

Research on the Application of Micro-Performances in Traditional Culture Study Tours: Taking Hongdong Big Locust Tree Scenic Area as an Example

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Abstract: Under the background of deep integration of culture and tourism and the upgrading of study tourism, micro-performance becomes an important path for activating traditional culture and iterating study tourism products. From the perspective of the dramaturgical theory of tourism, this study takes the Hongdong Big Locust Tree Scenic Area as a case to build a four-dimensional analysis framework of “script, stage, performance, and front and back stage.” This study analyzes the application mechanism of micro-performance in root-ancestor culture research, points out the existing problems in its narrative, performance, technology, and management, and put forward optimization strategies such as cultural narrative innovation, double qualification system construction, digital technology integration, effect evaluation system construction, etc. It provides reference ideas for the development of similar cultural heritage research tourism.

Keywords: Micro-performance; Study tourism; Dramaturgical theory of tourism; Hongdong Big Locust Tree

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1. Introduction

Under the background of cultural tourism integration and the experience economy, immersive experience has become a major direction for cultural tourism renewal. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China proposes to “shape tourism with culture and highlight culture through tourism.” This provides strategic guidance for the active utilization of traditional culture. Tourist demand is shifting from sightseeing to a deep cultural experience. The traditional “static display” model is difficult to meet the expectations of participation and emotional resonance. At the same time, study tourism is developing rapidly. The traditional “lecture + tour” model can no longer meet the needs of young people’s in-depth experience and cultural exploration. Using immersive performances to enhance the attractiveness of study tourism

products has become an important topic.

Micro-performance originates from the concept of “micro-theater.” It refers to a performance that is small in scale, close to the audience, and breaks the “fourth wall.” It has the characteristics of “small scene, grand narrative, low cost, and high immersion” ^[1]. It can provide a suitable path for the creative transformation of traditional culture. The Hongdong Big Locust Tree Scenic Area is a typical case of deep integration between root-ancestor culture and micro-performance. Its Root-Seeking and Ancestor-Worshipping Festival is a national-level intangible cultural heritage, carrying the memory of migration in the Ming Dynasty and the root-ancestor feelings of Chinese people ^[2].

2. Micro-performance and dramaturgical theory of tourism

Micro-performance refers to the performance activities that are carried out in a specific space, characterized by small-scale, high frequency, and strong interaction, and carried out in a short and close distance. Its core lies in relying on a lightweight design to achieve “the scene is the stage.”

Through the four elements of narrative construction, space creation, role interaction, and emotional resonance, micro-performance creates a deep and immersive cultural experience for participants. Narrative transforms cultural connotations into perceivable stories. Space uses real scenery to enhance the sense of presence. Interaction breaks the boundary between performance and audience. Resonance achieves emotional touch and internalization of meaning.

The dramaturgical theory of tourism was proposed by Goffman. He compared society to a stage, and introduced core concepts such as “front stage,” “back stage,” “performance,” and “impression management.” He regarded the tourism world as a “cultural drama” composed of performers, stage, and script. This theory highly aligns with micro-performance: narrative corresponds to “script,” space corresponds to “stage,” interaction corresponds to “performer” and “impression management,” and the creation of authenticity corresponds to “front stage and back stage.”

Based on this, this study constructs a four-dimensional analysis framework of “script, stage, performance, and front and back stage.” It systematically analyzes the application mechanism of micro-performance in the study tourism of the root-ancestor culture in the Hongdong Big Locust Tree Scenic Area.

3. Current application status of micro-performance in the study tourism of root-ancestor culture at the Hongdong Big Locust Tree Scenic Area

3.1. Narrative construction and cultural expression: Script planning and research

The script design of micro-performance serves as the core teaching carrier for the root-ancestor culture study tourism. It directly determines the knowledge content and the entertainment value of the study activities ^[3]. The scenic area translates the history of the Great Migration in the Ming Dynasty into a story. The live performance “The Locust Tree Migration” vividly reproduces the tragic history of the migration at that time. During the performance, students naturally put themselves into the role of the descendants of the migrants, feeling the emotional tension of their ancestors leaving their hometown. In 2024, the “Migration Drama Game” began with a “casual conversation” format. The actors play the role of villagers from the migration period and talk naturally with students. They embed the background, policies, and stories of the migration into the dialogue. Other diverse projects, such as “The Clan Leader Who Keeps the Genealogy” and “Sophora Flower Teaches

You to Speak Local Dialect,” turn abstract concepts like “root-ancestor” and “hometown” into perceptible symbolic systems. This transformation of this narrative from “telling” to “performing” solves the problem of one-way indoctrination in traditional study tourism. It allows students to actively acquire historical knowledge through their participation in the storyline.

3.2. Space planning and atmosphere creation: Research on stage setting

The real stage of the Hongdong Big Locust Tree turns historical space into a study tourism classroom. It uses multi-sensory creation to achieve immersive teaching. The scenic area fully preserves the original layout of a Ming Dynasty courtyard house. It uses cultural relic-level real scenes to carry the narrative of the migrants’ daily life. And the Ancestor Worship Square restores the collective context of the migrants’ departure. In terms of atmosphere creation, “Colorful Drums and Gongs” uses a powerful rhythm to build the mood. “Sophora flower Teaches You to Speak Local Dialect” uses dialect conversation to arouse students’ initiative in language expression. The scenic area also launched an offline themed activity based on “Black Myth: Wukong.” Students play the role of “destined ones” to look for elements in various scenic spots and clock in, collect them, and get certificates. Through spatial narrative, the activity turns scattered cultural landmarks into root-seeking narrative nodes. The route design based on spatial narrative perfectly matches the tour pace of study groups. It allows students to learn the root-ancestor culture systematically as they move from one scene to another.

3.3. Interaction ritual and emotional resonance: Research of “performance” presentation and visitor participation

The performance link is the key to the emotional education of root-ancestor culture study tourism. Through role play and interaction, students can have deep emotional resonance. The “Migration Drama Game” arranges several character roles, and each character leads a team to complete tasks. Students advance the plot as actors. Those who play descendants of migrants integrate the root-ancestor culture into their own identity ^[4]. The ring-toss game called “Circle the Filial Piety” and the music interaction “Song of the Locust Tree Shade” use gamified design to turn interaction into emotional connection ^[5]. This emotional resonance generation path just corresponds to the three-dimensional educational goal of “cognition–emotion–behavior” of research tourism. And it realizes the dual transmission of cultural knowledge and emotional identity.

3.4. Authenticity creation and boundary management: Management strategy research of front and back stage

The boundary management between front stage and back stage is the core for ensuring the authenticity and educational value of root-ancestor culture study tourism. It avoids excessive commercialization while meeting students’ need for exploration. The scenic area provides professional training for actors, makes props and costumes according to ancient styles, and restores scene arrangements based on historical records. Actors act with genuine emotion, making students feel as if they have walked into the story ^[6]. The scenic area adopts a “moderately open” strategy for the backstage. The tasks in the “Migration Drama Game” allow students to access the migration policies and the specific information about the issuance of “travel permits and funds.” Meanwhile, the cultural core areas, such as the sacrificial rituals, are strictly protected, and their sacredness remains undisturbed. The scenic area achieves effective boundary management through measures such as physical space separation, time allocation, and division of labor among staff. This moderately open

management strategy allows students to not only contact the real cultural core but also maintain the reverence for the ancestral culture. This approach meets the basic principles of study tourism education.

4. Problems existing in the application of micro-performance in the research and study of root-ancestor culture

4.1. Narrative level: Homogenization trend and lack of innovation

The micro-performance projects in the scenic area show a clear trend of homogenization in their narratives. Li pointed out that “the cultural exploration of development projects is not deep enough, and the homogenization phenomenon is serious” ^[2]. “The Locust Tree Migration,” “The Iron Pot Story,” and “Sophora Flower Teaches You to Speak Local Dialect” all focus on the single theme of “migration history.” They do not sufficiently explore the living conditions of migrants’ descendants in different places or the cultural blending that occurred. Moreover, the scenic area has not designed age-differentiated study scripts for students of different ages. Primary school students find the content difficult to understand, while middle school students find it too simple. This fails to meet the needs of tiered teaching and directly weakens the educational effect of study tourism.

4.2. Performance level: Imbalance between actor professionalism and interaction quality

The professional level of actors is uneven, and the quality of interaction fluctuates. Some students said that certain interactions “seem to be done just to finish the performance, and are quite superficial.” Actors need to improve their accuracy and expressiveness. Most actors lack the qualifications of study tourism instructors and cannot accurately answer students’ questions about history and culture. The interaction remains only at the entertainment level and fails to play an educational and guiding role. This affects the depth of the study tourism experience.

4.3. Technical level: Lack of digital technology application

The micro-performance projects in the scenic area still mainly rely on live performances and real-scene restoration. “Opening the Door to Welcome Guests,” “The Locust Tree Migration,” and “The Iron Pot Story” do not use digital technologies such as AR, VR, or holographic projection. For example, “Twelve Hours of Chang’an” in Xi’an has integrated digital technology into all aspects of its micro-performances. It has formed a circular model where “technology supports content, and content enhances experience” ^[7]. The Hongdong Big Locust Tree Scenic Area lacks digital interactive content specifically designed for study tourism. It cannot achieve the study tourism loop of “online preview—offline experience—online extension.” It has difficulty stimulating students’ interest in independent exploration.

4.4. Management level: Lack of effect evaluation mechanism and delayed feedback response

Although the scenic area has channels for leaving comments and suggestions, it has not formed an overall effect evaluation model. The quality of actor interaction depends entirely on the individual’s improvisation, and there is no unified standard. Some negative visitor comments mention problems such as “insufficient content,” but the scenic area has not made an overall response or improvement. More importantly, the scenic area has not established an evaluation system for the educational effect of study tourism. It cannot quantify

students' knowledge acquisition and cultural identity. The delayed feedback makes it difficult to iteratively optimize the study tourism products.

5. Optimization strategies of micro-performance empowering the root-ancestor culture study tourism

5.1. Cultural narrative innovation: Deep excavation of cultural connotation and creation of age-specific research scripts

To address the problem of narrative homogenization, the scenic area should break out of the single framework of "migration history." It should expand to areas such as surname culture, genealogy culture, and ritual culture to form a composite narrative model of "surname culture + migration history"^[4]. The scenic area should also create an age-differentiated study script system. For primary school students, it can design fun and story-based scripts. For example, "The Migration Diary of the Little Locust Tree" tells the migration story in an anthropomorphic way. For middle school students, it can design history-inquiry scripts, such as "The Great Challenge of Tracing Surnames." This allows students to explore family origins through task-based challenges. For university students, it can design a cultural research script like "Migration Culture and Regional Integration" to guide them to think about the social and cultural impact of migration history. The scenic spot can also create micro-performance works from the perspective of children, and create themed micro-dramas in accordance with festivals such as "Worshiping Ancestors in Qingming Festival" and "Reunion in Mid-Autumn Festival"^[7]. Through seasonal content updates, the scenic area can achieve dynamic iteration of cultural narratives. In this way, it can meet the cognitive needs of students at different educational levels.

5.2. Performance improvement: Establishing a dual qualification system of "actor + study tourism instructor"

In view of the uneven professionalism of actors and the imbalance of interaction quality, the scenic area should establish a tiered actor training system. It divides actors into core actors and interactive actors and strengthens their performance abilities and improvisation interaction skills respectively^[5]. More importantly, it is necessary to establish a dual qualification system of "actor + research tutor." It provides specialized study of tourism instructor training for core actors, covering knowledge of root-ancestor culture, student cognitive psychology, and interactive teaching techniques. It clarifies the educational responsibilities of actors during performances and naturally integrates cultural knowledge explanation into interactive sessions. The scenic area should also set quality standards for interaction frequency, interaction depth, and emotional expression^[8]. It should set up QR codes for interaction evaluation to make study groups scan the codes and provide feedback. This ensures that interaction moves from the "surface level of entertainment" to the "deep level of education."

5.3. Technology integration: Developing digital interactive modules dedicated to study tourism

The Hongdong Big Locust Tree Scenic Area should take the integration of data and reality as the breakthrough point to comprehensively promote technological upgrading^[9]. In terms of mini-program integration, the scenic area should upgrade its current mini-program that only undertakes the function of

ticket purchase to the “general narrative entrance” for study tourism. It should add sections such as “study preview package,” “online task card,” and “study achievement display.” Before the performance, the program pushes the historical background of the migration and the surname-tracing pre-task. During the performance, it interacts with the live show in real time. After the performance, it generates a personalized root-seeking commemorative album. This achieves a closed study tourism loop that integrates online and offline experiences. In the aspect of scene enhancement, the scenic area should set up AR code-scanning experience zones at core performance scenes such as “The Big Locust Tree Migration” and “The Iron Pot Story.” Digital content such as AR surname tracing and VR migration journey experiences should be developed as expanded teaching segments for study tourism. When students scan the code, the system virtually recreates historical scenes such as the gathering of migrants. This echoes the live performance and stimulates students’ interest in independent exploration.

5.4. Management optimization: Building an evaluation system for the educational effect of study tourism

The scenic area should focus on the refined management of the whole micro-performance process. In terms of the evaluation model, besides conventional indicators such as the number of viewers, length of stay, and visitor satisfaction, the scenic area should add educational evaluation indicators, including “knowledge mastery level,” “cultural identity level,” and “quality of study tourism outcomes.” It should issue exclusive evaluation questionnaires to study groups, establish a monthly review mechanism for individual performance pieces and a special evaluation mechanism for seasonal events, and regularly review and optimize the study tourism products^[10]. In terms of feedback response, the scenic area should set up instant code-scanning feedback channels at each performance venue and shift from passively responding to complaints to actively collecting opinions on the study tourism experience. This forms a closed loop of “evaluation–improvement–re-evaluation.” This will drive the continuous iterative optimization of micro-performance products for study tourism and will ensure the effective achievement of study tourism educational goals.

The above improvement paths can promote the scenic spot to realize the three major changes from “cultural presentation” to “immersive experience,” from “one-way transmission” to “two-way interaction,” and from “festival activities” to “cultural life.” These paths make study tourism students change from passive receivers of culture into active explorers and co-creators of root-ancestor culture. This truly realizes the study tourism goal of “learning by traveling, and understanding by learning.” It promotes the creative transformation of cultural resources and provides transferable development ideas for similar cultural heritage sites to carry out research tourism.

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