

# *Research on the Strategy of Enhancing the Vitality of Rural Communities Based on the Integration of Culture and Tourism*

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**Abstract:** The vitality of rural communities is crucial for the long-term development of rural areas and the process of urban-rural integration. However, the current lack of vitality in rural communities poses constraints on their development. To address this issue, researchers have focused on the integration of culture and tourism, selecting rural communities as their research subject, and exploring pathways for development through industrial integration, the return of young population, and environmental optimization. Research indicates that rural communities possess unique advantages in terms of human and natural resources, but caution is needed to avoid potential harm to local culture from commercial projects. The return of young population, the creation of a favorable living environment, and the development of infrastructure are key factors in enhancing community vitality. Therefore, it is essential to build rural communities that integrate culture and tourism, with community management units guiding residents to actively participate and form consensus to promote sustainable development.

## 1. Introduction

In January 2023, the "Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Doing a Good Job in the Key Tasks of Comprehensive Rural Revitalization in 2023" emphasized the need to promote the high-quality development of rural industries and to solidly advance the construction of livable, business-friendly, and beautiful countryside. [1]The high-quality development of industries and the construction of beautiful countryside have become new driving forces for rural development in the new stage of development. They are also important levers for further promoting the evolution of rural social production and lifestyles. The social vitality of rural communities is closely related to the momentum of rural revitalization development. In the rapid urbanization process, a large number of rural populations migrating to cities has led to low social vitality in rural communities. The intensification of the urban population suction effect has exacerbated the contradictions in the evolution of urban-rural relationships, driving the reshaping of rural economic structures, production structures, and lifestyles. This phenomenon prompts rural communities to quickly overcome the dilemma of low vitality and insufficient

momentum for subsequent development.

The imbalance in rural population structure and the low level of economic development pose urgent challenges in enhancing the vitality of rural communities. Faced with the dual pressures of rural population loss and lagging rural economic development, activating local resources and constructing a model of integrated development between culture and tourism have become effective measures for the sustainable development of rural social vitality. Cultural and tourism integration, through comprehensive integration of cultural and tourism industry elements, maximizes the utilization of resources, injecting momentum into the high-quality development of rural areas [2]. The tourism industry, driven by culture and tourism integration, may attract economic growth and potentially facilitate the return of young labor forces to rural areas. The return of young people to start businesses in rural areas plays an important social role in promoting the transformation of rural industries, promoting urban-rural integration, and increasing the welfare of farmers [3]. In recent years, academic research on rural culture and tourism integration has focused on the development models of rural cultural tourism, discussions on the cultural inheritance value and economic value in rural cultural tourism development, and exploration at the meso and micro levels [4], laying a rich theoretical foundation for enhancing the vitality of rural communities.

As theoretical and practical research on rural cultural and tourism integration accumulates, rural community vitality has become the carrier for the healthy development of the cultural and tourism industry. Rural community cultural and tourism integration development not only accelerates economic growth and balances urban-rural development in terms of GDP indicators but also considers multiple dimensions such as the quality of rural industries, environmental quality, and community belongingness. At this level, the enhancement of rural community vitality is inherently consistent with the goals of improving rural living environments, production methods, and population structures. Therefore, this study will analyze changes in rural production, life, and population structure from the perspective of cultural and tourism integration development. This approach aims to more effectively understand the process of rural community social vitality evolution, explore strategies for enhancing rural community vitality, and provide theoretical guidance for the high-quality development of rural communities under the context of cultural and tourism integration.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Overview of Research on Community Vitality at Home and Abroad

Domestically, research on community vitality started relatively late, and there are relatively few theoretical research achievements. Through reviewing existing literature, valuable studies related to this topic include: Zhang Runjun's "On the Activation of Urban Community Vitality" proposes three aspects corresponding to community vitality: community political vitality, community economic vitality, and community cultural vitality [5]. Xu Jianhua's "Assessment of Community Planning Practices Aimed at Improving Residents' Sense of Happiness" mentions that rural communities share similarities with urban communities. Therefore, community vitality can be stimulated by enhancing community governance, improving community service systems, and strengthening infrastructure construction, such as creating community street life scenes, focusing on public space creation, and fostering neighborhood interactions [6]. From this perspective, community construction largely considers its potential and rationality as a platform for promoting positive social interactions. Current academic research mostly focuses on urban communities, with relatively few targeted studies on rural community vitality. However, some regions have achieved corresponding practical results. For example, in Huangmei County, Hubei Province, based on the renovation of the living environment, the "Five Shared" (shared consultation, construction,

management, evaluation, and benefits) concept has been implemented, mobilizing the masses to transform old communities and rejuvenate them, thereby stimulating community vitality. In Ningbo's Yingfeng community, initiatives like "wasteland transformation" have been launched, with community party members and residents as the main participants, to unearth community talents, integrate regional resources, and drive collective participation in building small gardens [7]. These initiatives fully mobilize the enthusiasm for shared management among neighbors and promote environmental vitality within the community.

Foreign researchers believe that a clean and pleasant environment, sports activities, community life and service facilities, and social networks are the primary needs of community residents. They consider the development of community vitality to be closely related to the above-mentioned needs. Additionally, scholars Teemu Makkonen and Tommi Inkinen conducted benchmark testing on rural community vitality using the Finnish region as an example. They believe that a decrease in rural community population leads to a decline in community vitality. However, they also found that in some areas, despite population loss, community vitality can still be maintained. They propose the strategy of "smart shrinkage" to maintain community vitality [8]. From this perspective, community vitality is one of the indicators of community development, and enhancing rural community vitality is strategically significant for the comprehensive promotion of rural revitalization.

## **2.2 Current Research Status of Cultural and Tourism Integration in Rural Communities**

Research on the integration of culture and tourism in rural communities is currently an important topic for rural revitalization and sustainable development. Many scholars have conducted extensive research on the theory and practice of cultural and tourism integration, aiming to explore its application effects and impacts in rural communities.

Fu Caiwu and Cheng Yumei (2021) argue that rural areas, as concentrated carriers of Chinese agricultural civilization, provide "memory places" for the rapid urbanization of society (tourism consumers) regarding traditional agricultural culture. The impression of agricultural culture in social consciousness is a driving force for promoting the integration of culture and tourism in rural areas. They emphasize the importance of cultural scenes, stating that through the development of rural tourism resources, the creation of cultural experience projects, and the provision of related services, cultural and tourism integration can promote economic diversification and sustainable development in rural communities.

Luo Dameng and Wu Licao (2023) propose that the reconstruction of rural cultural and tourism integration spaces needs to follow the paths of locality, scenarization, digitalization, and industrialization [9]. By focusing on scenario design, project operation, and technological empowerment, rural areas can be transformed into spaces for displaying rural culture, experiencing rural life, and generating rural emotions. For example, some rural communities have successfully attracted tourists and investment by developing homestays, agritourism, and cultural and creative industries. By providing cultural activities, inheriting local culture, and protecting cultural heritage, these communities enhance cohesion and identity, enrich cultural connotations, and promote the willingness of residents and communities to participate.

Furthermore, cultural and tourism integration is of significant importance for the environmental sustainability of rural communities. Qiu Zhicheng (2021) points out that cultural and tourism integration is not only an important means to enhance cultural confidence and promote rural cultural revitalization but also an inherent requirement for the coordinated development and harmonious coexistence of humans and nature [10].

Han Rongpeng (2021) summarizes that the coordinated integration of urban and rural cultural and tourism integration should focus on key difficulties and breakthroughs, improve top-level

design, and refine the layout of integrated development spaces. It should explore integration models, promote the integration of cultural and tourism characteristic industries, accelerate the integration of cultural and tourism institutions, and industrialize cultural and tourism services. It should also assist in the construction of industry chain clusters, integrate into the dual-cycle pattern, and build modern new rural areas with prosperous industries, livable ecology, civilized customs, effective governance, and affluent lives [11].

Ding Ying (2023) proposes design principles of inheritance and protection, aesthetics, public participation, and sustainable development. They have designed the rural tourism landscape in the suburbs of northern Shaanxi from the aspects of protecting traditional dwellings, reshaping activity places, and fully utilizing regional cultural elements [12].

The results indicate that rational planning and management of cultural and tourism resources can promote environmental protection and sustainable resource utilization. Through eco-tourism models and green building design, coordinated development between tourism activities and the natural environment can be achieved, thus protecting the integrity of ecosystems and biodiversity. However, cultural and tourism integration in rural communities still faces some challenges and issues, including how to balance the relationship between cultural protection and economic interests, how to improve the management and operation level of rural communities, and how to address problems such as the loss of young population and insufficient community vitality.

### **3. Rural Community Vitality Analysis under the Development of Cultural and Tourism Integration**

#### **3.1 Economic Vitality Perspective**

Rural cultural and tourism integration creates new consumption scenes for rural communities, bringing new economic growth points. The natural landscapes, cultural resources, and traditional culture in rural areas can attract more tourists, creating new economic value and significantly expanding the boundaries of industries. By tapping into and developing rural tourism resources and introducing various cultural experiences and tourism products, economic vitality is extended to deeper dimensions. This not only increases local employment but also promotes the production and sale of agricultural products, handicrafts, and specialty products, fostering the diversified development of rural economies.

Under industrial drive, cultural and tourism integration can promote commercial activities and market prosperity in rural communities. The development of rural tourism industry brings opportunities for local commerce, catering, accommodation, and other service industries. With the increase in the number of tourists, the old commercial environment in rural communities will be improved, and commercial facilities and service levels will be enhanced. New formats provide new development impetus, attracting more tourists and investors, and forming a virtuous commercial cycle (Figure 1). In the process of nurturing and developing rural cultural industries, the rural industrial chain is extended, and the skills of villagers involved are enhanced, increasing their income and improving the brand awareness and competitiveness of rural communities [13].

Therefore, from an economic vitality perspective, through the development and integration of rural tourism resources, improving service quality, and management levels, rural communities can achieve diversified economic development, create more employment opportunities, promote commercial prosperity, attract talents and investments, and drive the sustainable development of rural communities.

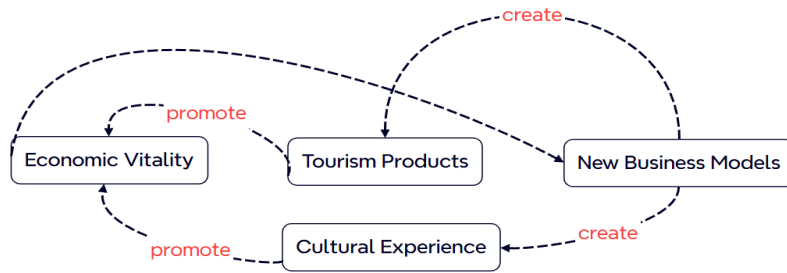


Figure 1: Cultural and Tourism Industry Cycle Diagram

### 3.2 Population Vitality Perspective

Population vitality is one of the key indicators for assessing the level of vitality in rural communities (Table 1). Under the development of cultural and tourism integration, enhancing population vitality starts from two aspects: population size and population age structure, which are crucial for the sustainable development of rural communities. The reasonable population size and age structure are closely related to whether the enhancement of rural community vitality can achieve long-term development. In the process of urban-rural integration, rural population loss directly leads to the shrinkage of economic structures such as commerce, agriculture, and services within the community, limiting the development potential of rural communities. Therefore, to enhance the vitality of rural communities, it is necessary to actively promote bidirectional population mobility between urban and rural areas, making it a major force in promoting urban-rural integration and deep integration. [14] Based on this, it is essential to rebuild a stable population structure. Driven by the integration of culture and tourism, this study actively establishes the interactive relationship network between residents and tourists in the community. This study provides employment opportunities through the development of cultural tourism industry to attract migrants to work and live in rural communities, thereby increasing the community population. At the same time, leveraging the unique cultural, historical, and natural resources of rural communities, create unique cultural tourism products to attract visitors for sightseeing and experiences. The frequent interaction of external personnel not only promotes the vitality of community development but also provides new development opportunities.

Table 1: Framework of Population Vitality Indicators

Population vitality indicators	Population size	Data support	Increased number of incoming population
	Population age structure		Population distribution by age group or population count by age group
	Rural community economic structure		Employment numbers or percentages in commerce, agriculture, and services
	Urban-rural population mobility		Population migration from urban to rural areas
	Cultural tourism industry development		Employment opportunities and tourism revenue
	Community resident participation		Proportion or number of residents participating in rural cultural and tourism construction

### 3.3 Environmental Vitality Perspective

Rural community living environment serves as the material carrier of integrated development of rural culture and tourism. The vitality of rural environment, influenced by comprehensive factors such as economy and population, plays a role in optimizing resource allocation and achieving adaptive structural compensation in coordinating the enhancement of community vitality. Due to the difficulty in achieving balanced distribution of economy, population, and environment attributes in rural communities, environmental carrying capacity directly affects the upper limit of economic and population growth. Factors such as the area, greening, infrastructure, and aesthetics of the environment are sub-factors of environmental vitality. Therefore, enhancing environmental vitality is crucial for ensuring the overall vitality of the community. Constructing a high-quality environment includes aspects such as infrastructure and services, environmental hygiene and greening, aesthetic aspects of living places, and sound and air quality. Considering the behavioral habits of community villagers and urban tourists and their cultural and tourism experiences, the connection of these factors with the further development of ecological civilization will propel community cultural and tourism development towards high-quality development. Additionally, the rural environment relies on the overall planning of urban development to highlight the bottom-up regional environmental functions on the basis of the original top-down governance framework, by rationally allocating various development resources between urban and rural areas, coordinating the planning of production, living, and ecological space layout, and promoting regional coordinated development and urban-rural integration development. This will shape a more vibrant urban and rural living environment that fosters harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, further tapping into the potential of integrated cultural and tourism development [15].

## 4. Strategy Proposal and Discussion

### 4.1 Development Strategy of Cultural and Tourism Industries

The attachment-oriented model is the primary development path for rural tourism. [16] Rural areas make reasonable use of unique natural landscapes, historical and cultural heritage, and local characteristics. Further development of these resources promotes the industrialization and commercialization of rural cultural and tourism industries. By developing diversified tourism products, different types of tourists can be attracted, increasing the visibility and attractiveness of rural communities. It can also expand specialty tourism projects such as agricultural culture and agricultural experiences. For example, in Xixiang Village, Chixi Town, Nanjiang County, Bazhong City, Sichuan Province, various attractions such as farmhouse B&Bs, Yue Fei Loyalty Cultural Industrial Park, Nanjiang Huangyang Standardized Breeding Farm, picking-style agricultural sightseeing parks, amusement parks, wooden houses for homestays, as well as 4,500 mu of Qingqian willows, 2,000 mu of tea, and 500 mu of honeysuckle, have formed a combination of agricultural culture and tourism, enabling the village to achieve tourism revenue of 6.02 billion yuan (2021). [17]

With the continuous advancement of the rural revitalization strategy, many rural areas in China, driven by policies, continuously explore the integrated development of tourism and traditional agriculture based on local advantageous natural and cultural resources. They innovate and develop rural tourism products and projects, leading to a surge in rural tourism popularity. This trend has had a positive impact on improving the level of rural economic development and addressing rural labor employment issues. [18]

In addition to innovative and diversified tourism products, it is necessary to fully understand the current demands of mainstream consumer tourists by integrating modern information technology

with the characteristics and resources of local rural communities. It is essential to leverage the three major empowering elements of data, technology, and intellect. Through the three empowering effects of data intelligence, namely connection, interaction, and fusion, the integration of agriculture, commerce, and culture in rural areas can be promoted, facilitating data sharing, integration of practical applications, and the construction of a digital ecosystem. [19] Information technology helps boost the visibility of rural cultural and tourism, creating weekend travel demands among urban residents in surrounding cities. Strengthening cooperation with neighboring cities and introducing urban capital investment to expand the transformation of rural resources are crucial steps. This approach broadens the development paths and promotional channels of cultural and tourism industries in rural areas, closely linking the development of rural cultural and tourism industries with the life needs of rural and urban residents. It establishes a development model for cultural and tourism industries guided by residents' demands [20].

## **4.2 Strategy for Youth Population Return**

For the sustainable development of rural community vitality, the quantity of youth population in the community is particularly crucial. Encouraging young people from rural areas to return for employment, attracting urban youth to start businesses in rural areas, and retaining local youth in rural development are necessary measures. Guiding the return of young people from rural areas can inject new vitality and innovative thinking into the rural community. Attracting urban youth to participate in the integrated development of rural community culture and tourism can promote the diversification of the rural economy. Retaining local youth will help maintain the cultural heritage and stability of the rural community, achieving sustainable development of rural vitality.

The return of youth population to rural communities also requires sound policy guidance and a community service system. The government can formulate incentive policies, providing returning youth with low-cost or free land and housing to reduce the cost of entrepreneurship. The government should set up a start-up support fund to provide financial support and guidance services for young people who intend to start their own businesses. The government should increase the investment in rural education resources, improve the quality of education, and provide a better learning environment for local teenagers. Additionally, rural communities can conduct vocational skills training, encourage villagers to participate in rural cultural and tourism development, engage in community governance and development, and collaborate to establish entrepreneurial incubation bases and employment entrepreneurship service centers.

Identifying passive returning youth, providing them with skills training, unleashing potential, and enhancing motivation can actively empower them, gradually involving them in rural construction. This, in turn, provides entrepreneurial support and assistance for returning youth. The implementation of these measures will lead to a positive development of youth population return in rural communities, injecting new vitality and momentum into rural revitalization.

## **4.3 Optimization Strategies for Residential Environments**

Improving the living environment of rural communities and enhancing their vitality are crucial for the sustained development of cultural and tourism industries and for retaining young talents. Effective environmental sanitation management and waste disposal are key to maintaining community cleanliness. Community management units should strengthen the environmental sanitation management system, establish waste classification systems, and encourage resident participation in environmental protection actions to raise awareness. Through regular environmental monitoring and assessments, potential environmental pollution and hygiene hazards can be promptly identified and resolved.

Greening construction is another important aspect of optimizing residential environments. Green vegetation not only absorbs waste gases and reduces air pollution but also helps improve soil and water conservation, thus protecting the stability of rural ecological environments. Through planning green leisure space and natural landscape, this study creates a pleasant environment atmosphere to increase residents' comfort and happiness. Furthermore, livable living spaces are crucial for attracting young people back to rural areas and retaining local residents. Optimizing residential space layouts, renovating old community housing should focus on aesthetic and human-centered design, integrating rural cultural elements, and creating a coordinated community style with the rural environment.

Residential planning should fully consider residents' needs and conveniences, such as schools, medical institutions, shopping centers, and community activity centers, while also optimizing transportation planning to provide convenient transportation and public transit systems, facilitating residents' travel and communication, and enhancing community cohesion.

Lastly, noise and air quality are often overlooked factors in optimizing living environments. The development of cultural and tourism industries should focus on reducing traffic noise, controlling industrial pollution, and protecting air quality. Relevant management units need to strengthen supervision and governance of noise and air pollution to ensure residents' peace and health. During planning and construction, organic renewal should be adopted based on the community's environmental carrying capacity to avoid damaging the original community landscape. Through comprehensive implementation strategies, governments, community residents, and relevant organizations should work together to build livable environments in rural communities, enhance their ability to attract young people back and retain local residents, thereby promoting the vitality enhancement and sustainable development of rural communities.

#### **4.4 Possible Challenges and Solutions in Implementation**

Several challenges may arise in promoting the strategy to enhance the vitality of rural communities, primarily including insufficient community participation, difficulty in forming consensus, and lagging rural infrastructure.

Adequate community participation is a prerequisite for community development. The development of rural communities requires the support and participation of local residents. To enhance population vitality, stabilize population structure, and increase population base, communities need to conduct promotional and educational activities. This will raise residents' awareness of rural revitalization and cultural tourism industry development, enhancing their willingness to participate. Only by involving more people can rural development activities truly take place.

Unified development consciousness is the cornerstone. Due to differences in residents' backgrounds, interests, and needs, disagreements may arise, making it difficult to form a unified consensus. This necessitates community management units and relevant organizations to act as communication bridges, guide discussions, strengthen communication and interaction with community residents, solicit opinions extensively, fully understand residents' demands and expectations, establish democratic mechanisms, and ensure both residents' participation and orderly community development.

Improving rural infrastructure is essential. Many rural communities have relatively backward infrastructure, lacking convenient transportation, water supply, and power facilities. Prioritizing the development needs of rural communities, improving transportation networks, increasing water and power supply facilities, enhancing the convenience and attractiveness of communities, and providing basic guarantees for the landing and development of cultural tourism industries are vital.



This includes collectively promoting infrastructure upgrades and renovations.

Considering the above challenges and solutions comprehensively, the implementation of strategies to enhance the vitality of rural communities requires multi-stakeholder cooperation and joint efforts to achieve the enhancement and sustainable development of rural community vitality.

## 5. Conclusion

The enhancement of social vitality in rural communities is closely related to factors such as economy, population, and living environment. The integration of culture and tourism development is one of the ways to activate community vitality. The development of cultural tourism in rural communities should be tailored to local conditions. Its internal driving forces come from the further development of rural natural environment, historical culture, and characteristic industries, as well as the high-quality living needs of community residents. Initial development requires strong support and participation from villagers. External driving forces come from policy guidance and the overflow of urban cultural and entertainment industries under the pressure of leisure and land use in urban areas. This is a crucial factor determining whether the integration of culture and tourism can achieve long-term development. In the process of urban-rural integration, the functions of urban and rural areas complement each other, showing interdependence. The integration of rural culture and tourism cannot be separated from the overall planning of urban areas.

Under the background of rural revitalization, the infrastructure of most rural areas in China has been greatly improved, providing the prerequisite for cultural and tourism development. However, in the planning and development process, we should avoid excessively focusing on economic growth, which may lead to the phenomenon of excessive commercialization of culture and tourism and lack of local cultural experiences. The vitality of rural communities emphasizes the intrinsic motivation of community development and faces challenges such as insufficient community participation and difficulty in forming consensus. Governments and relevant institutions need to strengthen communication and interaction with community residents. Through joint efforts, the implementation of strategies to enhance the vitality of rural communities will bring new vitality and momentum to rural revitalization and the development of cultural tourism industries, realizing sustainable prosperity and development of rural communities.

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