesses, and the economy as a whole.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that integrated strategies, which combine cultural preservation, community empowerment, and economic transformation, produce synergistic benefits. Policies that protect intangible heritage while fostering community participation and leveraging digital platforms will likely yield positive spillovers in the social, cultural, and economic domains. By aligning these three areas, policymakers can ensure that cultural tourism development not only supports economic growth but also strengthens community identity and social cohesion.

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