

International Tourism Island Development Experience: Case Studies of Okinawa (Japan) and Jeju (Republic of Korea) with Implications for Hainan Province

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ABSTRACT

With the vigorous development of the global tourism industry, island tourism has become a significant engine for regional economic growth. Japan's Okinawa and Republic of Korea's Jeju have achieved remarkable success in international tourism development. Their experiences hold important reference value for Hainan Province in building an international tourism island. This paper analyzes the practices of these two islands in policy measures, industrial models, tourism product development, infrastructure construction, ecological environmental protection, and outlying islands duty-free policies. It explores their implications for Hainan. The study finds that Hainan should draw on the successful experiences of these islands by strengthening policy innovation and integration, optimizing the tourism industrial structure, enhancing service quality, improving infrastructure, strengthening ecological protection, and innovating its outlying islands duty-free policy to promote high-quality development of its international tourism island.

KEYWORDS

International tourism island; Outlying islands duty-free; Tourism policy; Industry integration; Ecological protection; Hainan province

1 Introduction

As China's only tropical island province, Hainan possesses unique natural advantages and abundant tourism resources. Building an international tourism island is a key development strategy. The State Council has positioned Hainan as one of the "Three Zones, One Center," explicitly identifying it as an international tourism consumption center. This necessitates placing Hainan's tourism development within the global tourism landscape for its positioning and planning. However, Hainan still faces challenges in its tourism development process, such as serious homogenization of tourism products, insufficient supply of high-end tourism products and services, an incomplete international air route network, limited development of the inbound tourism market, and room for improvement in service quality and internationalization levels. Okinawa and Jeju have achieved notable success in international tourism, offering valuable insights for Hainan. Okinawa has shifted from mass tourism to a high-value-added, sustainable development model using policies like duty-free shopping, attracting high-spending tourists while protecting its ecology and culture. Jeju, leveraging its special zone status and autonomy, implements duty-free and visa facilitation policies, combining ecological protection with "Hallyu" (Korean Wave) culture to create a unique tourism brand.

2 International Tourism Development Experience of Okinawa and Jeju

2.1 Japan's Okinawa

2.1.1 High Value-Added and Sustainable Development Model

Okinawa, Japan's southernmost island chain, is a renowned international destination known for its unique natural scenery, rich history, and warm climate. Its development model is transitioning from traditional quantity-oriented mass tourism towards high value-added and sustainable development. The core strategy involves multi-dimensional policies and products centered on duty-free shopping to attract high-spending tourists, develop high-end experiences and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) industries, protect ecology and culture, and utilize special zone policies and advanced technology to balance economic benefits with environmental protection. Tourism is the absolute pillar of Okinawa's economy, reshaping its economic structure profoundly. Despite the impact of COVID-19, recovery has been swift. In 2024, tourism revenue reached 946.327 billion yen, surpassing pre-pandemic 2019 levels. The ripple effect is significant; in 2019, tourism's total economic impact was estimated at 1.702 trillion yen, indirectly contributing 589 billion yen (12.7% of GDP) to related sectors like accommodation, dining, retail, and transportation.

2.1.2 Specific Measures

Okinawa's development is planned across four main areas: policy support, sustainable tourism, product innovation, and transportation improvement.

First, policy Support and Institutional Innovation: The Japanese central government's top-level planning and fiscal support provide fundamental guarantees. Okinawa established the Okinawa Convention & Visitors Bureau (OCVB) in 1954 for promotion and marketing. The Cabinet Office has issued successive "Okinawa Promotion and Development Plans" since 1972, integrating tourism with regional economic transformation and employment. In 2022, Okinawa Prefecture released the "Okinawa Tourism Promotion Basic Plan." Financially, the "Okinawa Promotion Lump-Sum Grant" has been allocated annually since 2012, totaling 400.1 billion yen for 2021-2025. Key policies include:

a. outlying Islands Duty-Free Policy: A global pioneer, Okinawa implemented a duty-free system in 1972, later refined through the "Okinawa Promotion Special Measures Act." The policy applies to all nationalities departing from Okinawa, with no purchase limits and a duty-free allowance of up to 200,000 yen per person (excluding tobacco). This has spurred shopping, creating synergistic effects in commercial areas like Naha's Kokusai-dori Street, forming a "duty-free + diverse retail" scene. In 2024, per capita spending by foreign air arrivals grew 12.1% compared to 2019.

b. visa Policy: Okinawa employs differentiated visa policies. Besides visa waivers for certain countries/regions (e.g., US, Republic of Korea), it offers 72-hour transit visa-free entry. For the crucial Chinese market, specific policies include the "Okinawa Multiple Entry Visa" (requiring first entry via Okinawa with one-night stay for a 3-year multi-entry visa) and the "Landing Permit for Cruise Ship Tourists" from specific Chinese ports. These have effectively lowered barriers, increasing visitor numbers and length of stay (average 4.02 days for foreign air arrivals in 2024).

c. special Zone Development Policy: The Japanese government established the "Okinawa Special Economic Zone" in 1999 and the "Okinawa International Tourism Innovation Special Zone" in 2015. The former offers tax incentives to stimulate private investment and job creation. The latter focuses on enhancing foreign tourist convenience and creating high-quality tourism business models, facilitating a strategic shift from traditional industry support to tourism service upgrades.

Second, promoting Sustainable Tourism Development: Okinawa's SDGs implementation guidelines explicitly include promoting sustainable tourism. Protection-oriented tourism linked to World Natural Heritage sites (e.g., "Amami-Okinawa" designated in 2021), implementing "Conservation and Use Agreements" in national parks. Environmental education and nature experience programs, such as crown-of-thorns starfish removal and coral planting activities led by diving associations. Addressing overtourism and securing funding: studying measures like a prefectural accommodation tax (planned from FY2026) and a "visitor tax" on island entries (e.g., in Taketomi Town) to fund environmental conservation and local community support.

Third, innovating Tourism Products and Services: Okinawa systematically enhances competitiveness by targeting high-value visitor segments (wealthy tourists, MICE, cruise tourism), developing new tourism formats like "workation" (work + vacation), supported by government subsidies and hotel packages. Promoting local culture through events (Okinawan karate, sports events), and advancing digitalization to improve visitor experience (e.g., luggage delivery services, robotics for "hands-free sightseeing").

Fourth, improving Transportation and Infrastructure. Efforts focus on two directions, one is the external Hubs: Upgrading Naha Airport (second runway in 2020, terminal expansions) and Naha Port (designated international cruise hub, new berth construction). International flight numbers had recovered to surpass pre-pandemic levels by August 2025. The other is the internal Transport that optimizing public transport via the Yui Rail monorail (extensions, increased capacity), integrated day passes, optimized bus services, and MaaS (Mobility as a Service) pilot projects providing one-stop travel planning.

2.2 Republic of Korea's Jeju Island

2.2.1 Policy-Driven and Cultural Tourism Model

Jeju, Republic of Korea's largest volcanic island, has transformed into a globally recognized destination through its natural endowments, forward-looking policy innovation, and cultural integration. Its model centers on a "Policy-Driven + Ecological Protection + Cultural Empowerment" framework. In Q1 2025, Jeju received 364,000 overseas visitors, a 519.5% year-on-year increase. It ranked 16th in a global tourism city attractiveness ranking. Duty-free consumption is a core driver of its economy; Jeju's GDP grew 6.5% in 2024.

2.2.2 Specific Measures

Jeju's development is planned across three areas: policy drive, ecological protection, and cultural empowerment.

First is policy Drive and Institutional Innovation. The Republic of Korean government enacted the "Special Act on the

Establishment of Jeju Special Self-Governing Province and the Development of Jeju International Free City" in 2006, granting Jeju special autonomous status with devolved powers (excluding foreign affairs, defense, judiciary). Key policies include that outlying Islands Duty-Free Policy. The "Special Act" includes tax measures allowing duty-free shopping for visitors leaving Jeju for mainland Korea. The policy sets limits (up to \$600 per person per trip, 6 times a year), balancing tourist attraction with preventing over-reliance on duty-free revenue. Revenue is reinvested in local infrastructure. Visa Policy, that Jeju's core advantage is a personal visa waiver for many nationalities, including Chinese citizens, who can enter directly with a passport (valid >6 months), round-trip ticket, and hotel booking for up to 30 days, restricted to Jeju. This "visa-free + duty-free" combo makes Jeju a top choice for free and easy travel. Urban Development Policy that Jeju was envisioned as a highly autonomous, market-oriented Northeast Asian hub comparable to Hong Kong/Singapore. The government-established Jeju Free International City Development Center (JDC) drives development focusing on "4+1" industries: tourism, healthcare, education, high-tech/agriculture, and green growth. JDC is funded by central government and bonds, and operates duty-free shops. Significant tax breaks and incentives attract foreign investment over \$5 million.

Second is coordinating ecological protection and tourism resources: Jeju prioritizes ecological protection. Designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (2002) and World Natural Heritage site ("Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes," 2007), it implements moderate development. For example, Mount Halla has no cable cars or large elevators; sea farming is restricted, and female divers ("haenyeo") operate only during non-fishing seasons.

Third is Hallyu (Korean Wave) Culture and Product Development: Jeju astutely integrates "Hallyu" culture into its tourism strategy, building a "romantic sanctuary" brand. It combines K-drama scenes and local legends (e.g., "Lovers' Cliff" on Udo Island) to create themed honeymoon routes and promotional campaigns featuring K-pop stars. This "cultural empowerment of tourism" creates a complete loop of "cultural experience-consumption scene-social media buzz," making Jeju a favorite destination.

2.3 Summary

Successful international tourism development in outlying islands requires multi-dimensional synergy to build core competitiveness systematically. Regional Policy & Institutional Innovation is the strategic cornerstone. Outlying Islands Duty-Free Policy is the core engine for activating tourism consumption. Visa facilitation policies are key tools for expanding international markets. Resource-based Tourism Industry Innovation is the critical path for upgrading competitiveness. Transportation infrastructure is the physical lifeline supporting sustainable development. Ecological Protection is the green foundation and value core.

3 Implications and Recommendations for Hainan Province

Based on the successful experiences of Okinawa and Jeju, Hainan Province can systematically advance its international tourism development from the following dimensions.

3.1 Deepen Special Zone Policies and Institutional Innovation, Strengthen Top-Level Design

Institutional support and innovation are the strategic cornerstone and fundamental guarantee for international tourism development. The mechanism of action is that, through legislative authorization, special policy arrangements, and institutional mechanism reforms, a stable, transparent, and predictable legal and policy environment is created for the tourism industry. This effectively reduces institutional transaction costs, attracts high-end factor agglomeration, thereby unleashing market vitality and translating the region's strategic positioning into tangible developmental advantages. Strong top-level design can coordinate resources from all parties, break administrative barriers, and ensure the coherence and execution of tourism development strategies. It is key to achieving the transition from resource dependence to innovation-driven growth. From international case studies, successful island tourism destinations all rely on special institutional arrangements. Japan's Okinawa, through the Okinawa Promotion Special Measures Act and the National Strategic Special Zone Act, established the "Okinawa Special Economic Zone" and the "International Tourism Innovation Zone," forming a dual-driver policy system for industrial revitalization and tourism service upgrading. Republic of Korea's Jeju Island, taking the Jeju Special Act on the Development of Jeju International Free City as its cornerstone, obtained a high degree of autonomy except in diplomacy, defense, and judiciary, clarifying its legal status and development path as an international free city. For Hainan, despite having the grand strategy of a Free Trade Port, the full release of its potential urgently requires greater breakthroughs in institutional innovation. Hainan must go beyond simple policy preference superposition and strive to build a tourism governance system that aligns with high-standard international economic and trade rules while possessing Chinese characteristics and Hainan-specific features, achieving a fundamental shift from a "policy lowland" to an "institutional highland."

Leveraging the legislative power and reform autonomy granted by the Hainan Free Trade Port Law of the People's Republic of China, and focusing on the critical milestone of island-wide customs closure operation by the end of 2025, Hainan should deepen institutional innovation in the following areas: First, legislation first, constructing a tourism regulatory system adapted to customs closure. Fully utilize the Free Trade Port legislative power. Centering on the institutional framework of "first-tier liberalization, second-tier control, and freedom within the island" post-closure, and targeting high-end formats that will accelerate development after closure, formulate supporting detailed rules. For instance, in medical tourism, refine coordination rules between the Boao Lecheng International Medical Tourism Pilot Zone and post-closure tax policies; in digital tourism, regulate the security management and facilitation measures for cross-border tourism data flow, forming a "1+N" regulatory system adapted to the post-closure open landscape. Second, upgrade the "International Tourism Innovation Demonstration Zone". Regarding factor guarantees, deepen point-supply and mixed-use land models for tourism, ensuring the implementation of new-format projects like space tourism and low-altitude flights, and aligning with post-closure industrial project construction needs. Regarding customs clearance facilitation, coordinate with "first-tier" ports to optimize entry procedures for international tourists, enhancing the international accessibility of destinations like Sanya. Third, deepen administrative system reform, establishing an efficient and coordinated management system. Implement the concept of "the whole province as one chess game," strengthening the coordinating functions of provincial tourism authorities in strategic planning, policy formulation, brand marketing, and market supervision. Explore establishing cross-departmental and cross-regional joint approval and comprehensive supervision mechanisms for tourism projects, and institutionalize "case-by-case" support for major tourism projects. Fourth, optimize the policy toolkit, precisely supporting key links. In key areas such as offshore duty-free, investment attraction, and talent introduction, continually enhance the precision and intensity of policy support. Innovate tourism investment and financing mechanisms, such as establishing professional tourism investment and financing platforms, guiding fiscal funds, issuing special bonds, etc., to attract social capital to participate in tourism infrastructure and major project construction. Simultaneously, implement more attractive talent policies, providing conveniences for internationalized tourism management, marketing, planning, and service talents in areas like individual income tax incentives, entry-exit facilitation, and professional qualification recognition.

3.2 Optimize Offshore Duty-Free Policy, Build a Global Consumption Hub

The offshore duty-free policy is the strategic engine and key lever for building an international tourism consumption center. Its mechanism of action is that, through the direct economic lever of tax reduction and exemption, it significantly lowers the final price of international high-end consumer goods, thereby precisely leveraging the shopping demand of global tourists, especially high-spending ones. This policy can not only effectively convert potential tourist flow into tangible consumption increments but also, using "shopping" as a core attraction, significantly extend tourists' length of stay, driving the synergistic development of related industries like accommodation, dining, and transportation. Ultimately, it transforms policy dividends into industrial growth momentum and regional economic vitality. From international experience, Okinawa and Jeju, all treat the offshore duty-free policy as the cornerstone of their tourism industry development. Japan's Okinawa, as a global pioneer in offshore duty-free, has a policy characterized by "high quota, few restrictions, simple procedures," with no limits on shopping frequency or nationality. It has formed an ecosystem of "duty-free + characteristic commerce" around commercial districts like Kokusai-dori in Naha. Republic of Korea's Jeju Island adopts a finely managed model of "quota and frequency limits," providing sufficient shopping incentives while avoiding excessive economic reliance on the duty-free industry, and reinvesting duty-free revenue into local infrastructure. For Hainan, although the offshore duty-free policy has achieved remarkable results, continuous efforts are needed in both the "depth" and "breadth" of the policy. The key for Hainan lies in not merely being satisfied with the growth of duty-free sales but striving for a leap from simple "price advantage" to comprehensive "value advantage." By optimizing product structure, improving service quality, and deepening industrial linkages, it aims to build a consumption hub with global influence and unique appeal.

To seize the opportunities presented by the customs closure policy and establish Hainan as a globally attractive duty-free shopping hub, it is recommended to focus on advancing the following three aspects: First, innovate consumption models to enhance the shopping experience. Based on the existing 100,000 yuan annual duty-free quota, consider researching more flexible single-item duty-free policies for high-end custom and limited-edition goods. Actively introduce a "duty-free + customization" model, collaborating with internationally renowned brands to establish debut centers and custom workshops, creating a "Hainan Exclusive" consumption experience. Simultaneously, leveraging the post-closure "zero tariff" policy dividend, optimize the supply chain for high-end goods to achieve price synchronization with international markets, strengthening the price-performance advantage. Second, create a "Hainan Limited" product system, promoting industrial value upgrading. Learning from Okinawa's success in combining duty-free shopping with local specialties, vigorously promote the deep integration of duty-free shopping with Hainan's local characteristic

industries. Fully utilize the policy allowing duty-free sales of 6 categories of domestic products, promoting duty-free shops to establish "Hainan Famous Products Halls." Internationalize the packaging of specialty products like deep-processed tropical fruits, Li and Miao brocade cultural and creative products, and Hainan agarwood to create a "Hainan Limited" series. Introduce domestic trendy brands and designer resources to enrich product hierarchy, achieving a shift from "purchasing agent transit" to "brand export." Third, optimize service processes to enhance competitive advantages. Continuously optimize the layout and logistics systems of duty-free shops, upgrading diversified pick-up services like "pick up upon purchase" and "guaranteed pick-up." For new policy-eligible groups such as departing island and departing country tourists, optimize the setup of pick-up zones and process guidance at airports and port terminals. Vigorously improve after-sales service systems, establishing return, exchange, and warranty mechanisms aligned with international standards, and introducing value-added services like multilingual shopping guides and personalized shopping consultants. Through the dual-driver approach of "competitive pricing + high-quality service," consolidate and enhance Hainan's core competitiveness in the global duty-free market.

3.3 Implement More Open Visa and Air Rights Policies, Facilitate International Tourist Flow

Visa and air rights facilitation are the core lever and prerequisite for expanding the international tourism source market. The mechanism of action is that, by simplifying or exempting entry visa procedures, it can significantly reduce the travel decision-making costs and psychological barriers for international tourists, directly expanding the potential source base. Expanding air rights openness and increasing international flight frequency effectively enhances the destination's accessibility and transportation convenience, shortening spatiotemporal distance and building an "air bridge" connecting global source markets. The synergistic effect of both addresses the key issues of "getting in" and "how to get in," injecting sustained momentum into international tourist flow. From case experience, all destinations treat visas and air rights as strategic tools to attract international tourists. Republic of Korea's Jeju Island, leveraging its special self-governing province status, implements highly competitive individual visa-free policies for Chinese citizens, making it a "first choice" and "quick choice" for Chinese outbound tourists. Japan's Okinawa, targeting its core source market China, innovatively launched the "Okinawa Multiple Entry Visa" policy, making a visit to Okinawa the "key" to obtaining a Japanese three-year multi-entry visa, successfully locking in high-value repeat customers. Simultaneously, Okinawa continuously expands Naha Airport and opens new cruise berths, strengthening its sea-air hub function. For Hainan, although a 59-country visa-free entry policy has been implemented, there remains significant room for improvement in the precision, convenience of visa policies, and the depth of air rights openness. Hainan cannot be complacent with existing policies; it must adopt a more proactive and open stance, promoting an upgrade of visa and air rights policies from "having" to "excellence," aiming to establish itself as one of the most convenient and fastest tourism destinations in the Asia-Pacific region for personnel movement.

To build more international passenger flow channels, Hainan can promote the following innovative measures: First, explore regional visa-free arrangements, creating a "Tropical Tourism Circle." Referring to the Jeju model, on the basis of the 59-country visa-free policy, attempt to pioneer visa-free policies for specific regions. For example, it could first implement multi-day entry visa exemption for group tourists from ASEAN countries, gradually expanding to individual tourists as conditions mature. This aims to leverage geographical proximity and climate similarity to deeply integrate Hainan into the Southeast Asian regional tourism market, attracting the vast Southeast Asian source market and forming a regional tourism linkage effect. Second, deepen air rights openness pilot programs. Fully utilize fifth-freedom traffic rights, focusing on opening aviation markets in "Belt and Road" countries and RCEP member states. Actively carry out seventh-freedom traffic rights trials, allowing foreign airlines to operate passenger routes directly between Hainan and a third country without stopping in their home country. Support Chinese and foreign airlines in launching and increasing direct flights between Hainan and major source markets like Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, and Australia-New Zealand through measures like establishing special funds, building a "Belt and Road" air corridor with Hainan as a node. Third, innovatively develop "aviation + tourism" formats. Leveraging the 144-hour transit visa-free policy, develop characteristic products like "half-day tours" or "one-day tours" for transit tourists. Encourage airlines and tourism enterprises to cooperate in launching bundled packages like "air ticket + duty-free shopping" or "air ticket + hotel + attraction," leveraging airlines' global distribution systems to lock in customers in advance. Support base airlines in opening feeder routes for cruise homeports, achieving integrated "air-sea intermodal" services.

3.4 Promote Strategic Upgrading of Tourism Product System, Create Core IPs

The innovative upgrading of the tourism product system and the creation of core intellectual properties (IPs) are the key paths to enhancing the core competitiveness of an international tourism destination and achieving the leap from resource dependence to value creation. The mechanism of action is that, by developing high value-added formats and creating unique cultural IPs, it can effectively break through the homogeneous competition of traditional sightseeing

tourism, attract high-consumption tourist groups from specific niche markets, extend tourists' length of stay, and increase per capita spending. A successful core IP not only serves as a powerful "traffic entry point" but also endows the destination with unique emotional value and brand recognition, forming sustained appeal and word-of-mouth effect, thereby driving the entire tourism industry up the value chain. From case experience, all destinations achieved differentiated competition through product innovation and IP creation. Japan's Okinawa focuses on developing MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) and workation (remote work + vacation) tourism, launching high-end products like cruises and adventures for affluent groups, and shaping its brand using cultural symbols like karate. Republic of Korea's Jeju Island deeply integrates with "Korean Wave" culture, combining film/TV IPs with local romantic landmarks, successfully crafting a "romantic holy land" image, achieving a perfect transformation from cultural export to tourism consumption. For Hainan, despite possessing natural resources, its tourism products still exhibit a homogenizing tendency of "beach + hotel," lacking globally influential iconic IPs and deep experiential products. Hainan must undertake strategic product upgrading, shifting from providing a beautiful "backdrop" to creating an immersive "main stage," building a diversified, high value-added tourism product system with distinctive Hainan imprints.

Hainan should focus on the strategic positioning of an "International Tourism Consumption Center," taking the "Tourism +" integrated development as the path, and undertake the following strategic layouts: First, construct a "medical + tourism" industrial ecosystem. Relying on the policy advantages of the Boao Lecheng International Medical Tourism Pilot Zone, focus on developing medical tourism products like specialized health and wellness, high-end medical aesthetics, and assisted reproduction. Introduce top international medical institutions to create an integrated service system of "screening - treatment - rehabilitation - recuperation." Develop traditional Chinese medicine health tourism routes, combining hot spring therapy, climate therapy with traditional Chinese medicine, building an internationally renowned tropical health and wellness destination. Second, build a "MICE + tourism" brand matrix. Leveraging the brand effect of the Boao Forum for Asia, cultivate professional MICE brands with international influence. Develop characteristic formats like "MICE + duty-free shopping," "MICE + golf," "MICE + cruise," constructing a comprehensive service system integrating business meetings, incentive travel, and exhibitions. Cultivate local MICE enterprises, introduce internationally renowned MICE institutions, and enhance the specialization level of MICE tourism. Third, cultivate "culture + tourism" super IPs. Deeply explore characteristic resources like Li and Miao ethnic culture, marine culture, and Nanyang culture, creating iconic IPs such as "Hainan International Film Festival," "Round Hainan Island International Regatta," and "Li & Miao March 3rd International Tourism Festival." Develop immersive cultural experience projects, build living heritage spaces like intangible cultural heritage workshops and cultural villages. Promote cultural and creative product development, realizing the value transformation of cultural resources into tourism products. Fourth, innovate the "sports + tourism" product system. Leveraging the advantages of a tropical island, vigorously develop water sports like surfing, diving, sailing, and sea fishing, building international-standard training bases and competition venues. Cultivate characteristic sports tourism products like triathlons, tropical rainforest adventures, and island cycling tours, creating a year-round outdoor sports paradise. Fifth, develop "rural + tourism" characteristic formats. Integrating with the rural revitalization strategy, cultivate new rural tourism formats like shared farms, pastoral complexes, and beautiful villages. Develop characteristic products like tropical agricultural sightseeing, farming experience, and rural homestays, creating a rural tourism pattern of "one village, one product; one town, one characteristic," achieving coordinated urban-rural tourism development. By constructing a multi-level, high-quality tourism product system, Hainan will effectively enhance the added value of its tourism industry, shape a distinctive international tourism brand, and lay a solid foundation for building an international tourism consumption center with world influence.

3.5 Build International Transportation Hubs and a Smart-Green Transportation System, Enhance Connectivity Efficiency

Constructing international transportation hubs and a smart-green transportation system is the core infrastructure and strategic fulcrum supporting the customs closure operation of the Hainan Free Trade Port and enhancing its international tourism competitiveness. The mechanism of action is that, through high-level open ports (airports, seaports) and convenient, efficient internal transportation networks, it can significantly reduce the time cost and physical exertion for international tourists, achieving "fast in, slow travel." Simultaneously, integrating smart technology and green concepts can not only improve the refined operation and management of transportation but also meet global tourists' expectations for low-carbon, environmentally friendly travel modes. It is a key measure in shaping the advanced, efficient, and responsible international image of the Hainan Free Trade Port. From case experience, all destinations prioritize the upgrading and intelligentization of transportation infrastructure. Japan's Okinawa continuously expands Naha Airport, upgrades cruise ports, and internally builds a public transportation network with the "Yui Rail" monorail as the backbone, integrated by a MaaS (Mobility as a Service) system. Republic of Korea's Jeju Island undertakes systematic development through JDC, reinvesting duty-free revenue into transportation infrastructure. For Hainan, customs closure operation

places higher demands on the freedom and convenience of personnel movement, requiring the transportation system to match it. Hainan needs to accelerate the construction of hardware facilities while promoting their deep integration with tourism consumption scenarios, achieving a virtuous cycle of "transportation-consumption conversion."

Integrating with the policy framework of "first-tier liberalization, second-tier control" for customs closure operation and the transportation planning in the Overall Plan for the Construction of Hainan Free Trade Port, the following measures are proposed: First, build integrated "air-rail-sea" international transportation hubs. Utilize the opportunity of further liberalized air rights policies post-closure to promote the expansion of Meilan and Phoenix airports, focusing on increasing flight frequencies to major source markets like Southeast Asia, Japan-Korea, and Australia-New Zealand, while actively exploring long-haul European markets. More crucially, efficiently advance the seamless connection of "air-rail intermodality" between Haikou Meilan International Airport and the Hainan Island Ring High-Speed Railway, achieving "off the plane, onto the high-speed rail, fast access to the whole island." At Yangpu Port and Sanya Port, construct international cruise homeports to high standards, strive to implement more convenient "multi-port cruise itinerary" policies, and explore "cruise + flight" combined services to attract international high-end cruise passengers. Second, comprehensively upgrade the "Hainan Island Tourist Highway" into a "Tourism Consumption Corridor." The island tourist highway is not just a transportation project but also an economic one. Systematically plan and layout a batch of "super service areas" along the highway integrating sightseeing, leisure, shopping, and experience. These service areas should introduce duty-free shopping experience stores, Hainan specialty boutiques, characteristic dining, and cultural/creative markets, making them tourist destinations and consumption points themselves. Third, government-led promotion of smart mobility. Integrate data from all travel modes—aviation, rail, ferry, bus, car rental, shared bikes—to create a unified provincial "Smart Travel Hainan" platform. Targeting domestic and international tourists, provide multilingual services, enable intelligent itinerary planning, and, under compliance, offer international tourists precise real-time information, attraction bookings, and multilingual navigation services. Fourth, systematically promote the "greening" and "scenarization" of the transportation system. In response to the construction of a National Ecological Civilization Pilot Zone, promote the construction of electric vehicle and electric bicycle charging networks across the island, especially in popular tourist areas along the east coast. Encourage scenic spots, hotels, and commercial complexes to support the construction of charging facilities.

3.6 Innovate Ecological Protection Mechanisms, Consolidate the Development Foundation

Sustainable ecological protection is the green base and core value of island-type international tourism development. Its mechanism of action is that, an excellent natural environment is itself the most attractive tourism resource and the lifeline of the tourism industry. By establishing effective ecological protection mechanisms, not only can this lifeline be safeguarded to ensure the sustainable use of tourism resources, but "lucid waters and lush mountains" can be transformed into "golden mountains and silver mountains." This transformation is not simple extraction but involves building a virtuous cycle of "protection - experience reinvestment," allowing ecological protectors to benefit and tourists to pay for quality ecology, thereby endowing the tourism industry with strong endogenous and moral appeal, forming a hard-to-replicate core competitiveness. From case experience, all destinations place ecological protection as a strategic priority. Japan's Okinawa implements coordinated protection of World Natural Heritage sites, "conservation utilization agreements," and plans to levy accommodation and visitor taxes, directly using tourism revenue for environmental protection. Republic of Korea's Jeju Island designates ecological protection areas through legislation, adhering to the principle of moderation throughout development, even abandoning facilities like cable cars to maximally protect the landscape. For Hainan, as a National Ecological Civilization Pilot Zone, its ecological advantage is its greatest asset. The current task is how to build, on the basis of existing protection measures, a set of market-oriented, diversified, and sustainable ecological compensation and value realization mechanisms, translating the concept of "ecological priority, green development" into concrete pathways and models, truly achieving the unity of ecological and economic.

Building upon Hainan's existing achievements in ecological protection, focus on promoting mechanism innovation and exploring pathways for realizing the value of ecological products: First, explore establishing a "Hainan Tropical Rainforest National Park and Ecological Contribution Value Trading Mechanism." Within the general control zone of the national park, design a few high value-added, low-environmental-impact ecological experience routes. Proceeds are directly reinvested into park management and surrounding communities according to a set ratio. Simultaneously, explore establishing an "Ecological Contribution Value" market, encouraging enterprises (especially tourism enterprises) to purchase ecological contribution values by funding specific conservation projects (e.g., coral reef restoration, Hainan Gibbon habitat protection). These values can be used to offset part of their carbon footprint or as evidence of fulfilling social responsibility. Second, take the lead in establishing a comprehensive "Carbon" system within the tourism industry. This is key to guiding green consumption. Develop a "Hainan Tourism Carbon" platform to quantify and record points for tourists' low-carbon behaviors. Points can be redeemed for tourism goods, attraction tickets, transportation discounts,

etc., across the province. Simultaneously, promote tourism enterprises like hotels and scenic spots to establish carbon emission accounting systems, using them as important criteria for incentivizing enterprises to proactively reduce emissions. Third, implement a "Sustainable Tourism Certification and Labeling System." Establish a set of "Hainan Green Tourism" certification standards covering the entire chain of "dining, accommodation, transportation, touring, shopping, entertainment." Certify and award qualified environmentally friendly enterprises and products, and vigorously promote them to tourists through various marketing channels. Form a market incentive mechanism, allowing green, sustainable tourism products to receive better market, thereby guiding the entire industry towards a more environmentally friendly transformation.

Hainan should seize the historic opportunity of building a Free Trade Port with Chinese characteristics. Through the systematic of policy, consumption, passenger flow, products, infrastructure, and ecology across six dimensions, it ultimately aims to build an international tourism consumption center with world influence.

4 Conclusion

Integrating the successful experiences of Okinawa and Jeju, island-type tourism destinations aiming for high-quality development must construct a systematic development model integrating "policy guidance --- product innovation --- eco-friendliness --- infrastructure support." Hainan Province, as China's only tropical island province, should fully draw upon these experiences. On the basis of utilizing the advantages of the Free Trade Port policy, it should further strengthen top-level design, optimize offshore duty-free and visa policies, promote the transformation of the tourism product system towards high added value and sustainable development, accelerate the construction of a smart-green transportation system, and innovate ecological protection mechanisms. Through multi-dimensional coordination and systematic advancement, Hainan is poised to achieve leapfrog development in its journey to build an international tourism consumption center with world influence, creating a high-quality island tourism development example that reflects Chinese characteristics.

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