

Brand Value Reconstruction and Cultural Tourism Development Path of Intangible Cultural Heritage Black Tea from “Her Narrative”: Based on Field Research of Lingshan Black Tea in Qinzhou

Xinyuan Wei

Guangxi Vocational Normal University, Nanning 530007, Guangxi, China

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Abstract: The Pinglu Canal is soon to open, bringing a historic opportunity for intangible cultural heritage along the route to spread across regions and build stronger brands. The Lingshan Black Tea is an intangible cultural heritage product of Qinzhou that was primarily passed on to successive generations by women. However, in the conventional stories of tea culture created by men, these women inheritors have been ignored over the years. The paper examines the problem of gender bias and underestimation of the value of storytelling in modern tea brands based on intensive interviews and study of female lineages and expertise in crafting Lingshan black tea. It suggests a value reconstruction approach that focuses on female stories. Integrating tea culture, female heritage, as well as canal tourism will allow us to find new means of combining cultural heritage of the intangible type with cultural tourism, and use the connectivity of the Pinglu Canal with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The conversion of the heritage and experience of female artisans into brand storytelling products can aid in increasing the market recognition and cultural worth of Lingshan Black Tea. It also provides a working solution to the problem of gender in regard to intangible cultural heritage on the canal, allowing such treasures not only to be seen, but also re-valued.

Keywords: Her narrative; Lingshan black tea; Cultural and tourism integration; Pinglu Canal

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1. Introduction

Pinglu Canal is an important project in Guangxi that will connect rivers with the sea, adding intangible cultural heritage along its shores to the map. As part of the heritage of Qinzhou, Lingshan Black Tea is an iconic item, yet it is yet to be developed. It is mostly run by women such as Teng Lingshan who do all the tasks, including cultivation, processing, and operation. They are not merely talented craftsmen. They have the taste memories, family ties, and local tradition knowledge of their people. But tea culture as a mainstream has been told with the masculine voice for a long time. These women who were behind the production of Lingshan Black Tea and

their uniqueness in experience and contribution had long gone unnoticed.

The brand therefore has not been able to find an obvious niche in the market. It is unable to communicate any special tale regarding the role of women, making the Lingshan Black Tea difficult to distinguish itself^[1].

In our research, we identified that a “her narrative” might be the solution to this problem. Women must not be seen as merely decorative symbols of promotion. We have to explore their true stories, their gender identity, their emotional connections, and their ability to transmit skills across generations. Only then will we be able to restructure the reality behind the brand and its distribution of reality. The fact that people are aware that women have a significant role in ICH, such as oral literature and traditional crafts, is known to them. However, regarding tea culture, which also includes farming, manufacturing, and cultural traditions, there has been limited research conducted in the field^[2]. And we do not have many practical suggestions on how to convert “her narrative” into a tangible brand strategy or tourism initiatives.

The paper is concerned with Lingshan Black Tea from Qinzhou. The question of how to restore its brand value as ICH will be examined in the context of “her narrative.” It also discusses how the brand may be redesigned using the benefits of the Pinglu Canal and the cultural tourism market so that we can come up with a viable model of local tourism. Using actual case studies, this research highlights the areas of gender blindness that exist in the approach Lingshan Black Tea takes to tell its brand story, and the negative effects of these blind spots. We are confident that such an exploration will represent another opportunity that will focus on gender differences in the promotion of intangible cultural heritage brands beside the canal. Meanwhile, it may also present some valuable insights into the branding of intangible cultural heritage related to tea and the development of local tourism.

2. The background of inheritance and modern industry situation behind Lingshan red *Camellia sinensis*

2.1. Historical origins and geographical endowments

Lingshan County (Qinzhou) is an old tea-growing area in China. In the year 1960, Tao Zhu, who was the Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee of Guangdong, visited and wrote about local tea resources, which stimulated extensive development of local tea planting.

Located south of the Tropic of Cancer, Lingshan has a good subtropical monsoon climate and selenium-rich soil that is suitable for growing tea. It is famous for quality early spring tea. By the end of 2025, there were 88,000 mu of tea plantation area in Lingshan, where 86,000 mu were harvestable. In the first half of 2025, the county produced more than 8,200 tons of tea and sold it at an output value of 660 million yuan.

The craft of making Lingshan black tea was officially designated as one of the regional intangible cultural heritages in 2021. Its main property is hand charcoal roasting, which distinguishes it from electrically roasted black tea.

Teng Lingshan, a local heritage inheritor, operates a tea studio on an area of almost 2,000 acres of tea gardens and is one of the biggest tea companies in the region. The classic manufacturing method comprises withering, rolling, fermentation, and carbon baking, where rolling as well as carbon baking require the highest levels of skill.

Rolling requires exact regulation of pressure and time, but charcoal curing uses locally produced lychee charcoal and long-time low-temperature roasting of over ten hours. This is an age-old method which gives Lingshan black tea its signature scent of charcoal and sweetness of honey, providing a distinct taste that cannot

be replicated by the machine-manufactured black tea.

2.2. Female-dominated inheritance lineage

Women are the ones doing most of the work related to the production of Lingshan black tea. Women pick tea leaves, care for tea gardens, process, sort, and pack the finished tea.

Teng Lingshan follows in her family tradition of tea making. Her father, Teng Jiashu, is the third-generation master of that traditional skill. She stated that most women in the locality are engaged in activities related to tea, whereas men work in other fields or engage in general farming labor.

The given division of labor is typical in the tea-growing regions of southern China. The art of tea making requires attentiveness and patience, which is why it has been traditionally an industry that was undertaken by women for many years. Women, being the main labor force, have become invisible in the context of cultural symbols and brand stories of *Camellia sinensis*. In conventional *Camellia sinensis* cultural discussion, the Sage of Tea Lu Yu is male, Tea Ceremony Masters are male, and most intangible cultural heritage inheritors *Homo sapiens* are male. This is what can be called the phenomenon of hidden women, whereby the story of Lingshan Black Tea fails to reflect a genuine representation of female experiences *Phoxinus phoxinus* subsp. *phoxinus*.

2.3. Industrial foundation and market status

The industry of Lingshan Black Tea has become a rather large-scale industry. Based on the results of our study, we can state that there is a significant gap between the traditional charcoal-roasted black tea and the modern black tea in the overall annual production of tea in Lingshan County.

The conventional charcoal-roasted black tea yields around 20 tons annually, with 15 tons being marketed locally and merely 5 tons being exported. Conversely, modern black tea can yield 80 tons per year, of which 75 tons are sold locally, and 5 tons are sold abroad. However, this indicates that despite the traditional handcrafted charcoal-roasted black tea having a significant cultural significance and unique taste, it is significantly less desired in the marketplace compared to industrialized goods due to its high cost. Teng Lingshan stated: “The process of handmade charcoal roasting is costly but yields low output, selling at roughly 200–300 yuan per jin, which customers feel is too expensive. Industrial tea is significantly lower priced, just several tens of yuan per jin, and thus is more commonly purchased. Most individuals cannot distinguish between the two.

Regarding sales channels, Lingshan Black Tea relies significantly on local wholesale, repeat orders of regular customers, as well as small quantities of online sales. Tea companies in Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, and elsewhere have been visited by Teng Lingshan in an attempt to gain experience. Her attempts at advertising her tea using WeChat Moments and video accounts also did not yield much success.

Her statement was: The tea industry has a lot to do. Tea companies, residents, and the government should collaborate in promoting a culture of love and high-quality tea consumption among the people.

Moreover, the impact of the Lingshan Black Tea brand is still restricted to Guangxi. It is not popular in other areas of China or foreign countries. Even though Lingshan is the famous home of renowned Chinese tea, this famous brand has not helped Lingshan Black Tea in the market.

3. Re-evaluation of brand value from the perspective of “her narrative”

3.1. Gender blind spots in existing brand narratives

This tea is well-suited to antioxidants and can alleviate the stomach when grown on selenium-rich soil and

prepared by traditional charcoal roasting. In spite of such advantages, the brand lacks a personal touch that would resonate with the consumers. Many of the customers do not recognize the local women who are behind tea manufacturing, and most of them cannot comprehend the family background of the inheritor, Teng Lingshan. There is also very limited awareness about the fact that each tea leaf has to be individually picked and roasted.

Disregarding this female segment has caused two very evident disadvantages. In the first place, the brand is not unique anymore. Due to the fact that many brands of black tea promote selenium-based ingredients and traditional methods, Lingshan black tea could be compared to other companies. Secondly, it is culturally unappealing. The new generation of buyers is inclined towards products that have a full story behind them, and this brand is just talking about the general features without any interesting brand history.

3.2. The theoretical connotation and practical possibilities of “her narrative”

Not only does “Her Narrative” give women their voices. It is an easy and realistic way of telling stories that are rooted in the experiences of women, and it has three significant implications for safeguarding the traditional culture.

To start with, female craft inheritors can share their personal life experiences and real emotions. Secondly, there is an indication of their unique hand-working abilities and great experience when making tea. Thirdly, the target audience is women, and it employs simple and friendly tales to develop a strong connection with them.

There exist three straightforward methods to market the concept of the Lingshan black tea known as the “Her Narrative.” To begin with, narrate the tale of Teng Lingshan and explain how she acquired the art of tea-making, how she inherited the tea farm, and maintained the old custom of charcoal-roasting. Secondly, demonstrate the regular activities of the village women working in the tea industry because such common group experiences are more appealing to people. Thirdly, reduce their practical tea-making experience to plain craft knowledge, and use this knowledge to build a brand, which will earn consumer confidence.

3.3. The value leap from “product specifications” to “emotional connection”

Building a “her narrative” brand system does a lot for Lingshan black tea. This helps the brand to stand out—high-quality tea combined with the warmth of female craftswomen will give it an individuality that is remembered by people. It also adds some cost. Consumers are prepared to spend 20-50 percent extra on items that have a true story to them, and this story does provide just that. In addition, it creates loyalty^[3]. When people are emotionally attached, they continue returning and talking about it, basically they become free brand representatives.

4. Pathway design for empowering cultural tourism development through “her narrative”

4.1. Canal opportunities: From local Guangxi market to the Greater Bay Area

Pinglu Canal connects Lingshan straight to the premium market of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Tea is popular among many rich ladies. These women like exquisite teas that also have a story to them and are extremely active on both Xiaohongshu and Douyin.

If the Black Tea of Lingshan has a specific brand image that is directed at women, it will cease to be a purely local product. It may turn into a popular lifestyle brand of contemporary women and increase its market opportunities in the economic zone of the Pinglu Canal.

The idea of the “Her Narrative” brand can inspire Lingshan Black Tea to design specific travel packages targeting women^[4].

It has the ability to initiate the experience of a One-Day Tea Farmer. During the tea tour, tourists may dress in traditional tea-picking outfits and get taught how to pick it by the local female tea farmers and go out and pick some fresh tea leaves. They could also post their experiences online to spread the brand through the assistance of tea makers.

The tea gardens may also provide the creation of some pleasant areas where friends can have their tea together. Tourists can sample Lingshan Black Tea and enjoy some light refreshments in this place. The gardens could also come up with a variety of gift packs that contain various types of tea and unique tea sets, which would be good gifts.

Also, the garden may be used to teach tea classes that are beneficial to women’s health. Due to the fact that the tea contains selenium and is good for the stomach, such classes could educate people on how they can stay healthy in various seasons and prepare easy-to-make tea beverages at work. Such activities will attract additional visitors and increase product sales.

4.2. Digital communication and community operations

Our most popular way of sharing is the “her narrative” on Xiaohongshu. We combine popular topics such as daily life, beauty, and slow living with the unique theme that we call “Lingshan Her Tea.” We are inviting female influencers to go and select tea in Lingshan, make quality videos, and share them online.

Our aim is to demonstrate a chilled way of living—to be near nature, to have peace with tea, and learn more about traditional culture. It is very relevant to the female audience.

In addition to that, we created the WeChat group named Lingshan Tea Friends—Her Community to serve both guests and consumers. On a regular basis, we share tea tips, women’s stories, garden views, and tea diaries. The members are allowed to upload photos and ideas, and the most interesting ones receive little gifts. That community makes sure that one-time buyers become regular fans who will continue supporting and promoting our brand.

4.3. Brand partnerships and product innovation

In order to accelerate the development of the “her narrative” strategy, Lingshan Black Tea may collaborate with other women-friendly brands. As an illustration, Lingshan Black Tea may team up with yoga studios, boutique homestays, and beauty brands to introduce limited-edition tea gift sets and market them via their respective platforms.

We can develop a specific line of products called Her Series in the process of creating a product. Some examples of such products may be beauty tea bags, mild black tea that is safe to use during pregnancy, as well as easy-to-use tea bags for working women.

The packaging ought to go beyond the outdated local souvenir fashion to meet the tastes of women of various ages.

5. Policy coordination and implementation recommendations

Lingshan Black Tea should take advantage of existing opportunities by focusing on the brand of “Her Narrative.” It has the potential to develop with the combined efforts of local authorities, tea companies, the

local population, and media.

Lingshan Tea House can be included in the travel routes of Pinglu Canal by the local tourism bureau, and booths could be built in tourist hubs to showcase and sell the tea. The experience of being a tea farmer for one day will be integrated into the one-day canal tour^[5].

It is also possible to invite the inheritor of the craft, Teng Lingshan, to major events such as the Guangxi March 3rd Folk Festival. She will be able to tell tales about Lingshan black tea and inform more people of the contributions of women in heritage artisans. Due to the river-and-sea transport connections of the Pinglu Canal, the brand has a chance to extend more into the ASEAN market with a specific focus on female consumers in the southeast region. With the emphasis on the culture of the tea, its health and beauty attributes, it is going to satisfy the local market needs more efficiently.

The warmth of traditional handmade craft that was passed down by Chinese women will be passed on with this tea, and it will help to add to the culture associated with the ancient Tea Boat Route. Over time, it will become more than an element of the local intangible cultural heritage but an integral part of the regional cultural brand.

6. Conclusion

The study was grounded in fieldwork and interviews in the vicinity of Lingshan black tea in Qinzhou. It deals with the transformation of the brand value of such an intangible cultural heritage by means of female narratives and integrating it into the local tourism industry.

After the opening of the Pinglu Canal, Lingshan will be directly connected to the Greater Bay Area. We have the ability to create a women-centered tea tourism, host online groups, and release co-branded products—we can combine the tea culture, skills of the women, and tourism of the canal into a single new model.

The canal is the boat. The female narrative is the sails. All of them bear the tales of female tea makers on the long journey on the waterway.

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