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Research on Empowering High-Quality Regional Economic Development Through Red Cultural Tourism in the Khampa Region

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ABSTRACT
The Khampa Region boasts distinctive Long March red resources, alpine ecological resources and folk customs. Its red sightseeing and study tour industries have achieved initial development, boosting local income growth and ethnic unity. Nevertheless, fragmented resources, monotonous business formats, short industrial chains, inadequate supporting facilities and insufficient regional coordination hinder the full exploitation of the economic potential of red resources. This paper analyzes the development bottlenecks and puts forward countermeasures in terms of resource integration, business format innovation, industrial chain extension and diversified financing to drive regional industrial upgrading and residents' income growth.

KEYWORDS
Khampa region; Red cultural tourism; Cultural-tourism integration; High-quality regional development; Long march culture

1 Introduction

Centered on Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the Khampa Region covers Xizang-inhabited counties across the Western Sichuan Plateau. It is a pivotal segment of the Long March where the Red Army stayed for the longest period and carried out the most abundant ethnic united front work. Dense red heritage sites here have fostered a distinctive red culture born from the Long March experience on the plateau. As the Northwest Sichuan Ecological Demonstration Zone and the core cultural tourism zone of the Greater Shangri-La Area, the Khampa Region has long been confronted with multiple developmental obstacles, including ecological protection restrictions, a homogeneous industrial structure, a wide urban-rural income divide and insufficient endogenous impetus for growth. Reliance merely on traditional agriculture, animal husbandry and conventional sightseeing tourism is incapable of sustaining the region's sustainable high-quality development.

Red cultural tourism boasts three core values: cultural inheritance, industrial income growth and ethnic unity. Focusing on red intellectual property (IP), it can integrate plateau ecological resources, Khampa intangible cultural heritage and organic agriculture and animal husbandry resources to form a closed loop for integrated development. In recent years, alongside the full implementation of the National Long March Cultural Park, a series of projects have been completed in succession, such as the Moxi red research and study base in Hailuogou, the former Red Army sites in Sertar, red blockhouses in Danba, and the Zhuokeji red scenic spot in Barkam. The number of red tourism visitors has kept increasing, and the driving effect of red cultural tourism on county economies has become increasingly evident. Even so, local red tourism in Khampa is still stuck in the initial stage of site visits and static displays. The transformation efficiency of red resource value is relatively low, the linkage between primary, secondary and tertiary industries remains weak, and the economic radiation scope generated by the red economy is limited.

Against the policy backdrop of revitalizing old revolutionary base areas, consolidating a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation, and advancing high-quality development in Xizang-inhabited areas in the new era, this paper selects red cultural tourism in the Khampa Region as its research object. It elaborates on the internal mechanism whereby red tourism empowers regional economic development, sorts out the actual development situation based on field investigation cases, identifies major existing restrictive factors, and proposes a targeted development path of red cultural tourism suited to plateau Xizang-inhabited areas. The research is expected to help the Khampa Region tackle the dilemmas of underdeveloped industries and slow resident income growth through the exploitation of local red resources.

2 Current Development Status and Empowerment Foundation of Red Cultural Tourism in the Khampa Region

2.1 Multiple Supporting Conditions

Garzê preserves more than 200 Long March red relics, including the Bopa regime and Danba Tibetan Independent Division, forming unique red resources with prominent research and study value. Supported by multi-level policies at national, provincial and prefectural levels, Garzê has set up a CNY 500 million special guiding fund for red industries and developed cross-regional red tourist routes via Sichuan-Chongqing and Great Shangri-La cooperation. In 2024, the

prefecture received 43.85 million tourists with total tourism revenue hitting CNY 48 billion. Resources such as yaks and Thangka can be developed into characteristic businesses combined with red IP. A transportation network connects core red sites, and the study tour market remains stable; the Moxi site alone received over 12,000 study tour groups in 2025.

2.2 Typical Practical Demonstrations

Three benchmark projects have been built locally. Moxi launches the dual route of "Party History Lectures + Glacier Sightseeing". Its village-benefiting linkage mechanism drives over 640 residents to gain an annual income increase of more than CNY 8 million. Danba integrates red blockhouses with Jiarong intangible heritage, balancing tourist flows between peak and off seasons through real-scene experiences and cultural & creative products. Sertar invests CNY 180 million in the construction of the Long March National Cultural Park, develops a self-driving red loop, and coordinates tourism development and grassland protection under the "red projects plus ecological compensation" mechanism.

2.3 Phased Development Characteristics

First, development is government-led. Fiscal funds accounted for 65% of investment in red projects in 2025 while private capital made up less than 20%, with scarce market-oriented financing channels. Second, tourism formats are outdated with a lack of digital and immersive products, resulting in short tourist stays and weak consumption conversion. Third, industries are scattered without cross-county industrial chain coordination, and fewer than 10 enterprises produce red cultural and creative goods. Fourth, red tourism delivers remarkable social benefits yet limited economic driving force, as the added value of red industries only accounts for 8% of the total cultural tourism output value, leaving huge untapped income growth potential.

3 Restricting Factors for Red Cultural Tourism Empowering Regional Economy in the Khampa Region

3.1 Fragmented Red Resources and Lack of Cross-Regional Coordination Mechanisms

The overall planning of regional red resources has obvious deficiencies. Each county independently renovates and promotes its red sites without integrating resources around three core themes: the Bopa People's Republic, the Danba Tibetan Independent Division and major Long March conferences. Fragmented red narratives make it impossible to build large-scale red tourism destinations. Garzê, Aba and Diqing of Yunnan share homologous red resources yet operate separately with no channels for tourist exchange. The prefecture lacks a unified red IP and standardized service system, while inconsistent ticketing, reception and commentary standards across counties damage long-distance tourists' experience. Besides, no prefecture-level coordinating body has been established, and regular systems for joint resource development, tourist sharing and revenue distribution are absent, leaving clustered development of red resources without institutional support.

3.2 Superficial Integrated Formats, Short Industrial Chains and Weak Value Conversion

Red tourism products suffer severe homogeneity, dominated by static exhibitions of cultural relics and pictures, with a shortage of digital and immersive interactive products. Red cultural and creative products merely print slogans and portraits without integrating local elements such as Thangka, Tibetan embroidery and blockhouses, resulting in low added value. The industrial chain is disconnected between upstream and downstream: local institutions researching red historical materials and designing cultural creations are scarce, and most creative content is outsourced externally. Supporting facilities including red homestays and study tour bases are inadequate, and rural sites have limited reception capacity. Deep processing of agricultural & animal husbandry products and red-themed e-commerce lag behind, failing to form a complete industrial loop. In addition, tourism sees striking peak-off season imbalance: tourist flows plummet from November to March every year due to severe cold and snow, scenic revenues concentrate in four summer months, leading to drastic fluctuations in herdsmen and farmers' operating income.

3.3 Weak Industrial Supporting Infrastructure and Multiple Rigid Constraints

Transportation and digital facilities lag far behind. Remote red sites are connected by low-grade roads lacking sufficient snow removal and anti-slip facilities in winter; village-level relics have no parking lots or bilingual service centers, and less than 50% of townships are covered by 5G, pushing up costs for smart tourism construction. There is an acute shortage of interdisciplinary tourism talents: fewer than 200 certified bilingual commentators work across the prefecture, while professionals in cultural creation, study tour planning and investment & financing suffer severe brain drain; external talents are hard to recruit due to harsh plateau conditions, slowing down format innovation. Over 80% of red sites lie within ecological control and geological hazard zones, requiring supporting ecological restoration projects. Construction costs are 30% higher than inland regions with extended investment return cycles, discouraging private capital investment.

3.4 Single Investment & Financing Channels and Imperfect Benefit-Sharing Mechanisms for Rural Prosperity

Industrial funding relies heavily on fiscal appropriation, while market-oriented financing tools such as special red tourism bonds, industrial funds, carbon sink pledges and PPP projects are rarely implemented. Red tourism projects feature long return cycles and weak early cash flow, yet banks set high credit thresholds and short loan terms, bringing high financing costs for small and micro tourism operators. Long-term low-interest special credit products for red tourism have not been fully rolled out across the region. Revenue distribution rules vary from county to county, with farmers receiving low dividend ratios and long payment cycles. Tourism dividends barely reach rural grassroots, and a long-term interest linkage mechanism that drives rural revitalization via red tourism has not been established.

4 Optimization Paths for In-Depth Empowerment of High-Quality Development in the Khampa Region via Red Cultural Tourism

4.1 Build a Region-Wide Coordination System and Integrate Red Resources to Form Cluster Advantages

Set up a prefecture-level coordinating body for red cultural tourism to manage over 200 red sites across the prefecture, and design three cross-county high-quality tourist routes: the snow-capped mountain study tour route, the Bopa regime cultural route and the grassland self-driving route, realizing resource and tourist sharing among counties. Cooperate with Aba and Diqing of Yunnan to build a collaborative platform for Greater Shangri-La red tourism, featuring unified loop planning, universal ticketing and integrated regional promotion. Distribute tourism revenues based on each region's resource contribution to shift red resource development from scattered standalone construction to integrated regional cluster operation, unlocking the income-boosting effect of economies of scale.

4.2 Innovate Diversified Integrated Business Formats and Extend the Full Red Industrial Chain

Develop immersive study tour experiences including crossing snow-capped mountains and collecting grain on grasslands, and design tiered study tour products for enterprises, public institutions and primary & secondary schools. Combine intangible heritage such as Thangka, Tibetan embroidery and blockhouse craftsmanship to launch red handicraft workshops, and build red homestays and agricultural picking bases to improve offline consumption scenarios. Adopt VR and holographic technologies to reconstruct Long March historical events and build online digital exhibition halls to attract young consumers. Optimize the full industrial chain: support local institutions to excavate red historical materials and create exclusive regional IPs; construct concentrated study tour bases and red catering blocks to prolong tourists' stay; build deep processing plants for agricultural & animal husbandry products and convert scenic passenger flows into long-term specialty sales revenue via live-streaming e-commerce, forming a complete industrial loop to raise comprehensive benefits.

4.3 Improve Region-Wide Supporting Facilities and Address Plateau Hardware Shortcomings

Strive for superior special funds to upgrade roads leading to remote red sites and fully equip snow removal & anti-slip facilities; build bilingual tourist service centers and standardized parking lots at all red sites. Cooperate with communication enterprises to achieve full 5G coverage in towns and grassland areas, popularize intelligent tour guides and digital exhibition equipment, and build smart red scenic spots. Collaborate with local colleges to cultivate native talents proficient in bilingual commentary, cultural creation and tourism operation, organize regular free skill training and introduce external professional operation teams. All new and renovated projects shall be matched with ecological restoration schemes, and special funds extracted from scenic operating income will be used for grassland maintenance and geological hazard governance to balance industrial development and plateau ecological protection.

4.4 Expand Diversified Investment & Financing Channels and Improve the Benefit-Sharing Mechanism for Common Prosperity

Raise funds through multiple channels: apply for special-purpose bonds for the National Cultural Park of the Long March and provincial red tourism support funds, and introduce state-owned and private enterprises to operate red venues and study tour bases via the PPP model. Encourage local banks to launch long-term low-interest special credit products for red tourism, allow pledges of scenic operation rights and cultural & creative intellectual property rights, and innovate credit enhancement modes based on forest and grassland carbon sinks to lower financing thresholds for micro and small operators. Standardize a win-win multi-stakeholder interest linkage mechanism, allow village collectives to contribute land and dwellings as shares, and enable farmers and herdsmen to engage in homestay, catering and handicraft businesses with unified revenue distribution ratios. Earmark a fixed proportion of tourism revenue for rural infrastructure construction and agricultural & animal husbandry upgrading to broaden residents' operational and asset

income channels, consolidating the institutional foundation for long-term rural revitalization driven by red tourism.

5 Conclusion

The Khampa area boasts one-of-a-kind red resources featuring the Long March history on the plateau and ethnic unity. Complemented by its exceptional plateau ecology and distinctive Khampa folk customs, local red cultural tourism holds immense potential to fuel high-quality regional economic development. At present, an initial framework for Khampa red cultural tourism has taken shape. Initiatives including red study tours and red-themed villages have effectively boosted county-level consumption and raised incomes for farmers and herdsmen. Even so, multiple bottlenecks persist: fragmented resource integration, monotonous integrated business forms, short industrial chains, inadequate supporting infrastructure, limited investment and financing avenues, and weak brand influence. These problems lead to low efficiency in translating the economic value of red resources into tangible gains.

To further leverage red cultural tourism for the high-quality development of the Khampa region, efforts must be grounded in the unique realities of Tibet-inhabited plateau areas, namely ecological restrictions and special requirements for ethnic governance. Centered on innovative diversified business formats and based on the coordinated integration of all regional resources, we need to shore up weaknesses in transportation, digital infrastructure and talent support systems. It is also critical to develop market-oriented investment and financing mechanisms as well as benefit-sharing mechanisms that enrich local residents, and jointly build a unified public brand for regional red cultural tourism. The above approaches can fully unlock the integrated economic, cultural and social values of the red cultural industry. They will drive the transformation and upgrading of industries across the region, steadily expand income sources for local residents, and deliver three core goals in tandem: ecological conservation, ethnic solidarity, and improved quality of regional economic growth. Furthermore, this will generate a replicable and promotable Khampa practical model for red cultural tourism to bolster regional development in plateau old revolutionary base areas nationwide.

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