

## CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BASED ON TOURIST EXPERIENCE: A CASE STUDY OF THE MUSEUM OF THE WESTERN HAN DYNASTY MAUSOLEUM OF THE NANYUE KING

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### Abstract

*Cultural heritage tourism has gained global prominence amid the postmodern trend of cultural commodification, but the practical development of urban archaeological heritage sites still faces problems of weak attraction to non-local tourists, uneven supporting facilities, and limited integration between visitor experience and heritage protection. This study investigates the practical value of cultural heritage tourism development from the perspective of tourist experience, using the Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King in Guangzhou as a case study. Through questionnaire surveys conducted in 2023, the research collected and analyzed data on tourists' demographics, behaviors, and satisfaction levels. Results indicate that while the museum attracts primarily local visitors, it shows potential for broader tourism development. The experience-based analysis revealed key challenges, including inadequate supporting facilities and limited awareness of surrounding attractions. Based on these findings, the study proposes strategies for sustainable cultural heritage tourism development, including expanding experience-based tourism products, improving supporting facilities, strengthening promotional efforts, and enhancing cultural relics protection awareness. This research contributes to the understanding of the experience economy in cultural heritage tourism and provides practical recommendations for similar sites.*

**Keywords:** Cultural heritage; Cultural heritage tourism; Nanyue King Mausoleum; Tourist experience; Sustainable development

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### Introduction

The rise and popularity of postmodernism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Western world facilitated the commodification and popularization of culture. This interest in cultural assets, along with its ideological and cultural aspects, developed into tourism. Cultural heritage tourism, where cultural relics and old sites are the main attractions, has gained popularity in the world and has emerged as one of the key motivators of the rapid growth of tourism throughout the world [1].

The experience economy, which is the fourth phase of human economic life formation after the agricultural, industrial, and service economies or a continuation of the service economy, considers tourism to be the most optimal industry to work on, displaying efficiency. The study examines the practical utility of the development of cultural heritage tourism based on the tourist experience [2].

The Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King stands in the center of Guangzhou city and is the 2000-year-old tomb of the Nanyue King Zhao Mo, who ruled

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between 137 BCE and 122 BCE. In 1983, a hotel construction project uncovered the tomb, making it one of the most significant archaeological discoveries in China of the 20th century. The 1,000-plus cultural relics of the king's jade burial suit, imperial seals, gold and silver vessels, and burial objects in the 14,000-square-meter museum can attest to the craftsmanship and cultural exchange between Central China and the Lingnan region in the Western Han Dynasty [3].

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Tourist Experience***

The studies that explore the connotation of tourist experience internationally began in the 1960s. According to Boorstin (1964), tourist experience is one of the mass tourism forms of popular consumption: a manufactured and stereotyped experience [4]. Tourism should have been an aberration and a symptom of the times [5]. Mac Cannell in 1973 [6] disagreed with their pessimistic attitude by believing that tourists desire authenticity as a response to the situation of contemporary life that possesses spiritual significance. A tourist experience is a mixture of fun and education for people. These writers perceive the tourist experience as the process of how tourists forge relationships with tourism products as travelers and hence transform their psychological condition as well as change their psychological arrangement [7].

### ***Cultural Heritage***

Cultural heritage has different interpretations, according to scholars. According to the Dictionary of Chinese Culture, cultural heritage reflects the totality of material and spiritual richness that is passed on by predecessors. The Encyclopedia of Marxist Philosophy defined it as the residues of a culture given to the next cultures, as the Dictionary of Mao Zedong Literary Thought called it, as the material and spiritual wealth of a nation [8]. Items that are traditionally considered cultural heritage are as follows: (1) monuments, such as architectural buildings, sculpture, and paintings as well as archaeological features, inscriptions, and cave dwellings that have outstanding universal value in terms of history, art, or science; and (2) building complexes, such as groups of buildings, either individual, whether separated or connected, featured in the landscape that possess remarkable universal value of historical, aesthetic, ethnological, or anthropological significance [9].

## **Materials and Methods**

### ***Research Site***

The Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King is located in the Yuexiu District, which is the center of ancient Guangzhou. The manmade environment has evolved through the centuries, and thus it is challenging to preserve. Development in urban areas has transformed the landscape environment, which leads to pollution, reduced green areas, and alterations in hydrological structure [10]. Guangzhou is a city that has a long history of over 2200 years and a culture that harbors the Nanyue King's Mausoleum. The national historical and cultural city of Guangzhou is a common tourist attraction in China. It is estimated that Guangzhou contains numerous ancient ruins, tombs, historical buildings, stone sculptures, and inscriptions, according to the cultural relics evaluation [11].

The State Administration of Cultural Heritage granted the Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King the contents of the Strengthening of the Protection and Management of the Museum and the Relic in 1996. The Guangzhou Municipal Government then gave out the implementation regulations and created a special protection committee. In 2000, the Nanyue King Mausoleum was announced as a National Key Cultural Relics Protection Unit [12]. The Guangzhou Municipal Government approved the conservation plan of the Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King in 2006, including the description of the core protection area and the area of construction control and preservation requirements. In 2013,

the State Administration of Cultural Heritage amended the National Archaeological Site Park planning system to include the Nanyue King Mausoleum [13].

### ***Survey Methodology***

This study explored tourists' experiences at the Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King by applying a questionnaire survey supported by non-participant observation. Between April and June 2023, the museum conducted a field survey, providing 150 questionnaires and receiving 135 valid responses to achieve a 90% effectiveness rate of the responses. The questionnaire gathered information about the demographics of the tourists in relation to their age and place of origin; patterns of visits (first-time visits and repeat visits); tourism spending; transportation preferences; satisfaction; visit purpose; and satisfaction with the amenities that support their visit, such as shopping and entertainment, accommodation, and dining. It analyzed the eco-consciousness and behavior of the travelers. The surveys were supplemented with observational research in the exhibition halls, entrance and exit areas, rest areas, and surrounding service spaces during the same survey period. The researchers recorded visible environmental behaviors, including waste disposal, noise control, photography compliance, route choice, use of interpretation facilities, and interaction with cultural relic protection signs. These observations were used to contextualize the questionnaire results and to support the later discussion of environmental awareness and heritage protection behavior.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Tourist Demographics***

This study, as indicated in Table 1, conducted questionnaire surveys to identify the characteristics of visitors to the Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King, and its findings indicated that visitors are majorly local tourists (they took up more than 65% of people who were surveyed). Guangzhou locals and migrant workers (who are also the local tourists because they have been staying long in Guangzhou) make up 65% of local tourists. The remaining approximately 35% of non-local tourists mainly come from short-distance travelers from cities surrounding Guangzhou, with few long-distance tourists.

**Table 1.** Age Distribution of Tourists

Age Group	Local Tourists	Non-local Tourists	Total
18-30 years	28 (20.7%)	10 (7.4%)	38 (28.1%)
30-45 years	42 (31.1%)	18 (13.3%)	60 (44.4%)
45-55 years	15 (11.1%)	12 (8.9%)	27 (20.0%)
Over 55 years	8 (5.9%)	2 (1.5%)	10 (7.4%)
Total	93 (68.9%)	42 (31.1%)	135 (100%)

This is the case because Guangzhou being a tourism city endows it with tourism resources. Canton Tower, Shamian Island, and Chen Clan Ancestral Hall are a few of the useful attractions of Guangzhou to non-locals. Non-local tourists do not necessarily need to be interested in niche cultural tourism due to narrow itineraries and a sole selection of the most favored sites.

The nature of museums dictates the diversity of the age structure of the museum visitors. Social progress is encouraged by nonprofits making open, permanent museums. This causes the museums to tend to be free or cheaply charged. In this way, low admission prices of museums bring a large number of low-income and socially vulnerable people, which demonstrates their concern with all inhabitants being treated equally.

### ***Visit Patterns***

According to the survey, 72% of the visitors visited Nanyue King cultural tourism sites for the first time, including 48% locals and 24% non-locals, and 24% were repeat visitors, with 21% locals and 3% non-locals. Visitors with the highest frequency of 3 times were even fewer—4%, of whom 100% were local visitors. More than 85% of the tourists that were interviewed

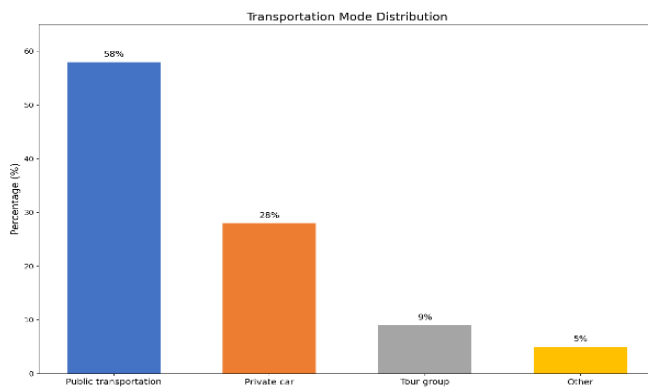
indicated that they would go back to the Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King. There were also the ruins of the Nanyue Palace, which is currently under excavation, which receive tourists. The dominance of first-time visits suggests that the site functions mainly as a discovery-oriented cultural attraction rather than a routine leisure venue. The high stated willingness to return is probably related to the educational value of the relics and the possibility of combining the museum with nearby heritage resources, whereas actual repeated visits remain concentrated among locals because they face lower travel costs and can integrate the museum into everyday urban leisure.

**Tourism Expenditure**

The economic benefits generated by tourism activities serve as the primary motivation for sustaining long-term tourism development. Museums do not receive much revenue as a result of tourism activities. We found out that the Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King has a fee for a 3D video regarding Nanyue culture (20 yuan each time), interpretation, and a small grocery. Therefore, tourists spend the greatest amount of money on transportation. More than 65% of the tourists spent less than 200 yuan at the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Western Han King Museum.

**Transportation**

More than 92% of the tourists found the transportation to the Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King to be convenient. With reference to the share of the mode of transportation decision, 28% of the tourists opted to drive, 58% opted to travel through public transportation, 9% opted for the tour guides, and 5% opted for other modes of transportation. The Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King can be easily reached by the Guangzhou buses and is easily accessible to tourists who have their own cars, as it is in the heart of Yuexiu District and is very well connected by transport links. Figure 1 shows that the museum is readily reachable by tourists who happen to be in their own cars because it is a central point in Yuexiu District that has high transport connectivity. This finding is mainly explained by the museum's central location in Yuexiu District and its integration into Guangzhou's mature public transport network. Public transport is therefore the most practical option for many visitors, while the share of self-driving visitors reflects the availability of urban road access for local or family-based trips. The low reliance on tour guides also suggests that the site is easy to reach independently.



**Fig. 1.** Transportation Mode Distribution

**Visit Purpose**

Tourism motivation is the most crucial limiting aspect of tourism activities' formation. According to the survey of tourists visiting sites on Nanyue King, as indicated in figure 2, the main goal the tourists have is to learn and acquire more knowledge about Nanyue culture.

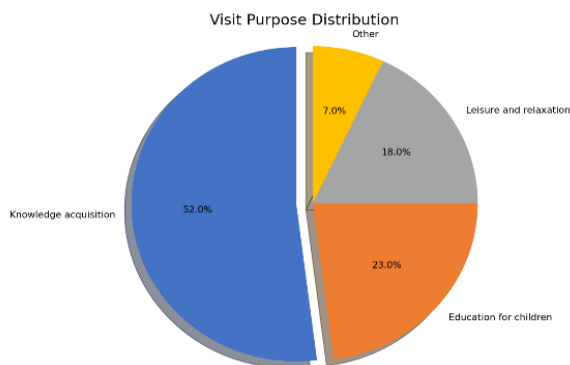


Fig. 2. Visit Purpose Distribution

The desire to learn among tourists is one of the most important factors that makes cultural heritage tourism highly sought after, as it drives them to seek knowledge about what they see and hear during their journey. The cultural heritage sites may be considered a way of learning and discovering the culture and history of other locations since knowledge is the desired end. Thus, the primary motivating factor that encourages tourists to explore the Nanyue King cultural sites is their desire for knowledge. Most of the surveyed tourists were those who visited with their children in order to enhance their children's future growth through experience and knowledge acculturation. Additionally, the museum's surrounding environment is one of the biggest attractions for tourists. This finding is consistent with previous studies that treat tourist experience as an educational and psychological process rather than only entertainment [4], [6]. It also echoes research on sustainable tourist behavior, where knowledge sharing and psychological engagement are key mechanisms [7]. In this case, the dominance of learning-oriented motives indicates that Nanyue King Mausoleum functions primarily as a cultural learning site.

**Supporting Facilities**

The results were not satisfactory in terms of the scope of the survey on dining, entertainment, and accommodation, as well as other supporting facilities around the Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King. Half of the tourists rated the shopping environment as good, while 40% rated it as poor. Entertainment for the tourists was rated 55% satisfied and 42% dissatisfied. On the issue of accommodations, 25% of the travelers rated them as sufficient, 45% as acceptable, and 30% as insufficient. Approximately fifteen% of passengers rated the meal as satisfactory, sixty% satisfied, and twenty-five% unsatisfactory. Most tourists were not very knowledgeable about the surroundings of the Museum of the Western Han Dynasty Mausoleum of the Nanyue King, like Yuexiu Park, the Five Rams Sculpture, and the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall. The cause may be that the museum's core function is heritage exhibition and relic protection, while commercial and leisure services around the site have not been integrated into a complete tourism consumption chain (Table 2). Since many visitors are unfamiliar with nearby attractions, weak spatial linkage and insufficient destination-level promotion reduce the perceived availability of dining, shopping, entertainment, and accommodation.

Table 2. Tourist Satisfaction with Supporting Facilities

Facility Type	Adequate (%)	Acceptable (%)	Inadequate (%)
Shopping	3	57	40
Entertainment	3	55	42
Accommodation	25	45	30
Dining	15	60	25

### ***Environmental Awareness***

Fitting the behavior of tourists visiting museums into questionnaires for proper understanding is not always easy. Hence, tracking travelers in the course of the survey provided us with certain important insights. First, tourists generally throw little waste in trash bins, and most do so deliberately, even though they do not understand how to sort it. Second, noise management is poor at the museum, potentially due to being a facility that is frequented mostly by children, who are more boisterous than adults, though the indoor atmosphere requires silence. Most tourists adhere to rules in the museum when visiting the premises and taking photographs, as their compliance offers security to the cultural artifacts and the environment.

### ***Challenges and Opportunities***

The Nanyue King cultural heritage tourism faces a conflict between protection and development. The protection of cultural heritage is a growing tourist activity, which is mostly concentrated in urban-rural junctions. Protection management is a difficult task; illegal construction continues; the threat of development increases, and the protection and construction conflict deteriorates [14]. The development and utilization processes are slow, but the environmental pressure caused by the development and productive destruction increases, making protection work passive. The system of management and funding problems has throttled the legislative processes in site protection and creation of specific management institutions; fiscal support is lacking, and a virtuous cycle system fostering protection by development has not been established [15].

With these rich cultural resources, there are opportunities and challenges in developing Nanyue King Mausoleum tourism. The high cultural ambience encourages cultural heritage tourism and offers numerous ideas of implementation. The locational advantage of the Nanyue King Mausoleum is not as high as compared to other cultural heritage sites in downtown Guangzhou, so the tourists have to make decisions or buy them. Therefore, the culture and tourism attractions of the Nanyue King should be pushed forward to attract the tourists [16].

This section clarifies the management context behind the recommendations: the empirical findings on limited spending, weak awareness of surrounding attractions, and insufficient supporting facilities are not isolated service issues but reflect the broader tension between heritage protection and tourism development. Therefore, the following recommendations focus on improving visitor experience while keeping cultural relic protection as the core constraint.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

To create Nanyue King cultural heritage tourism, one must take an inventory of the circumstances—that is, carry out an in-depth investigation of the current circumstances to understand the entire situation. Therefore, the preservation and discovery of rare, important, and threatened objects should be a priority. Second, one can preserve its historic cultural traditions by Nanyue King cultural heritage tourism, cultural villages, and other tourism goods of this kind [17]. There should be innovative awareness of development, but history must be revered so that the Nanyue King's cultural heritage is not needlessly modernized [18].

Specific recommendations are as follows:

### ***Expand Heritage Experience-Type Tourism Products***

The type of tourism product known as "heritage experience-based" is concerned with offering immersion tourism in terms of natural and cultural heritage. In the Nanyue King management territory, the development of such products is possible by capitalizing on the local resources. Participatory folk culture tourism allows the tourists to enjoy the Nanyue culture by way of trying folk activities. Cultural tourism can also be enhanced by offering actual experiences (like historical performances and interactive exhibitions) as a part of leisure that will make the experience not only captivating but also very important to the cultural consciousness of travelers, giving the site a better chance of attracting more visitors.

***Improve Tourism Supporting Facilities***

Enhancing the list of tourist options to enrich the tourist activity and increase the length of stay in the tourist area in terms of Nanyue King cultural heritage tourism is beneficial to attract more tourists and ultimately boost the revenue of the locals in addition to the good promotion of local economic development.

***Emphasize Tourism Promotion and Expand Heritage Recognition***

Collaboration with the adjacent scenic destinations ought to be focused to bring about a massive tourism region and attain tourism cluster development. Multiple publicities of various tourist sites increase the opinion and tourism motivation among the people. Promotion can be enhanced by package dealings with well-known attractions.

***Strengthen Cultural Relic Protection Awareness***

Protection of cultural relics should be publicized more so as to better the cultural protection awareness of the community residents and tourists and plant the concept of sustainable development in the mind of tourists. As an illustration, a series of promotional materials and science tourism books of the sustainable development of Nanyue King cultural heritage tourism can be arranged and collected with emphasis; collaboration with the promotional media can be formed to hold an activity entitled "Promotional Month of the Sustainable Development of Nanyue King Cultural Heritage Tourism" with the theme of "Cherish Resources, Protect the Environment, Civilized and Scientific Tourism, and Heritage Civilization, Science, and Ecology with Protection." A tourism volunteer activity can be held among the youths.

The paper has value in not only giving some theoretical knowledge of the experience economy in cultural heritage tourism but also in the practical implications for the tourism management of the archaeological sites. Research is required on the longitudinal studies to evaluate the experiences of the visitors and the comparison studies with the other similar cultural heritage sites to find out the best practices in sustainable tourism development.

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