

# EXPLORATION OF DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES FOR DONG GRAND SONG CULTURAL TOURISM SOUVENIRS

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## ABSTRACT

The Dong ethnic group is one of the minority nationalities in China, and the Dong Grand Song is a unique cultural treasure of the Dong people. It is a form of folk chorus in the Dong ethnic minority settlements, characterized by polyphony, unaccompanied, unaccompanied, natural harmony, and high public participation. It is a general term for the folk singing of songs and folk songs by song teams. (Dong Grand Song) has a history of 2500 years and is mainly popular in the Dong villages along the river in Meilin, Yangxi Township, and Fulu Township, Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County, Guangxi. It has been included in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage lists. UNESCO has included it in the "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." The "Er Yue Er" Dong Grand Song Festival in Meilin Township is a grand traditional folk festival. Over the years, the Dong Grand Song has frequently stepped onto the international stage and has become one of the carriers for China to showcase its image to the outside world. Therefore, strengthening the study of the cultural connotations of the Dong Grand Song, broadening its presentation channels, and designing its tourism souvenirs is of great significance, which can promote the inheritance and development of the Dong Grand Song culture in Sanjiang, Guangxi.

**Keywords:** Intangible Cultural Heritage, Dong Grand Song, Tourism Souvenirs, Development Strategies

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's world, where globalization is accelerating, the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) are facing tremendous challenges. Dong Grand Song, as a precious form of ICH in China, possesses unique artistic charm and profound cultural connotations. It embodies the wisdom and emotions of the Dong people and requires the exploration of new methods of inheritance. Meanwhile, the rapid development of the tourism industry has provided new opportunities for cultural dissemination. Tourism souvenirs, as part of the tourist experience, have become an important medium for showcasing and spreading culture. Integrating the culture of Dong Grand Song into the design of tourism souvenirs can not only promote the inheritance and development of this culture but also enrich tourism products and boost the local tourism economy.

The goal of this research is to explore the cultural connotations and social functions of Dong Grand Song. By investigating strategies for the development of Dong Grand Song cultural tourism souvenirs, this study seeks new pathways for inheritance and innovation, enhancing its influence and dissemination in modern society. This exploration can also inject cultural elements into the local tourism industry, improve the competitiveness of tourism products, and promote the deep integration of culture and tourism. It can drive the sustainable development of the regional economy and provide references for the tourism development of other ICH projects, contributing to the inheritance and development of traditional culture in modern society.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

**Research on the Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Tourism Souvenirs**

Sun et al. (2024) pointed out that while promoting the innovative development of ICH, the extraction and exploration of cultural symbols, as well as the creation and utilization of IPs, can effectively help protect and inherit ICH. Su et al. (2024) explored the use of virtual reality technology, user interaction, and digital display to present the history, craftsmanship, and cultural connotations of ICH in an all-round way. This further explores the modern survival methods of ICH, attracts more people to participate in the inheritance and protection of ICH, and enhances the public's sense of identification with ethnic culture. Zhang et al. (2024) designed and developed cultural and creative products based on the cultural elements of Changli Ground Opera, focusing not only on the practical functions of the products but also on the expression of their cultural connotations. Liu et al. (2022) investigated the impact of symmetrical design of ICH souvenirs on tourists' aesthetic pleasure, as well as the moderating role of authenticity perception. They found that symmetrical design significantly enhanced tourists' aesthetic pleasure.

### Research on Tourism Souvenirs in Cultural Heritage

Liping Qiu et al. (2024) pointed out that souvenirs can promote the dissemination and popularization of culture, and culture endows souvenirs with unique qualities and cultural connotations. In the increasingly competitive academic environment, a deep understanding of the relationship between souvenirs and local culture is crucial for both the theoretical and practical research on the development of souvenirs and local culture. It also plays an important role in promoting local culture, economic development, cultural protection, and consumer participation, providing new insights for sustainable development. Sun et al. (2020) designed an innovative model for cultural and creative products based on tourist experience, with the core focus on involving users in the design process, making cultural and creative products more capable of meeting user needs.

### Research on the Inheritance and Protection of Dong Grand Song

Pointed out that tourism development has both advantages and disadvantages for the development of Sanjiang Dong songs, which can be described as a double-edged sword.

Therefore, in the process of protective tourism development, it is essential to adhere to the principles of sustainable and scientific development. As long as these principles are consistently upheld, the tourism industry may have a positive impact on not only Sanjiang Dong Grand Song but also the entire intangible cultural heritage of Sanjiang. (Tan, 2016) Explored the potential and limitations of immersive media in its intersection with music heritage passed down as an oral tradition. Through virtual reality technology, they placed the audience in a CGI-modeled Dong village to experience the Dong musical tradition. This immersive experience not only recreates the auditory effects of Dong music but also enhances the audience's participation through visual and spatial design. (Guo & Zhang, 2024)

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Field Research Method

Conduct in-depth field investigations in Dong villages in Jiang County, Guangxi, and other areas, visiting the heritage sites of the Dong Grand Song. Through on-site visits and inspections, collect video and image materials related to the Dong Grand Song, interview local performers, deepen the understanding of Dong culture, and extract elements that represent the Dong Grand Song. Observe the performance settings of the Dong Grand Song, its modes of transmission, and its close connection with the daily lives of local residents. Record relevant images and video materials to provide intuitive research materials.

Survey the local tourism souvenir market, including tourism souvenirs sold at tourist attractions, specialty stores, guesthouses, and other venues. Collect data on product types, prices, and sales volumes of souvenirs involving Dong Grand Song cultural elements. Engage in discussions with merchants and tourists to understand their views and needs regarding Dong Grand Song-themed tourism souvenirs, and gather first-hand market information.

### Interview Method

Identify and conduct in-depth interviews with national-level inheritors of the Dong Grand Song intangible cultural heritage, such as Wu Guangzu, Qin Naihao, and Wu Chunyue, who are inheritors of the Dong Grand Song in Sanjiang, Guangxi. Gain insights into the origins, development, cultural value, artistic characteristics, and challenges faced in the transmission of the Dong Grand Song. Explore their perspectives and suggestions on integrating Dong Grand Song culture into the development of tourism souvenirs, and obtain professional opinions on the exploration of cultural connotations and the application of traditional craftsmanship.

Conduct interviews with local tourism authorities, operators of Dong handicraft stores, tourism souvenir designers, tourism business executives, and consumers who are fond of Dong tourism souvenirs. Understand the local tourism industry development plans, strategies for tourism souvenir development, and the utilization of Dong Grand Song cultural resources. Grasp the opportunities and challenges for the development of Dong Grand Song-themed tourism souvenirs from an industrial perspective, and provide policy and market-based evidence for formulating development strategies.

### Case Study Method

Collect successful domestic and international cases of tourism souvenir development based on musical intangible cultural heritage. Conduct detailed analyses of their development backgrounds, design concepts, production techniques, marketing strategies, and achieved outcomes. Compare these cases with the characteristics of Dong Grand Song culture to summarize experiences and models that can be learned from. Provide a reference template for proposing targeted development strategies in this study, avoid blind exploration, and enhance the scientific and practical nature of the research.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Cultural Connotations of the Dong Grand Song

The Dong ethnic group in Guangxi is one of the minority nationalities in China. Dong Grand Song is a unique cultural treasure of the Dong people and serves as the “cultural gene bank” of Dong society. It carries a rich connotation of ethnic history, production experience, ethical concepts, and aesthetic tastes, forming an important part of the Dong cultural system.

**Table 1** Summary of the Cultural Connotations of Dong Grand Song

Dimensions	Cultural Connotation	Specific manifestations
Harmonious coexistence between man and nature	It embodies the ecological concept of "harmony between man and nature", reproduces the rhythm of nature through sound imitation techniques, and expresses the awe and symbiotic concept of nature.	1) The song imitates the natural sounds of birds and streams 2) The ancient song "Ancestors Settled in the Village" describes the ideal living environment 3) The lyrics are related to nature worship
Harmonious coexistence between people and society	It conveys the spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance in the form of polyphonic chorus, strengthens the function of social ties, and undertakes the functions of education and rituals.	1) Songs of persuasion (such as "Mother's Song") convey ethics and morality 2) Singing in the road in the "Wei Ye" custom 3) The system of singing masters and the inheritance model of oral transmission
The people's hardworking and simple moral character	It carries the value of "labor is glorious", records production wisdom, and shapes hardworking and tenacious character and moral concepts.	1) Labor ballads (such as "December Labor Song") 2) Fusion of labor and music (such as "Belling Song") 3) Interweaving of labor and love (such as "Squirrel Song")
National cultural identity and cohesion	As a "living history book" of a nation without written language, it inherits history, ethics and collective memory through singing, and strengthens national identity.	1) The proverb "Han people pass on books, Dong people pass on songs" 2) The Kuan organization passes on the agreement through songs (such as the Kuan rule recitation ceremony) 3) Singing activities involving the whole nation (wedding, sacrifice, etc.)

### Social Functions of the Dong Grand Song

In the long process of cultural inheritance, Dong Grand Song not only reflects the Dong people's modes of production and living, social structure, religious beliefs, and aesthetic pursuits, but also plays an important role in facilitating inter-ethnic communication and strengthening ethnic spirit and a sense of identity. More importantly, Dong Grand Song is not confined to the artistic level; instead, it is deeply rooted in every aspect of Dong society and demonstrates a wide range of social functions in its continuous performance and transmission, including group entertainment, behavioral norms, cultural dissemination, production promotion, and ethnic education. It can be regarded as an “encyclopedic musical literature of Dong culture” and profoundly reflects the cultural spirit and identity of the Dong people. (Yang, 2025)

**Table 2** Social Functions of Dong Grand Song

No.	Function	Content
1	Cultural Heritage	The Dong Grand Song, as an important intangible cultural heritage of the Dong people, is passed down through generations in a "living" manner of inheritance. It relies not only on the intergenerational transmission by song groups and the main bearers of the tradition to continue, but also naturally disseminates cultural content such as the Dong language, history, views on love, and religious rituals during the performance process. Due to the lack of a written language among the Dong people, the Dong Grand Song has become the main vehicle for the transmission and dissemination of Dong culture, playing a crucial role in group performances.
2	Emotional Expression	The Dong Grand Song is a channel for the Dong people to express their emotions and has a strong emotional resonance. It is an important medium in Dong social interactions and festive ceremonies, not only serving the function of communicating thoughts, conveying emotions such as joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness, as well as reflecting life conditions and psychological experiences, but also deeply integrating into social etiquette and cultural traditions, becoming an important part of Dong culture.
3	Religious beliefs	The Dong "Jisa" ceremony, as a religious ritual of ancestor worship among Dong people, not only reflects Dong people's values of respecting ancestors, honoring heroes, and valuing women, but also combines contemporary concerns with religious beliefs through the performance of the Dong Grand Song. Jisa ceremony serves not only as a religious belief function, influencing the thoughts and behaviors of the Dong people, but also enhances ethnic cohesion, promotes social harmony, and plays a significant role in cultural heritage. Especially in the context of a non-literate culture, it ensures enduring continuity of Dong culture.
4	Aesthetic education function	The Dong Grand Song is not only a form of folk music art, but also a unique carrier of cultural education. It substitutes songs for written texts, carrying and passing down the history, ethics, life experiences, and philosophical concepts of the Dong people, thus becoming the "textbook" of Dong social life. Through the appreciation, acceptance, and dissemination of the Dong Grand Song, people are subtly influenced by aesthetic education, achieve emotional resonance, and complete inheritance of ideological understanding and moral concepts.
5	National identity	In the Dong areas, there is a proverb, "Food sustains life, and songs nourish the soul." For the Dong people, singing is not only an art form for expressing emotions on a spiritual level but also a microcosm and reenactment of Dong history, culture, and ethnic character, forming a collective memory passed down from generation to generation.
6	Economic Development	With the rise of cultural tourism, the Dong Grand Song has also become an important cultural resource for attracting tourists, having a positive impact on promoting local economic development and enhancing the visibility of the Dong areas.

### Case Analysis of Music-related Tourism Souvenirs

By conducting a survey and analysis of the existing music-related cultural and creative products in the market, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the current market for music-related tourism souvenirs. This understanding will provide positive guidance and reference for the design of Dong Grand Song music tourism souvenirs.

**Table 3** Case analysis of music tourist souvenirs

Product Name	Brand	Product Analysis	Product Image
Chaoshan Music Postcard Series Design	Chaoshan Music	The postcard is made of paper and is not easily oxidized. The design combines the saying that there are twelve-color flowers in Chaoshan area to ward off evil spirits, and uses flowers as decorations and combines them with musical instruments.	
Han Palace Music Box	National Museum of China	The materials used in this product are: wooden density board, spring-type movement. Han Dynasty folk songs use popular language to construct works close to life, adopt narrative writing, portray characters in detail, analyze ideological connotations in depth, and cover rich and colorful content.	
Musical Instrument Fridge Magnets	Dunhuang Museum	The creation of Dunhuang art has gone through thousands of years, leaving behind countless patterns and paintings, which are the masterpieces of countless ancient craftsmen. This work combines with current fashion, using modern design techniques to recreate traditional patterns to form a new pattern that has both traditional flavor and modern temperament.	
Shanghai Music Valley Scarf	Escape in the Clouds	The product is designed with century-old buildings as the main body and musical symbols interspersed with each other, reflecting the long history of Shanghai Music Valley.	

**Comprehensive Analysis:** The research on the design of tourism souvenirs for Dong Grand Song needs to combine local culture with modern design, exploring contemporary expressions of Dong Grand Song culture. The development strategies for Dong Grand Song tourism souvenirs can be explored from aspects such as the selection of product materials, extraction of cultural elements, design styles, narrative content, and environmental protection and sustainability.

### *Development Strategies for Dong Grand Song Cultural Tourism Souvenirs from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance*

#### 1) Delve into the cultural connotations to create unique products

Organize a team of cultural experts, inheritors, and designers to conduct an in-depth interpretation of the cultural connotations of Dong Grand Song, including its historical stories, lyrical meanings, and performance contexts. Extract design elements and transform them into

perceptible visual design elements. For example, integrate elements such as the themes depicted in Dong Grand Song, historical stories, performance venues, natural scenery, folk customs, ethnic costumes, musical instruments, and character performance poses into the pattern design of tourism souvenirs. This will enhance the cultural depth and artistic appeal of the products.

Develop tourism souvenirs themed around the experience of performing Dong Grand Song. For instance, create small models of Dong Grand Song performance scenes, produce teaching videos of Dong Grand Song accompanied by simple musical instruments, etc. This allows tourists to personally experience the charm of Dong Grand Song, increasing the interactivity and fun of the products and enhancing tourists' willingness to purchase.

*2) Innovate design concepts and production techniques to enhance product quality*

Integrate modern design concepts with traditional craftsmanship. Encourage designers to adopt a minimalist and fashionable style, combined with traditional Dong handicrafts such as Dong brocade weaving and embroidery, to develop tourism souvenirs that are both ethnically distinctive and meet modern aesthetic demands. Utilize modern technological means, such as the application of AR/VR technology in cultural translation, digital media technology, and 3D printing technology, to innovate the experience and production processes of tourism souvenirs. This will improve product precision and quality. Additionally, develop digital tourism souvenirs, such as mobile applications themed around Dong Grand Song and virtual reality experience products, to meet tourists' demands for digital tourism products. For example, through digital dynamic illustrations, users can scan a code to enjoy the performance scenes of Dong Grand Song, learn about its cultural connotations, and participate in interactive games related to Dong Grand Song, thereby enhancing tourists' understanding and experience of Dong Grand Song culture.

*3) Strengthen integration with the local tourism industry to expand market channels*

Collaborate with local tourist attractions to incorporate Dong Grand Song cultural tourism souvenirs into the tourism product system of the scenic areas. Establish dedicated display and sales areas within the attractions and promote the souvenirs in conjunction with cultural activities and travel routes. For example, in the Sanjiang Dong Village Scenic Area in Guangxi, special counters for Dong Grand Song cultural tourism souvenirs can be set up in the visitor center and cultural display areas. Additionally, related souvenirs can be sold at venues such as the drum towers and stages where Dong Grand Song performances take place. This allows tourists to conveniently purchase souvenirs after enjoying the performances, enhancing the sales atmosphere and the convenience for tourists.

Work with local tourism hotels and homestays to develop customized tourism souvenirs, which can be provided as room gifts or specialty items for guests. Utilize the online booking platforms of hotels and homestays for promotional purposes to increase product visibility and sales channels. For example, a Dong Grand Song-themed music box can be developed. When guests stay at the hotel, they can hear the songs of Dong Grand Song. The hotel can also promote this souvenir on its official website and social media platforms to attract more tourists' attention and purchases.

**Expected Results and Challenges of Implementation of Development Strategy**

*1) Anticipated Effect Evaluation*

The anticipated effects of implementing the above development strategies will be evaluated from aspects such as cultural heritage, tourism economy, and social benefits. In terms of cultural heritage, it is expected that the development of tourism souvenirs will lead to a greater number of tourists gaining an understanding of Dong Grand Song culture, thereby enhancing its visibility and influence and promoting the inheritance of this cultural tradition. Regarding the tourism economy, an increase in the sales revenue of tourism souvenirs is anticipated, which will drive the development of the local tourism industry, create more job opportunities, and

raise the income level of local residents. From the perspective of social benefits, it is expected that tourists' travel experiences will be enriched, their awareness and respect for ethnic minority cultures will be strengthened, cultural diversity will be better protected, and contributions will be made to the harmonious and stable development of the local society.

## 2) Analysis of Challenges Faced

During the implementation of the development strategies, several challenges may be encountered, such as insufficient funding, fierce market competition, and the balance between cultural protection and commercial development. Insufficient funding may restrict the design and development, production, and market promotion of tourism souvenirs. Fierce market competition could lead to severe product homogenization, which may negatively impact sales performance. The balance between cultural protection and commercial development requires a focus on preserving and inheriting cultural connotations during the development process to prevent the loss of cultural essence due to over-commercialization.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

### Summary of Major Research Findings

This study takes Dong Grand Song as the research object and systematically constructs a theoretical framework for the development of cultural tourism souvenirs from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) inheritance. It fills the gap in existing research on the exploration of tourism transformation pathways for orally transmitted ICH cultural resources. By integrating cultural semiotics, industrial integration theory, and design studies, this research proposes an analytical model that includes the exploration of cultural connotations, analysis of social functions, and analysis of product development strategies. This approach breaks through the limitations of traditional ICH research, which often focuses solely on cultural protection or commercial development.

Combining field research, in-depth interviews, and case analysis, the study translates the multidimensional cultural characteristics of Dong Grand Song into actionable design elements for tourism souvenirs. This provides a methodological innovation for the inheritance of ICH and the utilization of cultural resources.

In the design strategy, the application of AR/VR technology in the cultural translation of Dong Grand Song is explored, providing new ideas for the bidirectional dissemination of ICH in virtual and real spaces. This also offers theoretical references for the protection and development of similar orally transmitted ICH projects.

In the development strategy, it is proposed that by refining core elements of Dong Grand Song, such as the imagery of its lyrics, natural sound imitation skills, and social functions, souvenirs that combine cultural depth with interactivity can be designed. This effectively addresses the dilemma of the "static display" of ICH, enhancing tourists' understanding and emotional resonance with Dong culture. Meanwhile, a "culture-tourism integration" model is proposed to promote the deep integration of Dong Grand Song souvenirs with scenic spots, hotels, and digital platforms. For example, developing AR postcards (scan to experience live performances in Dong villages) or customized music boxes (embedded with classic Dong Grand Song tracks) not only enriches the tourism product system but also increases product value through scenario-based marketing. These strategies aim to promote the inheritance and development of Dong Grand Song culture while boosting the local tourism economy. Research findings indicate that these strategies are highly feasible and of practical value. They can provide beneficial references for the development of Dong Grand Song cultural tourism souvenirs and offer new ideas and methods for the tourism development of other intangible cultural heritages.

### Research Limitations and Future Prospects

The scope of this study is relatively limited, focusing primarily on some Dong-inhabited areas in Sanjiang, Guangxi, and not covering all Dong regions. In terms of research methods,

although field surveys and interviews were employed, the depth and breadth of data collection and analysis still need to be further improved. Additionally, the acceptance of the products in cross-cultural markets has not been verified.

Future research could expand the scope to include more Dong regions and other types of orally transmitted ICH. It could also delve into the commonalities and specificities of ICH tourism souvenir development. Meanwhile, employing a wider range of research methods and data analysis techniques could enhance the scientific rigor and accuracy of the research. This would provide stronger theoretical support and practical guidance for the protection and inheritance of ICH and the development of the tourism industry.

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