

# *The Strategy for Cultivating Chinese "Panda and Bamboo" Gastronomic IP*

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**Abstract:** In recent years, culinary tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors of global tourism. Gastronomy enriches a destination's cultural significance and serves as a novel pathway for promoting tourism by showcasing its unique culinary heritage and expressing the destination's brand personality. Chengdu, having been officially recognized by UNESCO's "Creative Cities Network" and bestowed with the title of "International Capital of Gastronomy," stands as the first city in Asia to achieve such honors. The gastronomic intellectual property centered around Chengdu's Panda culture plays a pivotal role in the development of Chengdu's culinary tourism. Hence, this paper elucidates the strategy of crafting the "Panda Bamboo" Gastronomic Intellectual Property from four perspectives: identifying novel growth opportunities for Sichuan cuisine, curating thematic gastronomic neighborhoods, disseminating culinary culture, and innovating marketing approaches, all of which aim to bolster the advancement of Chengdu's culinary tourism.

## **1. Introduction**

Culinary Tourism, also known as Food Tourism, has emerged as one of the most rapidly growing sectors in global tourism in recent years. Its advantages lie in the ability to establish local brands, enhance the appeal of tourist destinations, drive the development of multiple industries, create employment opportunities, and even offer entrepreneurial prospects without requiring massive infrastructure investments [1]. Domestic and international studies indicate that food consumption by tourists at a destination typically accounts for one-third of their total expenditures. Gastronomy has become a crucial resource for attracting tourists to destinations and a significant driver of tourism development. For tourist destinations, food is an essential component of tourism resources and an effective tool for fostering local tourism growth. Moreover, these renowned gastronomic delights with distinctive flavors can independently become alluring highlights that attract tourists to visit. Consequently, these culinary treasures can be promoted as tourism products to propel the development of a region's tourism [2]. Similar activities, such as food festivals, culinary workshops, and combining food experiences with cultural performances, can also entice visitors to partake in the festivities. From the perspective of the tourist experience, cuisine can serve as both a pinnacle and supporting element of the overall travel experience. Research indicates that women are more interested in culinary tourism than men [3]. Gastronomy endows destinations with cultural

significance and serves as a novel pathway for expressing a destination's brand personality and promoting tourism [4]. Therefore, in shaping the brand personality of tourist attractions, the creation and promotion of distinctive gastronomic brands are of paramount importance [5].

## 2. Case Introduction

### 2.1 International capital of gastronomy

In February 2010, UNESCO announced Chengdu's successful inclusion in the "Creative Cities Network," making it the first city in Asia to receive such distinction, along with being bestowed the title of "International Capital of Gastronomy" [6]. Subsequently, Chengdu's regional culinary culture attracted widespread attention from the international community [7], acknowledging its prosperity, development, and diverse culinary features. With the rapid advancement of mobile internet technology, the promotion of the "Gastronomic Capital" should harness multiple channels, including new media, all-media platforms, and other effective means, to further establish and disseminate Chengdu's gastronomic cultural tourism image.

Moreover, Chengdu is renowned both domestically and internationally as a well-known tourist city, having earned city honors such as "Top 10 Rapidly Growing Global Tourist Destinations," "World's Most Worthy Tourist City," "Best Tourist City in China," and "World's Excellent Tourist Destination Hub" [4]. Furthermore, Chengdu will host the 31st World University Summer Games, which will facilitate the organic integration of the catering industry with major festivals, create multi-dimensional gastronomic consumption scenes, enhance the overall urban consumption environment, and provide new opportunities for strengthening the city's consumer brand.

### 2.2 Panda hometown

The influence of Panda culture extends globally, and Chengdu's Panda culture is an unparalleled and irreplicable resource for other cities. Chengdu's Panda resources play a crucial role as a significant tourist attraction and core component in the development of cultural tourism. Utilizing Panda culture as the core to construct the "Panda Bamboo" Gastronomic Intellectual Property holds crucial significance for promoting the advancement of Chengdu's culinary tourism. Intellectual Property (IP) refers to the exclusive rights of intellectual labor achievements created in social practice, including copyright, patent rights, trademark rights, etc. In China, the concept of intellectual property has been extended to encompass various unique creations, be it a story, an image, a commercial entrance, an iconic industry, or a distinctive cultural form [8]. Thus, not only in fields like film, literature, and gaming, but culinary tourism also requires the creation of its own intellectual property.

The Panda, with its cultural attributes of ecology, harmony, inclusiveness, peace, friendliness, and resilience, has become a cultural symbol and emblem of unique Panda culture. Sichuan is the birthplace of pandas, and Chengdu, as the capital city of Sichuan, shares a close association with pandas. Panda culture is one of Chengdu's renowned cultural treasures and holds extensive global influence [8]. As pandas primarily inhabit Chengdu and its surrounding areas, they have become a vital symbol of Chengdu, infusing the city with distinctive cultural allure.

Although the integration of the Giant Panda with traditional culture, regional culture, photography, animation, music, gastronomy, and other elements has been attempted, there are still challenges regarding depth and brand prominence. Therefore, exploring and constructing the Panda Intellectual Property at a deeper level is necessary, enabling more effective dissemination and communication to maximize its benefits.

## 2.3 Bamboo growth

Chengdu possesses a favorable geographic and climatic environment for bamboo growth, which provides advantageous conditions for the development of the bamboo industry. Firstly, Chengdu boasts world-renowned Giant Panda ecological resources, integrating pandas with bamboo in a way that other regions lack. Secondly, Chengdu features a unique landscape of Western Sichuan Linpan, situated amidst bamboo groves, blending agriculture, livelihood, and ecology, presenting an unparalleled rural scenery in Chengdu. Thirdly, Chengdu possesses a distinctive cultural advantage, as it has a long history of producing poems and stories that praise bamboo, including the legendary tale of Xue Tao planting, making paper, and composing poetry at the Wangjiang Pavilion, adding a rich historical heritage to Chengdu's bamboo culture [9].

Based on the natural connection between pandas and bamboo, as well as the profound association between Chengdu and pandas and bamboo, it is feasible to craft the distinctive culinary Intellectual Property - "Panda Bamboo," merging various cuisines with panda and bamboo elements to further promote and disseminate Panda and bamboo cultures. Employing diverse strategies, whether through "Panda Bamboo" gastronomic products, innovating Sichuan cuisine, developing related tea beverages, or creating distinctive culinary neighborhoods, all contribute to the successful cultivation of this intellectual property.

## 3. "Panda Bamboo" Gastronomic Intellectual Property (IP) Development Strategy

### 3.1 Exploring New Growth Points for Sichuan Cuisine

Sichuan cuisine tourism, as an integral part of traditional culinary tourism, stands as a shining gem in China's cultural tourism industry. However, in recent years, with the flourishing development of the tourism sector, Sichuan cuisine tourism has encountered a series of challenges, with one of the most prominent being the aggravation of homogenization. Homogenization not only hinders the prominent showcasing of distinctive Sichuan cuisine tourism resources but also severely restrains the sustainable development of gastronomic tourism economy [10].

Chengdu, as a representative city of culinary tourism, has achieved rapid growth in its culinary tourism economy. However, the experience of culinary tourism remains relatively monotonous, limited to merely food tasting and specialty shopping, lacking interactivity and experiential elements. Increasingly, more tourists express a strong demand for interactive experiences and seek enriched tourism experiences through theme-based cultural design. To meet this demand, innovation is required in Sichuan cuisine tourism by integrating traditional Sichuan cuisine with local distinctive elements, combining well-known Sichuan dishes and traditional local snacks with the thematic experience of "Panda Bamboo," creating unique themed culinary products to enhance its appeal and competitiveness. For instance, the "Bamboo Rhythm" restaurant within Chengdu's Giant Panda Breeding Base successfully fused traditional Sichuan cuisine with bamboo elements and introduced a series of bamboo-themed dishes, such as Kung Pao Chicken, Sautéed Pork with Bamboo Shoots, and Beef in Bamboo Shoot Soup, all of which have received consistent acclaim from tourists.

However, simultaneously, excessive commercialization of destination cuisines has become one of the main reasons affecting the culinary tourism experience. To cater to tourists' tastes, some places excessively process and modify their gastronomic offerings, leading to the destruction of the original flavor and quality, consequently losing genuine local characteristics. To address this issue, the preservation and maintenance of gastronomic flavor and quality must be strengthened. A crucial measure to ensure the sustainable development of culinary tourism is to establish a comprehensive agricultural product quality assurance system, encompassing production, processing, storage, and transportation sectors, and impose strict quality certification on agricultural production and

processing enterprises as well as catering businesses.

In addition to pursuing taste innovation, Sichuan cuisine tourism also needs to focus on the development of health and wellness. Statistical data reveals that Chinese people's intake of seasoning ingredients such as salt, sugar, and monosodium glutamate far exceeds the world average, and excessive intake of these seasonings is harmful to health [11]. Therefore, incorporating health and wellness elements into the design of culinary tourism products, creating naturally nourishing and healthy Sichuan cuisine tourism products, can enhance their market competitiveness. Using bamboo as the main ingredient, the "Panda Bamboo" themed cuisine inherently possesses health-promoting, eco-friendly, and wellness attributes. As such, designing thematic series of culinary tourism experiences like "Rural Food Therapy and Wellness" that offer nutritional health lectures, vegetarian wellness options, and medicinal culinary preparations can cater to the growing demand of tourists for healthy gastronomic experiences.

### 3.2 Creating a Thematic Culinary Culture District

The "Panda Bamboo" Gastronomic Intellectual Property (IP) serves as a pivotal point in promoting emerging growth in Chengdu's culinary tourism, offering fresh perspectives for the development of traditional urban districts. The key challenge lies in integrating the gastronomic tourism industry with traditional urban districts to construct a distinct culinary tourism culture district imbued with storytelling and cultural significance. The transformation of the district into a thematic space necessitates a profound exploration of its essence, reinforced through various construction methods that accentuate its thematic features. Specific transformation strategies can be implemented, including thematic cultural content, experiential activities, and thematic landscape scenes.

Firstly, the thematic cultural content forms the foundation for crafting the culinary tourism culture district. By delving into the history, culture, and heritage of Sichuan cuisine, it should be integrated into the district's construction and planning. The naming of the district, architectural style, decorative elements, etc., should all align with the "Panda Bamboo" gastronomic theme to showcase local characteristics and cultural significance. Additionally, establishing venues such as food-related exhibitions and gastronomic museums can showcase the historical origins and unique charm of the panda and Sichuan cuisine to visitors, enhancing the district's storytelling and appeal.

Secondly, the thematic experiential activities are crucial in enhancing interactivity and amusement within the district. Developing interactive experiential projects related to "Panda Bamboo" gastronomy, such as workshops for making "Panda Bamboo" gastronomic delicacies, gastronomic tastings, etc., can provide visitors with deeper insights into the culinary preparation process and cultural background, heightening their engagement and satisfaction. Furthermore, organizing culinary culture festivals, gastronomic tasting competitions, and other events can attract more visitors to participate, elevating the district's visibility and influence.

Finally, thematic landscape scenes play a vital role in elevating the district's aesthetics and visual value. Through landscape design and decoration, the "Panda Bamboo" gastronomic elements should be ingeniously integrated throughout the district's various corners. Sculptures in the form of pandas, bamboo groves, and murals depicting Sichuan cuisine can be placed along the streets, creating a rich gastronomic ambiance. Additionally, the district's environment should prioritize green and healthy elements, utilizing eco-friendly materials and green vegetation to offer a comfortable and pleasant touring environment, catering to contemporary consumers' pursuit of both gastronomy and surroundings.

During the implementation of the thematic transformation of the "Panda Bamboo" gastronomic tourism culture district, a harmonious fusion with Chengdu's culinary culture is imperative. As the birthplace of Sichuan cuisine, Chengdu boasts abundant gastronomic cultural resources. The thematic

transformation of the district should draw inspiration from Chengdu's culinary culture, leveraging its unique characteristics and advantages to complement the "Panda Bamboo" gastronomic theme. Simultaneously, attention should be paid to innovative developments, incorporating new gastronomic concepts and culinary techniques to meet consumers' new demands and expectations regarding gastronomy.

### 3.3 Promoting Culinary Culture

In gastronomic tourism promotion, there is often excessive focus on the food itself, neglecting the demonstration of culinary culture, the dining habits of local residents, and the exchange and sharing of culinary cultures [12]. At the same time, marketing personnel in tourist destinations need to enhance their understanding of local and international culinary cultures and grasp potential customers' dietary preferences [13]. The direction for improvement lies in strengthening the cultural significance of products. Gastronomic tourism should not merely revolve around food tasting; it should also delve into culinary culture to highlight it as a distinctive feature. Therefore, the development of "Panda Bamboo" Gastronomic Tourism should emphasize the exploration of the cultural connotations of gastronomic resources and fully incorporate cultural characteristics into the gastronomic products, infusing elements such as history, legends, anecdotes, and local customs into the cuisine. This way, visitors can fully appreciate beauty through sightseeing, aroma, and taste while indulging in storytelling, observing local customs, and experiencing the artistic atmosphere.

Creating a cultural atmosphere in restaurants is a crucial step in enhancing the gastronomic tourism experience. By cultivating a strong cultural ambiance within the restaurant, visitors can better immerse themselves in the local culinary culture. Decorations on the walls can feature traditional "Panda Bamboo" elements or even intriguing historical story graphics, allowing diners to learn about the history and stories behind the culinary delights while dining. Moreover, the restaurant's music, lighting, and other details should also align with the thematic concept, creating a comfortable and pleasant dining environment.

Gastronomic explanations and culinary performances are also significant aspects of gastronomic tourism promotion. Through professional gastronomic explanations, visitors can gain deeper insights into the cultural origins behind each culinary creation, fostering greater interest and curiosity in gastronomy. Culinary performances, on the other hand, enable visitors to witness the culinary-making process, increasing their participation and allowing them to better experience the unique charm of the "Panda Bamboo" gastronomic theme. These interactive activities enhance visitor engagement, making their gastronomic tourism experience more enriching and diverse.

Additionally, for high-spending tourists, offering more in-depth culinary interactive activities, such as gastronomic workshops, allows them to personally prepare traditional delicacies, immersing themselves in the joy of cooking. Conversely, for low-spending tourists, simple and enjoyable culinary interactive games can be offered, enabling them to experience the charm of the "Panda Bamboo" gastronomic theme in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere [14].

Furthermore, conducting culinary culture exchange events by inviting representatives from other regions to showcase their culinary cultures and engage in cultural exchange can attract more tourists and enrich the cultural connotations of the "Panda Bamboo" Gastronomic IP, making it a genuine platform for culinary cultural exchange.

### 3.4 Innovative Marketing Strategies

The rapid development of mobile internet and information technology is crucial for constructing an international cultural image of "Gourmet Capital" in Chengdu. To achieve this goal, it is essential to actively utilize new media technologies and various media forms to meet the communication needs

of the mobile internet era [6]. To implement this strategy effectively, the integration of the "Panda Bamboo" IP of Chengdu into the promotion is of utmost importance, as it adds cultural creativity and attracts more tourists to participate in gastronomic experiences.

Furthermore, combining the "Panda Bamboo" theme with the image of the "Gourmet Capital" can enhance the unique appeal of cultural symbols. Pandas and bamboo, as symbols of traditional Chinese culture, represent harmony, friendliness, and prosperity. Incorporating these elements into gastronomic promotion can infuse more cultural connotations into Chengdu's "Gourmet Capital" image, making it even more attractive.

In gastronomic experiences, women play a stronger role in driving interest. Therefore, when formulating culinary communication strategies, special attention should be given to the preferences and needs of female audiences to attract more women to participate in gastronomic tourism and culinary consumption. This aligns with the "Panda Bamboo" theme, as pandas are often considered gentle and adorable, appealing to the aesthetic tastes of women.

In culinary communication, foodies play a crucial role. They are not only explorers of gastronomic resources and promoters of the market but also actively participate in interactive communication and word-of-mouth marketing of gastronomic information. Through new media, foodies provide valuable feedback to food providers, driving continuous improvement and enhancement of gastronomic offerings. They also utilize various new media platforms such as blogs and WeChat Moments to share their culinary experiences with friends, interact, and exchange ideas, thereby spreading gastronomic information online. Moreover, foodies can use the internet to transform their culinary experiences into facts or stories, generating more attention and interest from others [15].

In conclusion, by utilizing mobile internet and new media technologies in the construction of Chengdu's "Gourmet Capital," closely aligned with the "Internet+" trend, integrating the "Panda Bamboo" theme with gastronomic culture, attracting women to engage in culinary experiences, promoting gastronomic tourism, and utilizing interactive communication and word-of-mouth marketing from foodies, Chengdu's image as the "Gourmet Capital" can become more vibrant, appealing, and showcase its unique charm and competitiveness on the international stage.

#### 4. Conclusion

This research takes the development of Chengdu's culinary tourism as the background and delves into how to create the "Panda and Bamboo" gourmet Intellectual Property (IP) to promote the prosperity of Chengdu's culinary tourism, focusing on four aspects: exploring new growth points in Sichuan cuisine, creating themed districts, popularizing food culture, and innovating marketing strategies. The study findings demonstrate that culinary tourism holds tremendous potential in the rapidly growing global tourism industry. By integrating cuisine with local culture, not only can a unique brand identity be bestowed upon the destination, but also new promotional channels can be generated.

Throughout the study, this paper systematically explores the new growth points of Sichuan cuisine and provides an in-depth analysis of its performance and potential on the international stage. Furthermore, the creation of themed districts, featuring elements of "Panda and Bamboo," enhances the distinctiveness and allure of Chengdu's culinary offerings. Additionally, the importance of popularizing food culture for culinary tourism is emphasized, advocating for education and heritage efforts to allow more visitors to understand and experience the charm of Chengdu's cuisine. Lastly, innovative marketing strategies are proposed, utilizing social media platforms and digital marketing methods to promote the "Panda and Bamboo" gourmet IP and boost the recognition and appeal of Chengdu's culinary tourism.

In conclusion, by establishing the "Panda and Bamboo" gourmet IP, Chengdu's culinary tourism

is expected to gain a more prominent position in the international competition. However, to sustain the development of Chengdu's culinary tourism, further efforts are required to strengthen the protection and innovation of local food culture, improve service quality and experiences, enhance collaboration and exchanges, and build a global alliance. It is hoped that the findings of this research can provide valuable insights into the sustainable development of Chengdu's culinary tourism and serve as a reference for similar studies in other regions.

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