

Research on the Development Problems and Path Prospects of Whole-Territorial Tourism in Weishan County

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Abstract: Territorial tourism represents a new direction for regional economic development. This study examines Weishan County's geographic location, economic profile, and tourism resources through field surveys, data analysis, and ArcGIS spatial analysis. Key findings include: (1) Uneven geographic distribution of tourism development due to natural constraints; (2) High concentration of underdeveloped tourism resources; (3) Multiple constraints on holistic tourism development. Based on territorial tourism principles, solutions are proposed to enhance infrastructure, resource integration, and cross-sector collaboration.

1. Introduction

Territorial tourism has become a pivotal direction for the sustainable development of the tourism industry. Existing research primarily focuses on three aspects: (1) Conceptual definitions, tracing back to Dalian's "whole-region urbanization" proposal in 2010, with Li Jianxin^[1] first formalizing the term to emphasize tourism quality enhancement. Shi Peihua^[2] highlighted its transformative potential, while Yang Zhenzhi^[3] linked it to regional economic strategies. (2) Practical applications, such as Zhou Jie's^[4] city-cluster integration model and Lu Qingling et al.'s^[5] agritourism pathways. (3) Spatial optimization, exemplified by Liang Qi et al^[6]. analyzing China's tourism layout and Cai Jia et al^[7]. employing GIS in Gansu Province.

However, most studies remain macro-focused, lacking micro-scale implementation insights. This paper addresses this gap by examining Weishan County—a culturally rich yet underdeveloped region—through field surveys, data analysis, and ArcGIS spatial methods. The study identifies local challenges and proposes pathways aligned with territorial tourism principles, aiming to bridge theoretical frameworks with actionable solutions for similar regions.

2. Territorial Tourism Concept and Its Requirements for Regional Tourism Development

2.1 Conceptual Analysis of Territorial Tourism

In response to the growing demand for high-quality tourism, the concept of territorial tourism provides a systematic solution to address bottlenecks in tourism supply through spatial and industrial optimization^[8]. This paradigm repositions tourism as a core driver of regional development, integrating resources across geographic, cultural, and industrial dimensions to shift from isolated "attraction-centric" models to holistic collaboration. Its essence lies in redefining tourism's role: elevating it from a peripheral service sector to a dominant force in regional economic growth. By connecting dispersed resources through transportation networks and activating intangible cultural experiences (e.g., heritage crafts), territorial tourism transcends "point-based" development, forming a closed-loop model of "tourism-driven growth, industrial synergy, and spatial restructuring."

2.2 Requirements for Regional Tourism Development Under the Territorial Tourism Concept

To achieve territorial integration, the following four dimensions must be addressed:

(1) Upgrading Territorial Infrastructure

Spatial Framework Construction: Develop interconnected transportation arteries (e.g., scenic highways, tourism routes) to link core attractions with emerging nodes.

Standardized Service Facilities: Enhance lodging (hotels, homestays), sanitation infrastructure, and digital navigation systems to prolong tourist stays and ensure seamless experiences.

(2) In-Depth Integration of Tourism Attractions

Expanding Resource Boundaries: Move beyond static attractions to leverage ethnic culture (e.g., festivals, handicrafts), ecological landscapes (e.g., hiking trails), and local lifestyles as experiential assets.

Cross-Regional Synergy: Design composite products (e.g., thematic routes connecting ancient towns and nature reserves) to foster spatial and cultural linkages.

(3) Industrial System Innovation and Integration

"Tourism +" Cross-Sector Collaboration: Use tourism as a nexus to promote initiatives like "tourism + agriculture" (e.g., agritourism parks) and "tourism + cultural industries" (e.g., intangible cultural heritage workshops), building diversified value chains.

Industrial Chain Extension: Expand beyond traditional "food, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment" to emerging sectors such as health and wellness tourism, educational tourism, and sports tourism, enhancing industrial resilience.

(4) Scientific Restructuring of Spatial Patterns

Functional Zoning Optimization: Delineate heritage preservation zones, cultural experience districts, and ecological leisure corridors based on resource endowments to mitigate homogenized competition.

Axial Radiation Strategy: Use transportation networks as a backbone to connect core attractions with potential nodes (e.g., rural cultural complexes), forming a spatial framework of "multi-point support, axial linkage, and territorial coverage."

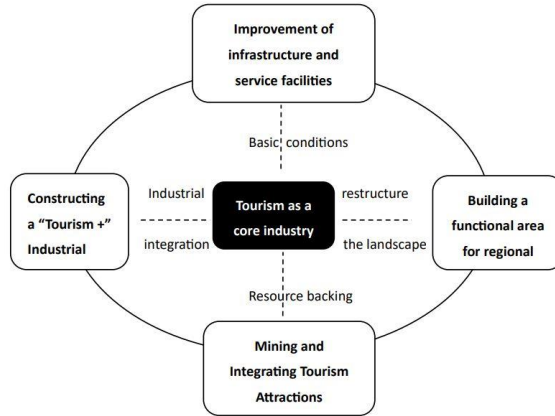


Fig.1 Requirements for the Development of Territorial Tourism

3. Overview and Tourism Status of Weishan County

3.1 Profile of Weishan County

3.1.1 Geographical Location

Weishan Yi-Hui Autonomous County is located in southern Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province, bordering Dali City to the north, Yangbi County to the east, and Nanjian and Fengqing counties to the south. Covering 2,200 km², it administers 4 towns and 6 townships (Fig. 2). As a National Historical and Cultural City and the ancient capital of Nanzhao, it preserves rich cultural heritage, including ancient architecture and diverse ethnic traditions.

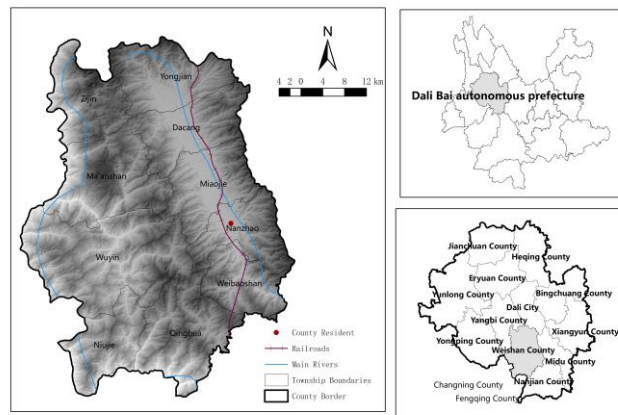


Fig. 2 Location map of Weishan County

3.1.2 Socioeconomic Profile

By 2023, the registered population reached 323,100 (permanent population: 263,600), with ethnic minorities accounting for 46.6% (Yi: 35.4%; Hui: 7.6%). The GDP in 2023 was 11.155 billion yuan (5th in Dali Prefecture), with a tertiary sector contribution of 43.1%. Road infrastructure spans 3,811.6 km, yet connectivity varies across townships. In 2022, tourism revenue totaled 2.935 billion yuan, with 2.179 million visitors (607,800 overnight).

3.2 Analysis of Tourism Resource Endowment

3.2.1 Resource Composition

Resources include historical sites (e.g., Weishan Ancient City), natural landscapes (e.g., Red River Source), and ethnic festivals (e.g., Torch Festival), classified as single-type (e.g., Shuanglong Cave) or composite-type (e.g., Weibaoshan Scenic Area) per national standards (GB/T 18972-2017) (Table 1).

Table 1 Statistics and Classification of Tourism Resources in Weishan County

Typology	National standard number and name		No. of resources
	Main category	Subclass	
Single Type	A Landscape	AC Landform	2
	B Waterscape	BA River system	2
	E Buildings and facilities	EA Humanistic Landscape Complex	6
		EB Utility buildings and core facilities	3
		EC Landscape and Minor Architecture	1
	F Remains	FA material cultural remains	2
		FB Intangible cultural heritage	2
	H Humanities	HB Seasonal festivals and traditional observances	5
Composite Type	A landscape	AA Natural Landscape Complex	1
	E Buildings and facilities	EA Human Landscape Complex	
	C bioscope	CB wildlife habitat	1
	E Buildings and facilities	EB Utility buildings and core facilities	
	F Remains	FA architectural monuments	38
	E Buildings and facilities F Remains	EA Human Landscape Complex	
		FA material cultural heritage	12
		EB Utility buildings and core facilities	
		FA material cultural heritage	2
	H Humanities	EC Landscape and Minor Architecture	
		FA material cultural remains	2
	F remains	HA Records of personnel activities	
		FB Intangible cultural heritage	

3.2.2 Characteristics of Tourism Resources in Weishan County

From a macroscopic point of view, Weishan County has a pleasant climate, good natural conditions, excellent natural environmental conditions for the development of tourism, and according to preliminary statistics, it can be seen that the county's tourism resources cover six main categories, eleven subcategories, a large number of types of rich; from a microscopic point of view, Weishan County can be counted as tourism resources in the humanities are mainly tourism resources, the number of ancient buildings, ancient ruins, as well as religious buildings, and the relative scarcity of natural tourism resources. From the geographical distribution, the geographical distribution of tourism resources in Weishan County is uneven, in the ten townships of Weishan County, the countable tourism resources are mainly concentrated in Nanzhao Township, followed by Miaogao Township and Weibaoshan Township, and the remaining townships have a small number of tourism resources (Table 2). In terms of the combination conditions of tourism resource types, there are many tourism resources of the same type in Weishan County, with great similarity, high degree of homogenization and poor combination conditions of tourism resources.

Table 2 Statistics of total tourism resources of each township

Twnshtps	Nanzhao	Miaojie	Dacang	Yongjian	Weibaoshan	Wuhuyin	Qinghua	Ma'anshan	Niujie	Zijin
Qantities	44	10	5	6	10	2	2	3	1	0
Add up the total	83									

3.3 Spatial Distribution Analysis of Tourist Attractions in Weishan County

3.3.1 Conceptual Definition of Tourism Resources and Tourist Attractions

Tourism resources refer to natural or cultural elements that attract tourists and generate economic, social, and environmental benefits. They are categorized into natural landscapes and cultural landscapes, with further classification as developed or potential resources. Tourist attractions are independently managed areas designed for tourism activities, equipped with facilities and services, serving as the smallest experiential units for visitors. Tourism resources form the foundation for attraction development, evolving into formal attractions after infrastructure enhancement.

3.3.2 Analysis of the Spatial Distribution of Tourist Attractions in Weishan County

Weishan County is relatively rich in tourism resources, but has been developed into tourist attractions, scenic spots with a small proportion. In order to more intuitively understand the spatial distribution of tourist attractions in Weishan County and the density of attraction distribution, using the kernel density analysis function of Arcgis 10.8 software, based on the number of attractions, the density map of tourist attractions in Weishan County is derived (Figure 3). According to Figure 2, it can be seen that the number of tourist attractions in Weishan County is small and concentrated in the townships along the rivers in the east, and there are no developed tourist attractions in the east. In terms of density, Nanzhao township has the highest density of attractions, followed by Weibaoshan township, and the rest of the townships have low density and little distribution.

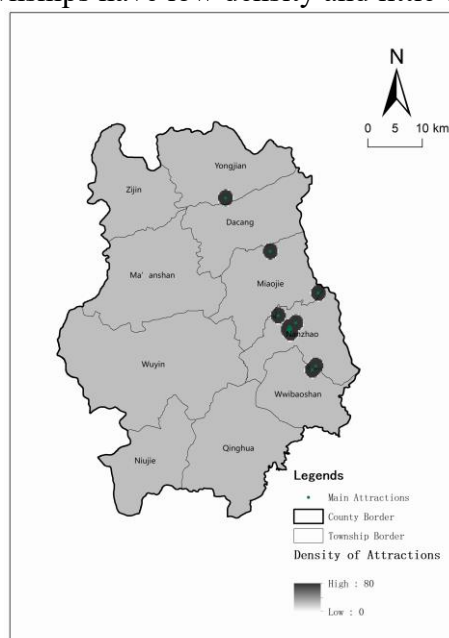


Fig. 3 Density map of tourist attractions in Weishan County

4. Characterization of Weishan County Tourism Development

(1) Geographically Imbalanced Tourism Development with Natural Constraints

Weishan County's tourism resources are distributed across all townships, with agricultural assets supporting rural tourism potential. However, the county's terrain—higher in the center and lower in the east—combined with a north-south mountain range, concentrates resources in eastern townships (e.g., Nanzhao). Western areas, constrained by topography and resource scarcity, exhibit near-zero tourist attractions. Mountain barriers hinder east-west connectivity, preventing spatial integration for holistic tourism.

(2) The richness of tourism resources is consistent with the concentration of attractions, but the development is insufficient.

Tourism resources and attractions in Weishan County are concentrated in the eastern townships, and their performance is consistent geographically. The development of tourist attractions in Weishan County is dependent on many resources and underdeveloped in many ways. There are a large number of tourist resources and a small number of attractions. The Ancient City of Weishan and its surrounding attractions are the only link between attractions. The rest of the attractions are isolated, making it difficult to create a driving effect for the tourist area. Most of the existing attractions are humanistic and dominated by ancient architecture. They are not related to local tourist attractions or the ethnic and farming cultures of Weishan County.

(3) The development of regionalized tourism is limited by many factors

Weishan County's tourism development is hindered by several factors. The region's ancient buildings and other heritage resources need further development, but the natural tourism resources are underdeveloped. The range of tourism activities and products is limited. The exploration of local folk culture is impeded by a dearth of uniqueness, and the county's traditional tourism resources limit development. It is crucial for regions with limited tourism resources to identify complementary economic drivers, but the county's substantial constraints pose a significant challenge.

Weishan County's poor transportation infrastructure hinders territorial tourism development. The poor road system and significant east-west differences restrict tourism and residents' mobility. Local residents' participation in tourism is limited due to their traditional agricultural culture, as shown in the number of tourism-related employees, cultural participation, and failure to integrate and innovate with tourism.

5. Problem-Path Analysis of Whole Area Tourism Development in Weishan County

5.1 Problems in Developing Whole Area Tourism in Weishan County

Weishan County's terrain and transportation network limits regional tourism. Its challenging geography hinders road and township growth, affecting tourism growth. Road infrastructure shortcomings also impede tourism. To promote regional tourism, it is crucial to improve accessibility. Despite improvements in road infrastructure, statistics show the transportation network still doesn't support territorial tourism development.

The service level of tourism reception needs to be improved. In 2023, 2,179,400 tourists visited Weishan County, including 607,800 overnight tourists and 1,571,700 day tourists. According to the data, most tourists are day-trip visitors. The number of scenic spots is small and their variety is lacking, which limits their ability to retain visitors, and the inadequate reception service level is also an important factor.

The scenic spots are all the same type, with uneven distribution. Weishan County's tourist attractions are mostly material and cultural, dominated by ancient architecture, ruins, and relics. The natural landscape type and folk culture, Nanzhao culture, and other intangible cultural landscapes

aren't developed enough, and the logos for natural and cultural tourism aren't significant. Most of the scenic spots are concentrated in one part of Nanzhao town, while the other townships have few to none.

The integration of other industries with tourism is lacking in Weishan County, an agricultural county that has recently seen an increase in the services sector. However, the economy is underdeveloped compared to other metrics, such as total GDP and per capita income. Despite abundant natural resources, the tourism sector is underdeveloped, focusing on traditional agriculture.

Tourism activities are concentrated in the county seat and surrounding towns, and the functional division of tourism is not clear. Comprehensive transportation conditions, resource conditions, uneven distribution of attractions and insufficient development of agro-tourism resources and other factors, tourism activities in Weishan County are also concentrated in the cities and townships around the county seat, and most of the remaining townships are almost devoid of tourism activities. Due to the concentrated distribution of tourist attractions and activities, there is no clear functional division of tourism in the whole county.

5.2 Perspective of the development path based on the idea of overall tourism development

The existing tourism development problems in Weishan County can be addressed by implementing a countermeasure based on the concept of whole-area tourism development.

The fundamental prerequisites for such a development include the presence of comprehensive facilities and services. The prevailing approach to tourism traffic optimization in Weishan County, as evidenced by its recent initiatives, is predicated on the concept of "mini-traffic," which entails the enhancement of interconnectivity within the county. The future traffic road system should develop in the direction of a landscape along the way. This approach will result in the establishment of a tourism scenic road system.

The region's tourism resources serve as the foundation for this initiative. The development of transportation infrastructure is paramount, and the promotion of folk and rural cultures is of significant importance. Industrial integration is also vital. Weishan County boasts a wealth of significant tourism resources yet remains underdeveloped. The county's strategic development plan emphasizes the leveraging of its existing tourist attractions as a foundation for its growth, underscoring its strengths. It emphasizes excavations of Nanzhao culture, multi-ethnic customs, and unique local cultural experiences, which it uses to develop cultural tourism projects. Its traditional agricultural resources are key, and creating new industries integrating the landscape, folk culture, and tourism experiences is vital for revitalizing agriculture and culture, developing new forms of territorial tourism.

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