Exploration on the Path of High Quality Development of Night-time Economy—Take Suzhou, China as an Example

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Abstract

The night-time economy has become a new growth point in major cities, among which night tourism and cultural consumption are hot spots. Combining the local cultural foundation, building a centralized display area and consumption agglomeration area for urban cultural IP is an important measure and effective path for major cities to develop the night-time economy. For the sustained, healthy and steady development of the night economy in Suzhou, China, on the one hand, it needs to learn from the experience of other cities, on the other hand, it requires cultural empowerment to build a cultural tourism consumption cluster with unique local characteristics. With a global tourism vision, adhere to the integration of city and region, and develop the "Gusu 8:30" night-time economy brand in all directions.

Keywords

Night-time economy; High quality development; Cultural and tourism consumption; Gusu 8:30

Introduction

The development of the night-time economy plays an important role in activating consumption potential and reviving the urban economy in the post-epidemic era. The high-quality development of the night-time economy will become a new growth point for the city's economy. The "2019-2020 China Night-time Economic Industry Development Trends and Consumer Behavior Research Report" released by iiMedia Research pointed out that the scale of China's night-time consumption currently accounts for about 60% of total retail sales. This number will show explosive growth in the future, and will be expected to exceed 30 trillion yuan in 2020. Zhou Jiyang (2020) pointed out that the night-time economy is one of the modern urban formats and also one of the expressions of local economic vitality. The night-time economy is a part of leisure economy and tourism economy, which is essentially the time and space extension of urban consumption economy. The business of the night-time economy is rich and diverse, including late night shopping, catering, entertainment, cultural tourism, leisure sports, film, television, etc. Developing the night-time economy, releasing and stimulating consumer consumption, and expanding domestic demand can promote the rapid

recovery of the local economy after COVID-19 epidemic. At the same time, it is beneficial to the promotion of the internationalization of the city, the shaping of cultural character and the improvement of the residents' living quality. Urban night-time economic development requires not only cultural empowerment and technological efficiency enhancement, but also the creation of cultural tourism consumption clusters. By creating an agglomeration area with local cultural characteristics, the participation and experience of non-local tourists and local citizens will be enhanced, making it a landmark cultural IP gathering place and a strong magnetic field. As said by Dai Bin (2019), Dean of China Tourism Research Institute, the "night-time economy" not only meets residents' increasing material and cultural consumption needs, but also becomes an important channel for tourists at home and abroad to perceive local culture and experience local lifestyles.

As early as the 1990s, western scholars have paid great attention to the night-time economy. Among them, there are many research results on the development and governance of night-time economy, such as Bianchini (1995), Finney (2004), Hobbs et al. (2005), Measham & Moore (2009), Karen et al. (2009), etc. Comparatively speaking, China's night-time economic development started late, so did its research. Since 2018, more than 360 related articles have been published, including more than 150 academic papers. In 2019, the night-time economy will have become a hot research topic. These papers mainly explore the advantages and disadvantages of night-time economy and the development mode of major cities in China.

Night-time Cultural and Tourism Consumption is an Important Format of Night-time Economy and the Growth Point of Urban Economy

Night-time economy has become a new economic growth point of cities

China Tourism Consumption Big Data Report 2019 shows that night-time tourism consumption has become a new hot spot. The COVID-19 has affected many industries in China, including the cultural and tourism industry. In the late stage of the epidemic, how can the cultural and tourism industry recover quickly? How to achieve high quality development? As early as 2004 and 2006, Qingdao in Shandong Province and Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province were the first to issue policy documents on the development of night-time economy. Hangzhou takes West Lake as the core to develop night-time tourism and leisure, which has achieved remarkable results. Subsequently, Hebei Province proposed to accelerate the development of the city's night-time economy and build characteristic neighborhoods and night market brands. After reviewing the policies and measures issued by municipalities directly under the central government and many cities in the past three years on the development of the night-time economy, it is not difficult to find that major cities such as Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Chongqing, Xi'an, Nanjing, Suzhou, and Wuxi all focus on the night-time economy as their growing point and driving force, and continue to stimulate cultural tourism consumption.

Great potential for night cultural tourism consumption

Night cultural consumption tends to be routinization. Post-80s and post-90s generations, as the main force of night consumption, they often choose to relax at night after finishing 8 hours of work during the day. This way of life brings about night cultural consumption, such as reading, cultural and skill training, and

recreational activities. On June 18, 2020, *Economic Daily* cited a report issued by China Tourism Research Institute and Shanghai Chuangtu Public Culture and Leisure Joint Laboratory. The report shows that in the second half of 2019, China's night-time consumption continued to exert strength. Night cultural consumption on weekends and workdays accounted for 43% and 23% respectively.

The proportion of night-time tourism consumption continues to rise. With the continuous improvement of people's pursuit of spiritual and cultural life and the quality of tourism products, the functional characteristics of tourism consumption such as recreation, enjoyment and experience have been fully reflected (Li, 2018). From the perspective of the tourism product system, to meet the three major functional characteristics of tourism consumption, cultural products including cultural creation, cultural entertainment, and cultural leisure products are the basic products of the night-time tourism economy. Only by paying attention to the cultural connotation of cultural tourism products can we attract tourists, stimulate consumption, and then satisfy tourists' curiosity about foreign culture. 2019 China Night-time Economic Development Report shows that most night tourists spend 1-4 hours in the night, and nearly 80% of tourists spend more than 2 hours. Therefore, constructing cultural tourism consumption clusters with local cultural characteristics is the focus of the development of night-time tourism economy.

Night-time economy is a hot spot, and cultural tourism consumption is the focus. How to promote the in-depth integration of cultural tourism, how to stimulate cultural tourism consumption, and how to improve consumer participation, experience and satisfaction are issues worth exploring.

The Present Situation and Problems of Night-time Economic Development in Suzhou

According to industry data, the night-time economy of major cities in China has achieved good results. In November 2019, at the China Night-time Economic Forum held in Wuhu, Anhui, Suzhou was selected as one of the “Top Ten Night-time Economic Cities”; the historical and cultural district of Shantang Street in Suzhou was selected as one of the “Top Ten Tourists' Favorite Historical, Cultural, Commercial Districts and Internet Red Pedestrian Streets” "; Suzhou Museum was awarded "Tourist's Top Ten Most Favorite Cultural Venues". In April 2020, Suzhou issued the "Suzhou City's Action Plan to Further Stimulate Cultural and Tourism Consumption Potential to Create a National Cultural and Tourism Consumption Demonstration City" and "Implementation Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Suzhou's Night-time Economy", to guide the sustainable, healthy and stable development of Suzhou's night-time economy. Starting from March 2020, Suzhou districts have successively released various measures, under the brand "Gusu 8:30", to further activate night cultural tourism consumption and promote the high-quality development of the night-time economy, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Night-time economic development measures of districts in Suzhou

Districts of Suzhou	Night-time economic development measures
Gusu District	(1) "Gusu 8:30" global investment network cloud promotion event was held; (2) The investment heat map of "Gusu 8:30" was launched, and the spatial development layout of "one pole, one ring, three plates and multiple nodes" was released; (3) The release of 5 core night tour products and 9 in-depth night tour routes of "Gusu, A Wonderful Night Tour"; (4) The "Suzhou Koi" activity continued to develop, and establish a "citywide" consumption guarantee mechanism for unreasonable returns; (5) The activities of "Gusu 8:30, Companion in a Comfortable Night-Midsummer—Night Rubik's Cube", "Light Up Northeast Street" and "Museum Season" activities.
Industrial Park	Plan and promote the economic sub-brand of "Extraordinary Park YE" in the four major gathering areas of Jinji Lake Business District, Yangcheng Lake Peninsula Tourist Resort, Olympic Sports Center, and Dushu Lake Science and Education Innovation Zone.
High-tech Zone	(1) The policy of "Night-time Economic implementation Plan for Prosperity and Development" was introduced, and efforts were made to create two night-time economic business cards, "Lion Mountain" and "Dayang Mountain". Hold Japanese Food Festival, Yunshang Shopping Festival, "Lion Mountain newcomer SHOW" performance and other activities. (2) Create "Gushu 8:30 · Sports Night Market", a special event of the Sports and Culture Center of Suzhou High-tech Zone.
Xiangcheng District	Xiangcheng District released the night-time economic brand of "Xiangcheng night reading", forming such sub brands as Wang Pavilion "Daoxiang Serenade", "It's never too late to meet and enjoy the wonderful night reading", High-tech Zone "scholarly vitality night", High Speed Rail New District "Cool Fashion Night", Yangcheng Lake Resort "Lakeside taste night".
Wuzhong District	Strive to create a "sleepless night, wonderful unlimited" exclusive brand. Closely linked to the three major themes of Taihu Lake Village, canal culture and Jiangnan ancient town, With the central area of the resort as the core, there are many rural cultural tourism, such as Dongshan, Linhu, Jinting, Guangfu, Yuexi Development Zone, Hengjing Street and so on. Focus on building Suzhou Bay, Yinshan Lake, City South three major business circles.
Wujiang District	Issued "Ten Policies and Measures on Promoting the Night-time Economic Development of Wujiang" and "Measures for the Implementation of the Night-time Economic Brand of the Gusu 8:30·Bustling Wujiang Night". Focus on building the characteristic night-time economic brand project of "Gusu 8:30·Bustling Wujiang Night". Create the Wujiang characteristic night-time economic business card of "night market + business circle + culture", and form the night-time economic atmosphere of "weekly night market, sleepless Wujiang city".
Changshu	Issued the "Implementation Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Changshu Night-time Economy" to create the "Yu Song" night-time economy brand. Revitalize the Fangta Business District, promote the dislocation development of Taxiang Commercial District, Yujing Cultural Plaza, Iron Qin and Copper Sword Floor-Guli Zhilv Cultural District, Binjiang Jiangnan Impression District, South Gate Altar District, Qinhu Town, etc. Through brand aggregation, form complementary formats.
Taicang	Taicang Tourism, Culture and Food Festival and Consumption Promotion Season; "Beautiful Night" night-time economic brand launch and the 4th Taicang Rural Tourism Festival.

Kunshan	Kunshan City issued the "Implementation Opinions on Accelerating Kunshan's Night-time Economic Development", focusing on the creation of four major night-time economic clusters of "one district, one point and two lines". To create a night-time economic brand of "Enjoy Kunshan at Night", and launch ten key night-time economic projects such as "Zhouzhuang Night" 3.0 and "Rhythmic Dayu Bay".
Zhangjiagang	City, town, village three-level linkage to create a "colorful night sandbar".

From the night-time economy to the launch of "Gusu 8:30" brand, all districts of Suzhou have formed a development pattern of unity and cooperation. After nearly 3 months of investigations by the research team, we also found some problems, such as insufficient environmental sanitation management during the night business, inconvenient public transportation, insufficient popularity in some tourist towns, and gathering of scalpers.

"Gusu 8:30" Night-time Economic Development Path Exploration

Drawing lessons from the night-time economic development experience of cities at home and abroad

Night-time economic development of major cities in the world is very rapid and orderly, such as New York in the United States, London in the United Kingdom, Melbourne in Australia, Berlin in Germany, Amsterdam in the Netherlands, Seoul in South Korea, and Tokyo in Japan. The night-time economic policies of China's big cities have their own characteristics, and the cultural tourism consumption clusters have distinctive characteristics. For example, Beijing’s first batch of four "Night Beijing City" landmarks built in Qianmen, Dashilanr, Sanlitun, China Beijing World Trade Center, and Wukesong; Shanghai’s "Night Shanghai"; "Tang Dynasty Sleepless City" of Xi’an; "Peak at Midnight" of Shenzhen; "Night Tour of Two Rivers" of Chongqing; Xishuangbanna's "Lancang and Mekong River Night" of Sipsongpanna, etc. Comprehensive development and rich experience can provide Suzhou with reference.

Cultural empowerment to promote the sustained, healthy and stable development of Suzhou's night-time economy

The regional cultures of different regions have shaped the urban landscape and economic formats. The integration of culture and tourism is the functional expansion of "Gusu 8:30" empowering ancient city culture (Li, 2020). The core of culture and spirit is the soul of the city's night-time economy. The integration and development of culture and "night-time economy" is essentially a process of gathering and interacting cultural elements and "night-time economy" elements (Zheng, 2020). Profound history and culture is Suzhou's most beautiful business card. In the form of the night-time economy trending, Suzhou has its own cultural characteristics, and its business formats include but not limited to night shopping, catering, tourism, entertainment, learning, leisure, etc. "Gusu 8:30" is a night-time economy brand with profound Jiangnan culture, and it is also a must for Chinese and foreign tourists to experience life in Suzhou.

Persist in the integration of city and region and develop the "Gusu 8:30" night economy brand in all directions

As a new concept and model that promotes the coordinated development of economy and society, the core connotation of global tourism refers to the rational and efficient allocation of production factors at the spatial and industrial levels in areas rich in tourism resources, guided by the tourism industry. Moreover, the tourism industry is used to coordinate the development of the regional economy and continue to enhance the innovative model of regional competitiveness (Peng, 2016). As the first batch of cities in the national global tourism demonstration zone, Suzhou has realized the innovation of the strategy in the city management and service model based on the global tourism development plan, and focused on the development of tourism internationalization.

Since the launch of the "Gusu 8:30" night-time economy brand, Suzhou counties and districts have combined their own tourism resources and industrial advantages to launch a series of sub-brands. With a global tourism perspective, adhere to the deep integration of cultural and tourism, as well as the transformation and upgrading of the traditional tourism industry. They have realized a comprehensive transformation from the behavior of individual departments to the overall planning of the government, from the ticket economy to the industrial economy, from the internal tourism cycle to the global cycle, and from the enterprise alone to the social construction and sharing. All districts are actively planning night-time economic sub-brand activities in various counties and districts under the work situation of "unity and linkage" to stimulate cultural tourism consumption with policies that benefit the people.

Construct night cultural tourism consumption cluster area with unique local characteristics

Constructing unique cultural tourism consumption clusters, on the one hand, can focus on displaying local cultural characteristics and tourism products, on the other hand, it is one of the important measures of developing the night-time economy to gather the economic forms and meet the diversified demands of consumers. The night cultural tourism consumption block refers to the leisure commercial street as the space carrier, the characteristic regional culture as the core attraction, and it is oriented to meet the diverse consumption needs of tourists and local residents at night. It gathers various consumer formats such as night landscape lighting, shopping, catering, entertainment, cultural and creative, film and television, and performing arts. The night cultural tourism consumption block is an integrated development model of cultural, business and tourism based on the gathering of people and the agglomeration of various consumption forms. There are mainly five modes for building night cultural tourism consumption clusters: (1) The scenic night tour mode represented by Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden in Kaifeng City; (2) The night cultural tourism consumption block mode represented by Xi'an Tang Dynasty Sleepless City Pedestrian Street; (3) The development model of night traffic "cultural tourism" represented by the luminous bicycle lane in Noord-Brabant, Netherlands; (4) The development model of night cultural tourism landscape belt represented by the Chengdu Night Tour of Jin Rive; (5) The development mode of night cultural tourism complex is represented by Hangzhou West Lake, Suzhou Jinji Lake and Tangshan South Lake. Comprehensive agglomeration areas are usually coordinated and developed by local governments. A wide audience and comfortable consumption

atmosphere are the main development trends of the future night economic clusters (Ge, 2019).

Suzhou, rich cultural heritage, unique style of the ancient city, historical and cultural block protection in place. Industrial Park and High-tech Zone have developed new industries. "Ancient Suzhou" and "Modern Suzhou" have their own characteristics and complement each other. The construction of Suzhou night-time cultural and travel consumption gathering area mainly takes Pingjiang and Shantang historic blocks and business circles as carriers, which are rich in cultural resources, perfect in business forms, and takes cultural tourism and entertainment consumption as the main business form. First of all, we should pay attention to the excavation and injection of local cultural elements. By launching exquisite cultural and tourism products, bringing together cultural and entertainment projects with local characteristics in Suzhou to showcase its unique charm. (1) Taking Pingjiang Road, Shantang Street and Xietang Old Street as representatives, featuring night scenery and food, bringing together cultural experience, Suzhou cuisine, non-heritage experience, cultural leisure and shopping, to create the Suzhou culture and tourism consumption gathering area for foreign tourists. (2) Taking Guanqian Street, Stone Lake traditional business circles and Suzhou Center and Longhu Sky Street modern business circles as representatives, featuring Suzhou night streetscape and food, bringing together time-honored brands, entertainment consumption and shopping, to create a Suzhou cultural and tourist consumption gathering area favored by foreign tourists and local citizens. (3) Taking Zhouzhuang and Tongli towns as representatives and Jiangnan Water Towns and characteristic towns as the theme, to create an open and experiential Suzhou characteristic culture and tourism consumption gathering area with cultural leisure, non-heritage experience and traditional folk culture in one. (4) Taking the cultural and Sports Center, public cultural center as the representative, and taking the humanistic stories and urban spirit display of Suzhou as the content, it integrates cultural leisure, sports leisure and sports fitness into one, so as to create Suzhou characteristic sports consumption gathering area. (5) Taking Panmen, Canglang Pavilion and other garden scenic spots as representatives, and taking Jiangnan classical garden culture as the main body, to create a Suzhou characteristic culture gathering area integrating traditional Chinese opera performance and cultural leisure consumption. (6) Taking Li embankment and Stone Lake as representatives, taking the water culture and food as the theme, to create an open and experiential Suzhou cultural and entertainment consumption gathering area integrating delicious food and specialty products. Second, attach importance to cross-border cooperation and resource integration, and promote the integration of Suzhou's regional culture and night-time economy to develop diversified business formats. Third, continue to enhance the cultural space creativity of historic districts. Through creative sculptures, art windows, creative LOGO and artistic landscape sketches, the Suzhou style creative aesthetics is reflected. Stimulate cultural vitality by organizing various folk activities, carrying out non-genetic inheritance project experiences, creating quality homestays to improve satisfaction of travelers, and retain high-level individual travelers . Fourth, actively explore the management socialization of the integration and development of culture and "night-time economy". Learn from the management system of night mayors, implement the community governance responsibilities of night-time economic development. We should guide social forces to participate in night management reasonably and legally, and build a new social community of night-time economic city governance. Fifth, build a comfortable environment for cultural tourism consumption. As soon as "Gusu 8:30" was launched, a "comfortable" consumer environment guarantee was put forward. In July, offline shopping for unreasonable returns was upgraded to version 2.0—in the tourism industry offline shopping for 30 days without reason to return. This measure not only protects the rights and interests of consumers, but also demonstrates Suzhou's determination.

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