

Study on Etiquette and Service Brands in China's Cultural Tourism

Qiyu Guo, Jing Hu

Wuhan City Vocational College, Wuhan, Hubei, China

Abstract: Cultural tourism has become a core driver for the high-quality development of China's tourism industry, and the in-depth integration of etiquette with service brand construction is a key path. As an important carrier of China's excellent traditional culture, etiquette helps enhance the quality of cultural tourism experiences and strengthen the core competitiveness of destinations. This study takes etiquette practice in cultural tourism scenarios as the research starting point, systematically analyzes the core functions of etiquette in shaping the uniqueness of service brands, conveying cultural values, and building tourists' emotional identification, sorts out the historical inheritance and contemporary innovative forms of service etiquette in China's cultural tourism, and combines typical case studies to explore the practical models of integrating etiquette into service brands in different types of cultural tourism destinations (famous historical and cultural cities, intangible cultural heritage tourist attractions, and folk experience villages). The paper reveals existing practical problems, including the lack of etiquette standardization, superficial cultural expression, and disconnection between service and etiquette, and on this basis, proposes a service brand construction strategy centered on "culture empowering etiquette and etiquette supporting brands". The strategy includes establishing a hierarchical and categorized cultural tourism etiquette standard system, cultivating professional talents with both cultural literacy and service capabilities, creating an immersive service experience that combines "etiquette + scenario" to enrich brand connotation, and building a service brand communication matrix based on etiquette practice. The aim is to provide theoretical support and practical paths for the upgrading of China's cultural tourism service brands from "functional" to "cultural" and "emotional", promote the

coordinated development of cultural inheritance and commercial value, and enhance the international recognition and influence of China's cultural tourism.

Keywords: Cultural Tourism; Service Etiquette; Service Brand; Cultural Inheritance; Tourist Experience; Brand Competitiveness

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In recent years, with the upgrading of Chinese residents' consumption structure and the awakening of their cultural confidence, cultural tourism has evolved from a subordinate form of traditional sightseeing tourism to a core track leading the transformation of the tourism industry[1].

Etiquette is a "living fossil" of Chinese culture, embodying three key elements: the moral principles of "benevolence, righteousness, etiquette, wisdom, and integrity", the behavioral norms of "gentleness, kindness, respectfulness, frugality, and humility", and the value pursuit of "harmony as the most precious"[2].

Under this trend, tourism services are no longer limited to basic functional needs such as "accommodation, catering, transportation, travel, shopping, and entertainment"; instead, they have gradually become an important medium for cultural transmission. The competition of service brands has also shifted from "competition in hardware facilities" to "competition in cultural connotation and emotional experience"[3].

According to data from China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, in 2023, the number of tourists received by domestic cultural tourist attractions accounted for 68% of the total number received by all scenic spots in China, and the proportion of cultural tourism consumption in total tourism consumption exceeded 55%. "Experiencing culture and perceiving traditions" has become the core

demand of tourists.

When applied rationally in cultural tourism scenarios, etiquette brings two main benefits: first, it allows tourists to perceive the charm of traditional culture through service details; second, it injects a unique cultural gene into service brands, forming a differentiated competitive advantage[4].

For example, the Qufu San Kong Scenic Area has developed derivative services such as the "City Opening Ceremony" and "Confucius Worship Ceremony", which deeply integrate traditional etiquette with tourist interaction. This integration makes "Confucian cultural experience" the core brand label of the scenic area[5,6].

Another example is the Suzhou Garden Scenic Area, where guides wear traditional costumes, perform the hand salute (a traditional Chinese greeting where hands are clasped), and explain the etiquette philosophy in garden design using "elegant language"; these practices make the service itself an important part of the cultural experience[7].

However, most current cultural tourism destinations face problems of "formalization" and "fragmentation" in integrating etiquette into service brands. Some scenic spots only use etiquette as a "performance prop" and lack systematic integration with service processes; some service personnel only understand traditional etiquette at the "action imitation" level and cannot convey the cultural connotation behind etiquette; there are even cases where excessive commercial transformation distorts etiquette culture. These problems seriously restrict the quality improvement and value release of cultural tourism service brands[8].

1.2 Research Significance

1.2.1 Theoretical significance

This paper provides a new "tourism scenario" perspective for the modern transformation of traditional etiquette, enriching the theoretical system in the interdisciplinary field of cultural inheritance and tourism management[1].

Existing studies mostly focus on two aspects: the standardization of tourism service quality and the cultural inheritance of traditional etiquette, but they have insufficient discussion on the "synergistic relationship between etiquette and service brands"[2].

This paper constructs a theoretical analysis framework of "etiquette-service-brand", clarifies

the mechanism of etiquette in shaping the value of service brands, and fills the gap in connecting the "cultural dimension" and "practical dimension" in the research of cultural tourism service brands[5].

1.2.2 Practical significance

This paper summarizes practical models and strategies for integrating etiquette into service brands through typical cases, which can directly provide operable brand construction plans for cultural tourism destinations such as scenic spots, hotels, and cultural tourism enterprises, helping them solve pain points like homogeneous services and superficial cultural expression[3]. Meanwhile, the paper provides a reference for competent authorities of the cultural tourism industry to formulate etiquette service standards and promote the high-quality development of the industry, helping China's cultural tourism service brands form a development pattern of "having cultural connotation, warm service, and distinctive brands"[4].

1.3 Research Methods and Framework

1.3.1 Research methods

Literature Research Method: This study systematically sorts out domestic and foreign literature covering cultural tourism, service etiquette, and brand management, clarifies the connotation of core concepts and research status, and lays a theoretical foundation for the paper[1,2].

Case Study Method: The study selects different types of cultural tourism destinations (Qufu San Kong, Suzhou Gardens, Lijiang Ancient Town, and the Palace Museum) as typical cases, and conducts in-depth analysis of their specific practices, effects, and problems in integrating etiquette into service brands[6-8].

Field Research Method: The study conducts on-site visits to some case destinations, records the details of service etiquette practice through participatory observation, and conducts in-depth interviews with three groups (tourists, service personnel, and brand managers) to obtain first-hand data[3].

Questionnaire Survey Method: The study conducts a questionnaire survey among cultural tourism tourists to understand their needs, perceptions, and satisfaction with etiquette services, providing data support for strategy formulation[5].

1.3.2 Research framework

This paper is divided into six parts:

The introduction, which expounds the research background, significance, and methods.

The definition of core concepts and sorting of relevant theoretical foundations.

The analysis of historical inheritance and contemporary forms of service etiquette in China's cultural tourism.

The discussion of practical models and existing problems in the integration of etiquette into service brands through case studies.

The proposal of specific strategies for etiquette to support the construction of cultural tourism service brands.

The conclusion and prospect, which summarizes the research results and points out the research limitations and future directions[1].

2. Definition of Core Concepts and Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Definition of Core Concepts

2.1.1 Cultural tourism

Cultural tourism, as referred to in this paper, is a type of tourism activity that takes cultural resources as the core attraction and aims primarily to let tourists experience cultural connotations and perceive cultural values[1].

It covers various forms, including historical and cultural tourism (e.g., visits to ancient cities and heritage sites), intangible cultural heritage (ICH) tourism (e.g., experience of traditional craftsmanship), folk tourism (e.g., participation in festivals and wedding customs), and cultural theme tourism (e.g., tours of Confucian culture and tea ceremony culture). Its core characteristics are "cultural experience" and "value perception"[3].

2.1.2 Service etiquette in cultural tourism

Service etiquette in cultural tourism refers to a set of codes (including conduct and communication methods) that service providers (scenic spot guides, hotel service staff, and cultural tourism product salespersons) follow in the process of cultural tourism services[2].

This etiquette integrates China's traditional etiquette culture with modern service standards, consisting of "external forms" (costumes, gestures, language, and rituals) and "internal connotations" (respectful, sincere, and patient service attitudes, as well as the ability to understand and convey culture). Its core function is "conveying culture through etiquette and enhancing experience through service"[4].

2.1.3 Cultural tourism service brands

Cultural tourism service brands are service images with unique cultural identifiers and emotional associations, which are formed in the minds of tourists through the long-term service practice and cultural accumulation of cultural tourism destinations or enterprises[5].

Their core values include three aspects: "functional value" (meeting tourists' basic needs), "cultural value" (conveying cultural connotations), and "emotional value" (building tourist identification). These values are the concentrated embodiment of the competitiveness of destinations or enterprises[1].

2.2 Theoretical Foundations

2.2.1 Cultural identity theory

This theory holds that individuals form a sense of belonging and identity by contacting and understanding a culture's symbols and value concepts[9,10].

In cultural tourism, etiquette acts as a concrete cultural symbol that can be transmitted to tourists through service scenarios. This transmission helps tourists understand cultural connotations and further form identification with the destination's culture and service brand, which lays a foundation for brand loyalty[2].

2.2.2 Service quality gap model

This model points out that service quality depends on the gap between "tourists' expectations" and "actual perceptions"[3].

The optimization of service etiquette in cultural tourism can narrow this gap by improving four aspects of services: "tangibility" (e.g., etiquette costumes, ritual scenarios), "reliability" (e.g., standardized etiquette processes), "responsiveness" (e.g., etiquette-based communication), and "empathy" (e.g., etiquette expression that respects tourists' cultural differences). This narrowing of the gap further enhances service quality and brand evaluation[5].

2.2.3 Brand personality theory

This theory holds that brands have "personalities" just like people, and a unique brand personality is the key to attracting consumers and forming differentiated competition[9].

In cultural tourism service brands, etiquette serves as an important carrier of "brand personality". For example, Confucian cultural scenic spots have "elegant and scholarly" etiquette, folk scenic spots have "enthusiastic" etiquette, and imperial cultural scenic spots have

"solemn" etiquette. These etiquette characteristics help brands form distinct personality labels and enhance tourists' memory[4].

3. Historical Inheritance and Contemporary Forms of Service Etiquette in China's Cultural Tourism

3.1 Historical Inheritance: The Genetic Continuity from "Ritual System" to "Tourism Service"

China's traditional etiquette culture has a long history, and its core genes have a profound inheritance relationship with service etiquette in cultural tourism[2].

3.1.1 The "respect" gene

Traditional etiquette emphasizes the concepts of "respecting others" and "taking things seriously", as stated in The Book of Rites: "Etiquette is about respecting others"[1].

In cultural tourism services, this gene is reflected in two ways: first, respect for tourists, such as service personnel taking the initiative to greet tourists and answering questions patiently; second, reverence for culture, such as service personnel accurately conveying cultural connotations and maintaining the solemnity of cultural scenarios[3].

For example, cultural relic restorers of the Palace Museum maintain a "rigorous and respectful" attitude when interacting with tourists. This attitude shows reverence for cultural relics and respect for tourists' cultural needs, which reflects the modern transformation of the "respect" gene[9].

3.1.2 The "elegant language" gene

Traditional etiquette focuses on the "elegance and correctness" of language, emphasizing "polite words and moderate speech"[2].

In cultural tourism services, this gene is reflected in "civilized language" and "cultural expression". For example, guides use respectful terms such as "you" and "please", and interpret cultural scenarios with "elegant language" (e.g., describing garden tours with "changing scenery with each step" and explaining the layout of ancient buildings with "harmony between man and nature")[7].

Guides avoid vulgar and casual language, which allows tourists to feel the cultural atmosphere through communication[4].

3.1.3 The "ritual" gene

Traditional etiquette includes a variety of ritual

forms, such as sacrificial rituals, festival rituals, and welcome rituals[1].

In cultural tourism services, this gene is reflected in "scenario-based ritual design". For example, Qufu San Kong holds the "City Opening Ceremony", where staff wear ancient costumes, perform welcome rituals, and recite excerpts from The Analects of Confucius; Lijiang Ancient Town has the "Naxi Welcome Ceremony", which involves presenting hada and singing toast songs[6,8].

The sense of ritual brought by these activities enhances tourists' cultural experience and makes the service more memorable[5].

3.2 Contemporary Forms: Innovative Expressions of Etiquette in Diverse Scenarios

With the diversification of cultural tourism scenarios, service etiquette has shown an innovative form of "scenario adaptation", and different types of cultural tourism destinations have their own characteristics in etiquette expression[3].

3.2.1 Historical and cultural scenic areas: integration of solemnity and knowledge

Costume etiquette in historical and cultural scenic areas requires staff to wear traditional costumes that match the scenic area's cultural theme. For example, the Palace Museum uses "imperial costumes" and the Xi'an Terracotta Army Scenic Area uses "Qin and Han Dynasties costumes". This practice not only enhances the sense of scenario immersion but also conveys knowledge about costume culture[9].

Explanation etiquette in these scenic areas requires guides to adopt specific postures, such as "squatting slightly" when facing child tourists and "side guiding" to avoid blocking tourists' views. The content of their explanations balances "accuracy" and "interest"; for example, when explaining ancient buildings, guides not only explain the structural function of "dougong" (a unique Chinese wooden bracket structure) but also interpret its connotation of "hierarchical ritual system"[7].

Ritual etiquette in historical and cultural scenic areas involves designing interactive rituals that align with historical culture. For example, Temple of Heaven Park offers the "Heaven Worship Ritual Experience", where tourists can participate in a simplified version of the heaven worship process and learn ancient etiquette movements. This turns tourists from "onlookers" into "participants"[5].

3.2.2 ICH tourism scenarios: integration of experience and interaction

Craftsmanship teaching etiquette in ICH tourism scenarios requires ICH inheritors to follow the process of "etiquette first, then craftsmanship" when teaching tourists traditional craftsmanship (e.g., tea ceremony, paper-cutting, and pottery)[4].

For example, in tea ceremony experience, tourists first learn "tea ceremony etiquette" (bowing, holding the teacup posture) and then learn tea-making skills. This process allows tourists to understand the cultural connotation of "integration of craftsmanship and etiquette" during the experience[4].

Interaction etiquette in these scenarios emphasizes "equal interaction" and avoids "one-way output". For example, in paper-cutting ICH experience, inheritors use "consultative" language to guide tourists (e.g., "Do you think this pattern would be more beautiful if cut this way?"). This not only respects tourists' creativity but also reflects the etiquette concept of "teaching and learning from each other"[2].

3.2.3 Folk tourism villages: integration of daily life and emotional connection

Reception Etiquette: Villagers receive tourists using local folk etiquette. For example, Hakka villages have " (pounded tea) welcome", where villagers present tea with both hands and say auspicious words; Miao villages have "blocking the door with wine", where villagers sing toast songs and offer wine bowls. These practices allow tourists to feel the warmth of "being at home"[8].

Festival Etiquette: Folk tourism villages organize tourists to participate in festival rituals during folk festivals (e.g., Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and Miao New Year). For example, Hakka villages hold "hanging mugwort and tying five-color strings" during the Dragon Boat Festival, and Miao villages hold "playing Lusheng (a traditional Miao wind instrument) and paying respects to village elders" during Miao New Year. This allows tourists to deeply integrate into local life and enhance emotional identification[6].

3.2.4 Cultural theme hotels: integration of immersion and detail

Check-in etiquette in cultural theme hotels requires staff to wear theme costumes (e.g., "Hanfu" in Hanfu hotels and "Zen costumes" in Zen-themed hotels) and greet tourists with traditional etiquette (e.g., greeting with the

"hand salute" and offering "welcome tea" such as Pu'er tea and chrysanthemum tea). Staff also introduce the hotel's cultural theme and etiquette norms to tourists (e.g., "You can walk around the hotel in Hanfu; please call 'waiter' if you need help")[3].

Guest room etiquette in these hotels involves integrating etiquette elements into guest room decoration. For example, hotels place an "etiquette manual" (introducing small knowledge about traditional etiquette), provide "traditional tea sets" (with instructions on tea ceremony etiquette), and place "etiquette small ornaments" (e.g., bamboo slips and jade pendants) on the bed linen. These details allow tourists to feel cultural etiquette in daily stays[5].

4. Practical Models and Existing Problems of Integrating Etiquette into Cultural Tourism Service Brands

4.1 Analysis of Typical Practical Models

Through in-depth research on four cases (Qufu San Kong, Suzhou Gardens, Lijiang Ancient Town, and the Palace Museum), this study summarizes four practical models for integrating etiquette into service brands[6-9].

4.1.1 "Etiquette + cultural ip" model: take qufu san kong as an example

The core logic of this model is to take the "Confucian cultural IP" as the core, transform traditional etiquette into IP-derived services, and form a unique brand identifier[6].

In specific practices, the scenic area first creates the core etiquette IP of the "Confucius Worship Ceremony" and upgrades it into a "participatory and experienceable" service product. For example, it launches the "Little Confucius Worship Officer" experience program (child tourists wear ancient costumes and participate in a simplified version of the Confucius worship ritual under professional guidance) and customized "coming-of-age ceremony" services (the scenic area holds traditional coming-of-age ceremonies for tourists, including capping/ji (a traditional ceremony for girls at the age of 15) and reciting excerpts from The Analects of Confucius). Second, the scenic area integrates Confucian etiquette into daily services; for example, guides address tourists as "Mr./Ms.", greet tourists with the "hand salute", and focus their explanation content on "benevolence, righteousness, etiquette, wisdom, and integrity" (e.g., explaining "filial piety etiquette" in

Confucius Mansion and "funeral etiquette" in Confucius Forest). Third, the scenic area develops "etiquette peripheral" products, including cultural and creative products printed with Confucian etiquette patterns (bookmarks, folding fans) and "etiquette training courses" (short-term Confucian etiquette experience courses for tourists), forming a closed loop of "service-product-brand"[6].

In terms of brand effects, "Confucian etiquette experience" has become the core brand label of Qufu San Kong. In 2023, the service products related to the "Confucius Worship Ceremony" drove a 45% growth in the scenic area's secondary consumption, tourist satisfaction reached 92%, and the brand's awareness and cultural influence were significantly enhanced[6].

4.1.2 "Etiquette + scenario immersion" model: take suzhou gardens as an example

The core logic of this model is to integrate etiquette into garden tour scenarios through "scenario-based design", allowing tourists to feel etiquette culture while walking and forming an "immersive service brand"[7].

In specific practices, the gardens first create "etiquette tour routes". For example, Humble Administrator's Garden designs the "elegant gathering route", where tourists tour along "Listening to the Rain Pavilion—Snow Fragrance and Clouds Pavilion—Thirty-Six Mandarin Ducks Hall", and staff in Hanfu perform traditional etiquette at each stop (e.g., tea ceremony etiquette in Listening to the Rain Pavilion and guqin (a traditional Chinese zither) etiquette in Thirty-Six Mandarin Ducks Hall). Second, the gardens focus on "detail etiquette creation"; for example, they set up "etiquette guide signs" at the garden entrance (using pictures and texts to introduce "garden tour etiquette" such as "speaking softly and not touching cultural relics at will"), place "etiquette reminder cards" beside stone benches (printed with small knowledge such as "giving seats to elders when sitting"), and set up "hand-washing etiquette" diagrams at the entrance of restrooms, integrating etiquette into the entire tour process. Third, the gardens train "etiquette-based guides", requiring them to master two key skills: familiarity with garden history and proficiency in "elegant language" expression and traditional postures (e.g., using professional terms such as "changing scenery with each step" and "borrowed scenery" for explanation, and

maintaining postures such as "pulling in the abdomen and straightening the chest" when walking and "palms up" when guiding), making guides "transmitters of etiquette culture"[7].

In terms of brand effects, the "immersive etiquette service" of Suzhou Gardens has been widely praised by tourists. In 2023, the tourist revisit rate increased by 30%, and the exposure of topics related to "garden etiquette" on platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu exceeded 500 million times, making Suzhou Gardens a "benchmark for cultural tourism services"[7].

4.1.3 "Etiquette + folk symbiosis" model: take lijiang ancient town as an example

The core logic of this model is to rely on Naxi folk culture, deeply integrate folk etiquette with tourism services, form a "folk service brand", and realize the "symbiosis of cultural inheritance and commercial services"[8].

In specific practices, the ancient town first promotes "folk etiquette into businesses". It formulates the Etiquette Service Standards for Businesses in Lijiang Ancient Town, requiring staff of inns, restaurants, and shops to master basic Naxi etiquette (e.g., inn owners greet tourists with Naxi greetings ("Ohayo", meaning "hello"), restaurant waiters say "Please enjoy your meal, wish you a pleasant dining experience" in both Naxi and Chinese when serving dishes, and shop assistants explain the folk etiquette behind products when selling ICH products, such as the relationship between Dongba paper products and Dongba sacrificial etiquette). Second, the ancient town creates "folk etiquette festivals"; for example, during the Naxi "Sanduo Festival", it organizes the "Ancient Town Welcome Ceremony" (Naxi girls in ethnic costumes present hada and sing toast songs to tourists) and the "Dongba Blessing Ceremony" (Dongba priests hold blessing rituals for tourists to convey the Naxi concept of "harmony between man and nature"), allowing tourists to deeply participate in folk etiquette. Third, the ancient town establishes a "folk etiquette training mechanism", inviting elderly Naxi people and Dongba culture inheritors as trainers to conduct regular folk etiquette training for business staff, ensuring the accuracy and authenticity of etiquette transmission[8].

In terms of brand effects, the "folk etiquette service" of Lijiang Ancient Town has effectively alleviated negative evaluations of "excessive commercialization". In 2023, tourists'

"satisfaction with cultural experience" increased to 88%, and "Naxi etiquette service" has become the core brand advantage that distinguishes the ancient town from other commercialized ancient towns[8].

4.1.4 "Etiquette + technology empowerment" model: take the palace museum as an example. The core logic of this model is to use technological means to innovate the form of etiquette services, realize the "modern expression of traditional etiquette", and create a "technology + culture" service brand[9].

In specific practices, the Palace Museum first develops "digital etiquette experience" products. For example, it launches a "virtual etiquette tutor" in the Palace Museum APP (tourists can interact with virtual "Qing Dynasty maids/eunuchs" through AR technology to learn Qing Dynasty court etiquette such as the "salute of greeting" and "kneeling salute") and sets up "etiquette interactive screens" in exhibition halls (tourists can touch the screen to watch etiquette animations and participate in etiquette knowledge quizzes). Second, the Palace Museum uses technology to optimize the etiquette service process; for example, it launches "etiquette-based guided robots" (these robots wear court costumes, interact with tourists using court titles such as "Your Majesty/Your Ladyship", and lead tourists on tours with "guiding language" such as "Your Majesty, this way please. The Hall of Supreme Harmony is ahead. During grand ceremonies in ancient times, the three-kneeling and nine-prostrating salute was required there"), which not only improves service efficiency but also enhances interest. Third, the Palace Museum spreads etiquette culture through "online live broadcasts"; for example, it regularly holds "Palace Museum Etiquette Class" live broadcasts (Palace Museum experts explain court etiquette knowledge and demonstrate etiquette movements) and launches "etiquette cultural and creative products" for pre-sale online (e.g., "court etiquette figurines" and "etiquette AR bookmarks"), realizing "online-offline integrated" brand communication[9].

In terms of brand effects, the "technology + etiquette" service brand of the Palace Museum is very popular among young tourists. In 2023, the number of participants in "digital etiquette experience" products exceeded 10 million, the download volume of the Palace Museum APP increased by 50%, and the brand's image of

youthfulness and technology was significantly enhanced[9].

4.2 Analysis of Existing Problems

Some cultural tourism destinations have achieved remarkable results in integrating etiquette into service brands, but from the industry's overall perspective, there are still five prominent problems[1,2,3].

4.2.1 Lack of etiquette standardization and uneven service quality

At present, the cultural tourism industry has no unified "service etiquette standard system", so the level of etiquette service varies greatly between different destinations and even between different businesses in the same destination[3]. For example, service personnel in some folk scenic spots only understand traditional etiquette at the "action imitation" level (they may know how to perform the hand salute but not its meaning), and guides in some historical scenic spots use casual language (they may interpret historical culture with internet buzzwords). This situation leads to unstable "etiquette service quality" perceived by tourists and affects the brand image[5].

4.2.2 Superficial cultural expression and disconnection between etiquette and culture

Many cultural tourism destinations use etiquette as a "gimmick to attract tourists" and lack exploration and transmission of the cultural connotation behind etiquette[2]. For example, some scenic spots let staff wear traditional costumes but do not explain the cultural significance of the costumes (such as the hierarchy represented by the patterns and colors of the costumes), and some hotels launch "Hanfu experience" services but do not provide supporting Hanfu etiquette teaching (such as the norms of walking and sitting when wearing Hanfu). This leads to a disconnection between "etiquette form" and "cultural connotation"; tourists cannot truly understand the value of etiquette and find it difficult to form cultural identification[4].

4.2.3 Disconnection between etiquette and service processes and insufficient experience coherence

Etiquette services in some destinations are only concentrated in specific links such as "welcome" and "ritual performances" and are disconnected from core service processes such as "tourism", "consumption", and "after-sales"[1]. For example, a historical scenic spot holds a grand

welcome ceremony at the entrance but has staff with cold attitudes and perfunctory responses to questions during the tour; a cultural theme hotel provides etiquette greetings during check-in but shows no etiquette reflection in room service and catering service. This leads to a tourist experience that starts well but ends poorly, and tourists cannot form an overall identification with the brand[6].

4.2.4 Shortage of professional talents and insufficient etiquette transmission capacity
Service etiquette in cultural tourism has high requirements for talents, who need to master three key abilities: traditional etiquette knowledge, modern service skills, and cultural interpretation capabilities[3]. However, the industry faces a serious shortage of such talents. On the one hand, most service personnel have not received systematic traditional etiquette training, leading to deviations in their understanding and expression of etiquette; on the other hand, professional talents with cultural literacy (such as ICH inheritors and historians) rarely participate in service practice. This leads to "empty form but no connotation" in etiquette services, which cannot meet tourists' in-depth needs for cultural experience[2].

4.2.5 Excessive commercialization and distortion of etiquette culture
Some destinations pursue economic benefits and carry out excessive commercial transformation of traditional etiquette, leading to cultural distortion[5]. For example, a folk scenic spot has turned the solemn "sacrificial ritual" into a "paid photo-taking project" (allowing tourists to wear sacrificial costumes and imitate sacrificial movements at will), ignoring the solemnity of etiquette; some scenic spots have tied traditional etiquette to "mandatory consumption" (e.g., tourists cannot enter core scenic spots without participating in etiquette experience). This causes tourist resentment and even damages the brand image[8].

5. Strategies for Etiquette to Support the Construction of Cultural Tourism Service Brands

To solve the above problems, this paper combines the development trend of cultural tourism and tourist needs and proposes five strategies for "empowering service brands with etiquette"[1,3,5].

5.1 Establish a Hierarchical and Categorized

Cultural Tourism Etiquette Standard System to Consolidate the Brand Foundation

First, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism takes the lead and collaborates with industry associations, universities, and cultural institutions to formulate the General Norms for Service Etiquette in China's Cultural Tourism[3]. This norm clarifies requirements for "basic etiquette" (including language norms, posture norms, and costume norms) to ensure the bottom line of service quality; for example, it stipulates three rules for cultural tourism service personnel: they must use "civilized and respectful language" (avoiding vulgar expressions), maintain basic postures (standing with chest out and head up, walking with steady steps), and follow costume principles (matching the cultural theme and avoiding excessive exposure or casualness)[5].

Second, specific etiquette standards are formulated based on the characteristics of different cultural tourism scenarios (historical scenic spots, ICH experience, folk villages, and cultural hotels)[2]. For example, for historical scenic spots, the Explanation Etiquette Standards for Historical and Cultural Scenic Spots is formulated to clarify requirements for "cultural expression" of explanation language and "solemnity" of postures; for ICH experience scenarios, the Service Etiquette Standards for ICH Tourism is formulated to clarify the "etiquette first, then craftsmanship" process in craftsmanship teaching and the "equal respect" principle in interaction; for folk villages, the Service Etiquette Standards for Folk Tourism is formulated to clarify the "authenticity" requirements for folk etiquette and prohibit excessive commercial transformation[4].

Third, etiquette standards are incorporated into the rating and assessment system of cultural tourism destinations; for example, the evaluation of A-level scenic spots and star-rated hotels needs to consider the level of etiquette service, and regular "etiquette service inspections" are conducted[1]. Industry associations are also encouraged to carry out "etiquette service certification" and award the title of "Etiquette Service Demonstration Unit" to enterprises that meet the standards, guiding the healthy competition of the industry[6].

5.2 Cultivate Professional Talents with Both Cultural Literacy and Service Capabilities to Strengthen the Brand Core

First, a "Government-Industry-University-Research" collaborative training mechanism is built. Universities offering majors in tourism management and cultural industry cooperate with cultural tourism enterprises and cultural institutions to set up courses in the "cultural tourism etiquette direction"[3].

These courses aim to cultivate compound talents who "understand culture, master etiquette, and are good at service", with a curriculum including three modules: "traditional etiquette culture" (e.g., selected readings from The Book of Rites, Chinese etiquette history), "service skills" (e.g., communication skills, emergency handling), and "scenario practice" (e.g., practical training in scenic spot explanation etiquette, practical training in ICH experience etiquette), ensuring that talents "integrate knowledge and action"[2].

Second, cultural tourism enterprises establish a "hierarchical training system" and conduct three types of training[5]: "induction etiquette training" for new employees (to help them master basic etiquette and corporate brand culture), "advanced training" for old employees (to help them learn in-depth cultural interpretation and etiquette response in complex scenarios), and "etiquette management training" for managers (to help them master etiquette standard formulation and team etiquette supervision methods). At the same time, enterprises invite cultural experts (such as ICH inheritors and historians) as trainers to ensure the accuracy and cultural depth of etiquette transmission[4].

Third, an "Etiquette Talent Incentive Mechanism" is established. Enterprises set up selection activities such as "Etiquette Service Star" and "Cultural Transmission Ambassador" and provide material rewards (e.g., bonuses and promotion opportunities) and spiritual rewards (e.g., public recognition and publicity reports) to outstanding employees[1]. Enterprises also encourage employees to participate in "etiquette culture research" (e.g., writing etiquette service cases and putting forward etiquette innovation suggestions) and provide financial support for valuable research results, stimulating employees' enthusiasm and creativity[6].

5.3 Create an Immersive Service Experience That Combines "Etiquette + Scenario" to Enrich Brand Connotation

First, a "Full-Process Etiquette Experience" is designed to integrate etiquette into the entire

process of tourists' "pre-trip, in-trip, and post-trip" and achieve experience coherence[3]. During the pre-trip phase, "destination etiquette guides" are pushed to tourists through official websites and APPs to introduce local traditional etiquette knowledge and precautions; during the in-trip phase, etiquette services are designed in each link (check-in, tour, consumption, and check-out), such as welcome etiquette at check-in, explanation etiquette during the tour, cultural interpretation etiquette during consumption, and farewell etiquette at check-out; during the post-trip phase, "electronic etiquette culture manuals" are sent to tourists to review etiquette knowledge during the experience and invite tourists to share their feelings about the etiquette experience, forming a "closed-loop experience"[7].

Second, "Interactive Etiquette Products" are innovated with consideration of tourist needs, especially the "sense of participation" and "personalization" needs of young tourists[5]. For example, "customized etiquette services" are launched to provide exclusive traditional etiquette experiences for tourists (e.g., coming-of-age ceremonies, weddings, and birthday ceremonies); "etiquette scripted games" are developed with historical culture as the background, allowing tourists to learn and practice traditional etiquette by playing roles; "etiquette study camps" are created for young tourists to carry out study activities of "traditional etiquette + cultural exploration" (e.g., "Confucian etiquette study camp" and "court etiquette study camp")[9].

Third, technologies such as AR, VR, and metaverse are used to enhance the "immersive experience" and innovate the form of etiquette experience[4]. For example, "metaverse etiquette scenarios" are developed to allow tourists to enter historical scenarios through virtual avatars, interact with virtual characters, and learn etiquette; VR technology is used to restore "ancient etiquette scenarios" (e.g., tourists put on VR glasses to "be in" the Hall of Supreme Harmony in the Qing Dynasty and experience the emperor's ascension etiquette); "personalized etiquette tutors" are created through AI technology to push customized etiquette learning content based on tourists' interests and cultural foundations[9].

5.4 Build a Service Brand Communication Matrix Based on Etiquette Practice to

Expand Brand Influence

First, content communication is carried out by exploring the cultural stories behind etiquette, making etiquette "come alive" through "storytelling communication" and enhancing the emotional resonance of the brand[2]. For example, "etiquette culture micro-documentaries" are shot to tell the historical origin of etiquette, the cultural connotation of etiquette, and the stories of service personnel transmitting etiquette; "etiquette knowledge short videos" are released on social media platforms (Douyin, Xiaohongshu, and Bilibili), such as "Learn the hand salute in one minute" and "Guide to walking etiquette in Hanfu"; cultural KOLs and travel bloggers are invited to experience etiquette services and share "etiquette experience diaries" to expand the communication coverage[1].

Second, event communication is carried out by creating iconic etiquette activities combined with important festivals and cultural events to enhance brand awareness[6]. For example, during traditional festivals such as the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival, the "National Cultural Tourism Etiquette Ceremony" is held to invite various destinations to display characteristic etiquette services and select the "Best Etiquette Brands"; during the "Cultural and Natural Heritage Day", the "Etiquette Culture into Scenic Spots" activity is carried out to organize cultural experts to explain etiquette culture on site and conduct etiquette experiences; "China Cultural Tourism Etiquette Image Ambassadors" are launched for major events (e.g., the Olympic Games and World Expo) to show the charm of China's cultural tourism service brands to the world[8].

Third, word-of-mouth communication is promoted by providing high-quality etiquette services to enhance tourists' satisfaction and stimulate "word-of-mouth communication"[3]. For example, a "tourist etiquette experience feedback mechanism" is established to collect tourists' opinions and suggestions on etiquette services through questionnaires and interviews and make timely improvements; "etiquette experience souvenirs" (e.g., etiquette experience certificates and customized etiquette cultural and creative products) are provided to tourists to encourage them to share their experiences on social platforms; "word-of-mouth communicators" (tourists who publish

high-quality etiquette experience content on social media) are rewarded with scenic spot tickets and cultural and creative gifts, forming a virtuous cycle of "tourists taking the initiative to communicate"[5].

5.5 Balance Cultural Inheritance and Commercial Value to Guard the Brand's Original Aspiration

First, the principle of "Cultural Authenticity" is adhered to in the design of etiquette services; the cultural connotation and solemnity of traditional etiquette are respected, and excessive commercial transformation is prohibited[2]. For example, for solemn rituals such as sacrificial ceremonies and coming-of-age ceremonies, "experience norms" are clearly defined (prohibiting random jokes and avoiding excessive entertainment); cultural experts are invited to conduct "authenticity audits" on etiquette services to ensure that the form and connotation of etiquette are consistent[4].

Second, the "Coordinated Development of Culture and Commerce" is realized by reasonably tapping the commercial value of etiquette under the premise of cultural protection[1]. For example, etiquette is combined with "cultural and creative products" to develop cultural and creative products containing etiquette elements (e.g., etiquette-themed bookmarks, folding fans, and costumes); etiquette itself is not taken as a "high-priced consumption item", and etiquette experience is combined with "public welfare" (e.g., part of the income from etiquette experiences is used for cultural protection and ICH inheritance), enhancing the brand's social value and reputation[6].

Third, "Cultural Education Guidance" is strengthened by integrating cultural education into etiquette services to help tourists understand the cultural value of etiquette and avoid "blind experience"[3]. For example, before the etiquette experience, service personnel explain the historical background and cultural significance of etiquette to tourists; during the experience, tourists' inappropriate behaviors (e.g., random imitation of etiquette) are promptly corrected; after the experience, tourists are guided to think about "the relationship between etiquette and modern life", allowing them to move from "experiencing etiquette" to "understanding culture" and further forming in-depth identification with the brand[9].

6. Conclusion and Prospect

6.1 Research Conclusions

Through the study on the relationship between etiquette and service brands in China's cultural tourism, this paper draws three main conclusions.

First, etiquette is a concrete carrier of China's excellent traditional culture and plays an irreplaceable core role in the construction of cultural tourism service brands. It can inject a unique cultural gene into service brands to form a differentiated competitive advantage, enhance tourists' identification and loyalty to the brand through "emotional" and "experiential" services, and promote the modern transformation of traditional etiquette to realize the coordinated development of cultural inheritance and tourism development.

Second, the current practice of integrating etiquette into service brands in China's cultural tourism has formed four typical models: "Etiquette + Cultural IP" model, "Etiquette + Scenario Immersion" model, "Etiquette + Folk Symbiosis" model, and "Etiquette + Technology Empowerment" model. These models provide valuable experience for the industry, but there are also five problems: lack of etiquette standardization, superficial cultural expression, disconnection between service and etiquette, shortage of professional talents, and excessive commercialization. These problems restrict the quality improvement of service brands.

Third, to solve the above problems, efforts should be made from five dimensions: "establishing a standard system", "cultivating professional talents", "creating immersive experiences that combine 'etiquette + scenario'", "building a communication matrix", and "balancing culture and commerce". Through systematic strategy design, a virtuous cycle of "etiquette empowering service brands and brands transmitting cultural values" can be realized.

6.2 Research Limitations and Future Prospects

6.2.1 Research limitations

The cases in this paper mainly focus on well-known domestic cultural tourism destinations and pay insufficient attention to the etiquette practices of small and medium-sized cities and emerging cultural tourism projects. At

the same time, due to time and resource constraints, the sample size of questionnaires and field surveys is limited, and the analysis of tourist needs also needs to be further deepened.

6.2.2 Future prospects

In terms of the expansion of research scope, future studies can focus on two directions: first, the etiquette and service brand construction of cultural tourism destinations in small and medium-sized cities and rural areas, exploring practical paths under different resource endowments; second, strengthening research on "international cultural tourism", including the perception of Chinese etiquette services by inbound tourists, to provide references for China's cultural tourism service brands to "go global".

In terms of the deepening of research depth, further quantitative analysis can be conducted to focus on the impact of etiquette services on brand value; for example, analyzing the correlation between etiquette service satisfaction and tourist revisit rate and brand loyalty through data. At the same time, the concept of "sustainable development" can be combined to study the role of etiquette services in promoting the "greenization" and "low-carbonization" of cultural tourism, enriching the research connotation.

In terms of the application of research results, future studies can carry out cooperation with cultural tourism enterprises, transform the strategies proposed in this paper into specific "etiquette service brand construction plans", test the effectiveness of these plans through pilot practices, and continuously optimize and improve them to provide more operable guidance for the industry.

In conclusion, the in-depth integration of etiquette and service brands is a key starting point to help China's cultural tourism transform from "scale expansion" to "quality improvement". Only by adhering to the concept of "culture as the soul, etiquette as the bridge, and service as the foundation" can we create cultural tourism service brands with Chinese characteristics and international influence, allowing tourists to feel the charm of Chinese culture in "polite and disciplined" services and making China's cultural tourism truly an important carrier for "spreading Chinese voices and telling Chinese stories".

Acknowledgments

This paper is the final research achievement of the 2025 funded project "Study on Etiquette and Service Brands in China's Cultural Tourism" (Project No.: 2025B0023) under the China National Culture and Tourism Research Project of the China National Association for the Promotion of National Trade.

References

- [1] Zhang H., Li X. J. Cultural Tourism: Theory, Methods, Cases. Beijing: Tourism Education Press, 2022.
- [2] Xiao F. Special Topic on Etiquette Civilization and Contemporary China. Art and Folklore, 2023 (3): 1-8.
- [3] Zhao L. M., Huang A. M. Tourism Service Quality Management. Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 2021.
- [4] Liu M. W., Zhu S. S. The Cultural Essence and Contemporary Inheritance of Chinese Traditional Tea Ceremony Etiquette. China National Expo, 2024 (14): 56-60.
- [5] Kotler P., Keller K. L. Marketing Management. Mei Q. H., Trans. Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2020.
- [6] Wang, Y., & Li, Z. (2023). Integration of Confucian Etiquette and Service Brand Construction in Qufu San Kong Scenic Area. Journal of Chinese Cultural Tourism, 10(2), 45-62.
- [7] Suzhou Garden Administration. Practice of Immersive Service Brand Construction in Suzhou Gardens. Chinese Landscape Architecture, 2023 (8): 45-50.
- [8] Chen, H., & Zhang, J. (2024). Standardization of Folk Etiquette Service in Lijiang Ancient Town: Problems and Solutions. Tourism Management Research, 18(3), 78-95.
- [9] The Palace Museum. Report on the Construction of "Technology + Culture" Service Brand in the Palace Museum. Sciences of Conservation and Archaeology, 2023 (6): 78-85.
- [10] Wang N. Cultural Identity and Tourism Experience. Tourism Tribune, 2022 (11): 23-31.