

Investigation and Research on the High-quality Development of Night Tourism Scene in Qixingyan Scenic Area of Zhaoqing

Haiming Chen, Rou Wen

School of Tourism and Historical Culture, Zhaoqing University, Zhaoqing 526000, China

ABSTRACT

As a vital extension of urban tourism, Qixingyan Scenic Area's nighttime tourism faces challenges including limited product diversity, insufficient cultural integration, and underdeveloped supporting services. This study systematically analyzes the current state of nighttime tourism in the scenic area. Through questionnaire surveys and tourist interviews, it reveals that visitors are predominantly young people from within the province, with low satisfaction regarding supporting facilities. Based on these findings, the study proposes innovative approaches such as developing diversified product systems, enhancing cultural transformation, optimizing transportation and catering services, and strengthening government coordination. Specific recommendations include leveraging new media marketing to attract out-of-province visitors, fostering talent through school-enterprise collaboration, and establishing dynamic feedback mechanisms. The conclusions provide data-driven support and practical references for the high-quality development of nighttime tourism in Qixingyan Scenic Area and similar attractions.

KEYWORDS

Night Tourism; High-quality Development; Qixingyan Scenic Spot.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the transformation of China's primary social contradiction into the disparity between the people's growing needs for a better life and unbalanced, inadequate development, tourism as a key vehicle for fulfilling these aspirations is undergoing a transition from "daytime economy" to "all-time economy". Nighttime tourism, as an extension and upgrade of urban tourism, has become a crucial driver for revitalizing urban tourism development through its unique temporal dimensions and experiential formats. The Chinese government places high importance on the development of nighttime cultural and tourism economy. In 2019, the State Council issued the "Opinions on Further Stimulating the Potential of Cultural and Tourism Consumption", emphasizing the vigorous development of nighttime cultural and tourism economy[1]. Zhaoqing City, as a national historical and cultural city and a key node in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, boasts world-class tourism resources like Qixingyan and Dinghushan, yet has long struggled with "difficulty in retaining visitors". Although Qixingyan Scenic Area has developed projects such as "Star Lake Night Cruise" and "Yupingyan Night Climbing", it faces challenges including homogeneous product structures, insufficient cultural exploration, and lagging supporting services, making it difficult to meet tourists' demand for diversified, high-quality nighttime experiences. This study analyzes the current status of nighttime tourism development in Qixingyan Scenic Area, explores innovative pathways for high-quality urban nighttime tourism scene development, summarizes relevant recommendations, and proposes specific strategies to address existing issues. The findings aim to

provide effective solutions for enhancing nighttime tourism development in Qixingyan Scenic Area and establish quality safeguards for building Zhaoqing as a premier tourist destination.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Zhao Yijing (2019) defined urban nighttime tourism as a comprehensive range of leisure, sightseeing, and experiential activities conducted between 6:00 PM and 6:00 AM the following day, centered around urban attractions and neighborhoods[2]. Tang Xixi and Yang Zhujin (2023) further specified that nighttime tourism encompasses a variety of activities from sunset to dusk, typically taking place near residences or tourist destinations. These activities are time-sensitive, not confined to specific locations or formats, and may include enjoying the night view, participating in evening walks, or engaging in social interactions[3].

Eldridge A and Smith A (2019) and other scholars have examined the distinctions between nighttime tourism and daytime tourism, emphasizing that nighttime tourism prioritizes leisure, relaxation, and cultural immersion, whereas daytime tourism focuses on sightseeing and natural scenery appreciation[4]. Guo Yulong posits that nighttime tourism is a comprehensive form of travel, building upon daytime visits to scenic areas by developing nighttime tourism platforms to facilitate nighttime activities[5].

Liu Meijun, Su Shuangxi et al. (2024) argue that night tourism serves as the core driver of urban night economies, deeply integrated with sectors like dining, retail, and entertainment[6]. The night economy encompasses not only tourism activities but also local residents' nighttime consumption patterns, including fitness routines, supermarket shopping, and dining at neighborhood restaurants-behaviors that are not inherently tourism-related.

Regarding the Qixingyan Scenic Area, Shao Zilei (2024) pointed out issues such as lagging tourism service facilities, insufficient in-depth resource development, narrow tourist market, and weak brand operation[7]. Despite the challenges, according to the report on the booming nighttime tourism market by China Tourism Academy (2023), the Qixingyan Scenic Area still holds great potential in the field of nighttime tourism due to its rich natural and cultural resources, such as the Star Lake Night Tour and the Zijing West Embankment Cultural and Creative District, and it is worth exploring its high-quality development path in depth[8].

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a combined approach of literature review, field investigation, and case analysis. First, the literature review method is used to systematically examine the current research status of nighttime tourism both domestically and internationally, establishing a theoretical foundation for the study. Second, field investigations are conducted at Qixingyan Scenic Area to collect visitor feedback and operational data on nighttime tourism. Finally, case analysis is applied to draw on successful experiences from global nighttime tourism development, providing references for the high-quality development of nighttime tourism at Qixingyan Scenic Area.

3.1. Data Collection Method

From October 2024 to January 2025, five field surveys were conducted at Qixingyan Scenic Area, with 200 questionnaires distributed (95% valid response rate). In-depth interviews were conducted with 50 tourists representing diverse age groups, origins, and spending patterns, analyzing their behavioral characteristics, consumption habits, specific suggestions, and satisfaction levels.

3.2. Data Analysis Methods

(1) Descriptive Statistical Analysis: The total tourist volume and proportion across different periods were statistically analyzed to demonstrate the growth trend of nighttime visitors (from August-November 2024 to January 2025, the tourist volume increased from 228,000 to 300,000, with the proportion rising from 15.9% to 20.9%) (Table 1). Categorized statistics were conducted on origin regions (90.2% within the province, 9.8% from other provinces), age distribution (65% aged 18-35), and consumption patterns (average expenditure of 50 yuan per person) (Table 2). Satisfaction percentages for facilities were assessed using a five-point scale (Very Satisfied-Satisfied-Neutral-Unsatisfied), with transportation convenience rated at only 40% satisfaction/very satisfaction.

(2) The qualitative analysis was carried out to open coding the content of the interview, and the high-frequency opinions such as "the route is not clear" and "the price of the food and beverage is high" were extracted.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Analysis of Tourist Reception Volume and Origin.

Tourists from Guangxi Province account for 90.2% of visitors, with local residents making up 48.5%. Out-of-province visitors are predominantly from Guangxi and Hunan, representing 9.8% of the total. The age group of 18-35 years old makes up 65% of visitors, spending an average of 100 yuan with a stay duration of just 2.5 hours. The summer student ticket exemption policy attracted 698,000 visitors. This indicates that Qixingyan Scenic Area currently relies mainly on regional tourists, with young visitors being the primary spenders, but its nationwide influence remains limited and spending depth is insufficient.

4.2. Participation Analysis of Night Tour Projects

Starting January 1, 2025, the upgraded Yeping Rock Night Tour 2.0 will introduce a "Night Climbing Mode", allowing visitors to enter the scenic area after 7 PM for an evening ascent of Yeping Rock. This experience offers panoramic views of Duanzhou's illuminated cityscape, complemented by cultural attractions like the Poetry Lantern Show and Pink Flower Wall installations. Survey data reveals that among participants in the Seven Star Rock Night Tour, the "Moonlit Star Lake" boat tour leads with 60% engagement. This integrated experience combining water sightseeing, nighttime views, and cultural commentary effectively caters to diverse preferences. The Poetry Lantern Show and Yeping Rock Night Climbing attract 40% and 35% participation respectively, while the Pink Flower Wall's 25% engagement reflects its relatively limited format. Although the Poetry Lantern Show incorporates cultural elements and draws some visitors, the Pink Flower Wall's lower engagement likely stems from its monotonous presentation and lack of immersive nighttime lighting experiences compared to daytime viewing.

4.3. Satisfaction Analysis of Supporting Facilities

In the survey on Qixingyan Scenic Area's nighttime tourism facilities, safety facilities received the highest satisfaction rating, with 80% of visitors expressing satisfaction or high satisfaction. However, transportation convenience ranked lowest, with only 40% of visitors reporting satisfaction or high satisfaction. Catering services also received relatively low satisfaction, as 50% of visitors deemed them average or unsatisfactory. While Qixingyan Scenic Area excels in safety facilities, it falls short in transportation convenience and catering services, which aligns with the importance of nighttime tourism supporting facilities highlighted in the literature.

4.4. Interview Analysis

Randomly selected interviews revealed that visitors generally appreciated the natural scenery and cultural ambiance of Qixingyan Scenic Area during nighttime tours, though they raised concerns about supporting facilities, service quality, and project design. While the area excelled in nighttime light shows and boat tours, areas needing improvement included ticket pricing, promotional efforts, signage, dining services, and transportation (see Table 1). These improvements will enhance the overall visitor experience, boosting satisfaction and loyalty.

Table 1. Interview results of some tourists in Qixingyan scenic spot at night

No.	Tourist Information	Nocturnal Travel Motivation	Feelings and opinions
1	Male, 32 years old, from Guangzhou	Enjoy the night view and relax	The cruise experience is great, with stunning night views of the lights.
2	Female, 28 years of age, local resident	Leisure and entertainment, meetups with friends	The overall experience was great. The night climb at Yupingyan was quite interesting, though the trail markers weren't very clear.
3	20 years old, local, college student	New and fun	I love taking photos by the pink flower wall during the day—it's a great spot for photography. I also tried night climbing, which was really fun.
4	42 years old, male, from Shenzhen	Experience local culture	The nighttime display of the cliff carvings was impressive, but the dining options near the scenic area were pricey and of average quality.
5	30 years old, married, from Dongguan	Date	Strolling along Star Lake is delightful, though the surrounding high-end accommodations come with a premium price tag.
6	25 years old, female, from Zhuhai	Check out the popular tourist attractions!	The floral wall and poetry lanterns are perfect for taking photos.
7	57 years old, male, local resident	Exercise, leisurely walks	Evening walks are comfortable, but some areas are too dark and unsafe
8	Female, 35 years of age, local resident	Relax and feel nature	I love the natural scenery of Star Lake, but some staff members are not professional enough when I ask questions.
9	Male, 40 years old, from Guangzhou	Traveling with your family	The environment is beautiful, but transportation is not very convenient, and parking is difficult during holidays
10	Female, 27 years old, from Foshan	tour	I came across this travel agency online. Their tour packages are unique, but some of them aren't well promoted.
11	Male, local resident, 29 years of age	Take a walk and have fun with your family.	Night cruises are fun, but the tickets are a bit pricey.

Nighttime travel motivations vary across age groups. Younger travelers (18-30) are primarily driven by "exploring new experiences" (68%) and "social sharing" (52%). Middle-aged travelers (31-50) prioritize "cultural immersion" (75%) and "family bonding" (60%). Older travelers (50+) show stronger preferences for "rejuvenation" (83%) and "physical fitness" (67%), as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Night Tour Motivation of Tourists of Different Ages

Age range	Main motivation
18-30	Experience new things (68%), social sharing (52%), and check-in with influencers (45%)
31-50	Cultural experiences (75%), family leisure (60%), and special activities (48%)
Over 50 years old	Relaxing (83%), exercising (67%), enjoying nature (55%)

Young tourists prioritize interactive activities (48%), while middle-aged travelers emphasize the integration of intangible cultural heritage (39%). Senior visitors show the highest concern for lighting safety (67%). Family tourists (32%) suggest extending popular attractions' operating hours, and infrequent visitors (28%) advocate for price caps on merchant markups. These intergenerational differences in tourist preferences are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Categorized Statistics of Tourist Feedback (N=200 questionnaires + 50 interviews)

Preference	Specific suggestions (high-frequency word extraction)	Proportion	Typical characteristics of a group
Project Experience	Add interactive activities (e.g. AR treasure hunt)	48%	18-30 years old, individual travelers
	Extend the opening hours of popular items (e.g., night crawl)	32%	Family and group tourists
Cultural Awareness	Incorporate more local intangible cultural heritage (ICH), such as the making of Duan inkstone	39%	Highly educated, out-of-province visitors
	Reduce commercial slogans and enhance cultural interpretation	27%	Cultural practitioners, individual visitors
Service Optimization	Increase the frequency of toilet cleaning	45%	Female tourists, families with children
	Enhance the professional knowledge of employees in scenic areas.	28%	Senior tourists
Price Sensitive	Launch nighttime tour packages (e.g., family night cruise packages, student packages)	33%	Family tourists and students
	Limit nighttime price increases for nearby merchants (prices are higher nearby)	28%	Low frequency consumer tourists, students

5. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Product Innovation: Constructing a Multi-level Experience System

Survey data reveals distinct preferences: Younger travelers aged 18-30 prioritize novelty experiences (68%) and social sharing (52%), while middle-aged visitors show strong demand for cultural immersion (75%) but low engagement with activities like pink floral walls (25%). Older travelers (over 50) focus on relaxation (83%) and fitness (67%), with 10% reporting inadequate lighting in certain areas. To address these gaps, a tiered experiential system tailored to different demographics can effectively meet diverse needs.

To cater to young travelers, we should create interactive "technology + social" scenarios and enhance experiential tourism offerings. For instance, establishing a night photography competition zone

allows visitors to fully immerse themselves in the scenic area's charm while capturing breathtaking views. Additionally, introducing nighttime culinary tours that combine Zhaoqing's local specialties with scenic exploration can enrich visitors' nighttime experiences. Another initiative is the "Xinghu AR Treasure Hunt" project, featuring virtual check-in points at Yupingyan and Xinghu Trail, where participants can redeem points for Duan inkstone-themed cultural products.

For middle-aged visitors, we should create immersive "culture + experience" spaces by developing unique night cruise routes. These routes should highlight Qixingyan's distinctive karst landscape and the starry lake's night view, incorporating cultural commentary and light shows to craft distinctive sightseeing experiences.

For senior travelers, optimized "safety + convenience" slow travel routes should be designed, including a "Star Lake Slow Tour Loop" with anti-slip walkways, motion-sensor lighting, and connections between rest areas and viewing platforms.

5.2. Service Optimization: Addressing Shortcomings in Transportation and Catering

The data analysis indicates that tourists' satisfaction with transportation convenience (40%) and catering services (50%) remains low. To address this, the scenic area should prioritize improving transportation accessibility and catering service quality, thereby enhancing the nighttime tourism experience.

First of all, it is necessary to strengthen the professional training of catering staff, improve their service awareness and professional skills, and the restaurant management should arrange staff reasonably and adjust the supply of tourism products to achieve the refined management of scenic spot operation and improve the overall experience of tourists.

Furthermore, optimizing the public transportation network around the scenic area involves increasing nighttime bus frequency and extending operating hours to facilitate visitor mobility. A "Night Traffic Information Screen" will be installed at the main entrance, displaying real-time bus arrival times, shared bike parking locations, and available parking spaces, complemented by an elderly-friendly voice announcement system. The development of shared mobility services such as bike-sharing and ride-hailing platforms will be encouraged to provide visitors with more diverse transportation options. These measures will effectively enhance the overall service quality of Qixingyan Scenic Area's nighttime tourism and boost visitor satisfaction. Collaborative efforts with Zhaoqing's historic cultural districts, museums, and other landmarks will develop an integrated nighttime tour route. Through close cooperation with catering, accommodation, and shopping services, a robust industrial cluster can be formed to strengthen the overall appeal of nighttime tourism.

5.3. Cultural Empowerment: Creating Immersive Experience Scenarios

The data analysis shows that tourists have a high demand for cultural experience (39%) and a high demand for enhanced cultural interpretation (27%). To address this issue, scenic spots should coordinate resources with industrial collaboration, delve deeper into cultural connotations, and optimize tourists' cultural experiences.

Zhaoqing's distinctive Duan inkstone culture and other cultural elements can be integrated into nighttime tourism products and activities. Alternatively, immersive nighttime performances themed around the scenic area's historical and cultural heritage can be designed, vividly presenting the stories behind the cliff carvings and Zhaoqing's folk legends through dynamic performances. By hosting cultural shows, exhibitions, and experiential activities, visitors can gain a deeper appreciation of Zhaoqing's rich historical and cultural heritage during their nighttime tours. This strategy not only enhances the quality of visitor experiences but also promotes cultural preservation and innovation, adding unique charm to the nighttime tourism of Qixingyan Scenic Area.

5.4. Marketing Innovation: Expanding Out-of-province Visitors and Enhancing Scenic Area Recognition.

Data indicates that Qixingyan Scenic Area's nighttime tourism attracts only 9.8% of out-of-province visitors, primarily from neighboring provinces like Guangxi and Hunan, with limited national recognition. Innovative marketing strategies can overcome geographical and demographic barriers to effectively expand the tourist market.

Social media platforms can be leveraged for targeted marketing. For instance, launching the "Seven Star Rock Instagrammable Tour" for young travelers, where influencers' recommendations and shares attract more youth to explore the scenic area. Alternatively, catering to family tourism needs, the "Seven Star Rock Night Study Tour" could feature engaging natural science experiments and cultural craft workshops, drawing families to visit during evenings for educational and recreational activities. This approach broadens the tourist base and boosts visitor numbers. Additionally, immersive experiences like the "Duan Inkstone Carving Workshop" and "Steamed Zongzi DIY" projects can be developed to enhance the appeal.

5.5. Management Upgrade: Establishing a Coordinated Mechanism between Government and Scenic Area

Data indicates that 28% of merchants charge premium prices, while nighttime tourism suffers from issues like dim lighting in some areas and inconvenient transportation. Additionally, 45% of tourists request increased toilet cleaning frequency. Addressing these concerns requires coordinated efforts between the government and scenic spots.

First, the government should take the lead by strengthening planning and management of nighttime tourism, increasing investment in infrastructure-particularly improving nighttime lighting systems and optimizing traffic routes and parking lot layouts. Simultaneously, it must enhance market supervision to regulate business operations and protect tourists' legitimate rights. The government should also introduce preferential policies to incentivize innovation and investment in tourism enterprises, thereby promoting sustainable development of the nighttime tourism industry. Additionally, it should standardize business practices of merchants within scenic areas, crack down on illegal activities like overcharging and selling counterfeit goods, and maintain market order and tourism image.

Secondly, scenic areas should standardize merchants' operating hours and pricing mechanisms (with a maximum markup of 20%) to address issues like merchant markups. They should install suggestion boxes at exits and rest areas, and establish feedback channels on official websites and social media platforms to encourage visitor evaluations. By analyzing feedback and monitoring results, they can optimize products, improve facilities, and adjust marketing strategies, effectively addressing market needs and enhancing nighttime tourism quality and competitiveness. Additionally, scenic areas should focus on recruiting innovative and experienced tourism professionals. Collaborating with universities and training institutions to conduct staff training programs and actively attracting specialized talent are crucial steps toward achieving high-quality development and thriving nighttime tourism.

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