

The Evolution and Influence of the Lianzhou Foto Festival (2005-2019) on Lianzhou City

Yao Qiong and Arkom Sa-Ngiamviboon

Maharakham University, Thailand

Corresponding Author, E-mail: arkom.s@msu.ac.th

Abstract

This study aims to systematically analyse the development and economic influence of the Lianzhou Foto Festival in Lianzhou City from 2005 to 2019, to explore ways of using the festival to build a local cultural brand, and to assess its effectiveness. As a research objective, this study examines how photography festivals influence the city's image and promote cultural tourism. The research sample consists of data collected from photography festival activities over the years through literature analysis and observation methods. The research tools were analysed mainly using official data made public by the Lianzhou Municipal People's Government in order to assess the influence of photography festivals on Lianzhou's urban image building and tourism economy.

Data collection included comprehensive records of festival activities, visitor statistics, and economic data from various sources such as literature and official data. A mixed qualitative and quantitative research methodology was used in the research analysis to assess the contribution of the festival in enhancing Lianzhou's international image and stimulating tourism growth, i.e., increasing the number of tourists and tourism revenue.

The results of the study show that over the past 15 years, the Lianzhou Foto Festival has successfully transformed itself into a cultural event of international significance, which has significantly raised the global profile of the city of Lianzhou. This transformation has contributed to the diversification of the city's economy, making the Lianzhou Foto Festival an important force in the development of regional cultural strategies.

Keywords: Lianzhou Foto Festival; Cultural Development; Economic Impact; Tourism; City Image Shaping.

Introduction

The Lianzhou Foto Festival has been held in Lianzhou City, Guangdong Province, China, since 2005; the festival has become an important cultural event in the field of photography in China by showcasing the work of contemporary Chinese photographers and introducing international photographic trends (Li, S., Wang, B., Yang, L., & Tang, M. (2016).

The Lianzhou Foto Festival is more of a contemporary art 'festival' using photography as a medium and is held annually (Duan, Y., Bao, K., Wang, N., Nan, W., & Duan, L. 2014). As a small city, Lianzhou uses this festival to explore and address macro-level global issues through the lens of photography. The fact that Lianzhou is small does not prevent it from exploring big global macro issues (Jin, L., 2016).

With the success of the Lianzhou Foto Festival, Lianzhou City has demonstrated the effective use of cultural events as a tool for local development and an increase in cultural confidence. Zhou Dongmei (2015) points out that the festival not only enhanced the cultural

and social image of Lianzhou, but also brought significant economic benefits, especially in the tourism industry, and successfully enhanced the city brand image of Lianzhou through the Lianzhou Foto Festival. Lianzhou Foto Festival has successfully tapped into the cultural heritage of Qingyuan and Lianzhou, branded Lianzhou, Qingyuan and even Guangdong Province for foreign cultural exchanges, enhanced the image and popularity of Qingyuan and Lianzhou, and injected a new impetus to enhance the cultural ‘soft power’ of Qingyuan and Lianzhou and to promote new development (Yu, H. 2015). He Kun (2021) pointed out that the local government of Lianzhou is a kind of promotion and development of the local cultural and economic tourism economy by organising photography exhibitions.

This study is devoted to an in-depth analysis of the contribution of the Lianzhou Foto Festival to the cultural development, urban image building, economic and cultural exchanges of Lianzhou City over the past 15 years. The successful experience of Lianzhou Foto Festival provides an example for other regions on how to use cultural activities to promote local development and enhance cultural confidence. By analysing its development model, this study aims to provide a strategic reference for the planning and implementation of similar cultural projects. Duan Yuting's analysis of the Lianzhou Foto Festival and her discussion of the relationship between the art of photography and local development provide the theoretical and practical foundation for this study.

Research Objectives

1. To study the development of Lianzhou Foto Festival
2. To study and analysis the economic impact of Lianzhou Foto Festival on Lianzhou City.

Research Methods

This study adopts mixed research methods, including qualitative and quantitative research, to systematically analyse the cultural development, social impact and economic effect of Lianzhou Foto Festival in Lianzhou City from 2005 to 2019.

1. Population and research sample

In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of private photography during the Lianzhou Foto Festival, this Research population will be selected as a representative sample from the overall population. These samples include private photographs that have significant influence and typical significance in each festival. The specific population is divided into the following categories:

(1). Curators:

Curators are at the heart of photography exhibitions and they play a key role in selecting and organising them. Curators not only have a deep understanding of the photographers' works, but also have insight into the cultural significance and artistic value behind the works. Therefore, interviews with curators provide insight into the positioning and development of private photography in the Lianzhou Foto Festival.

(2). General audience:

Feedback and reactions from general audiences are important indicators of the social and cultural influence of photographic works. Their opinions can reflect the reception of private photography in the wider society and the extent to which viewers empathise with

the emotions and self-expression in the work. Interviews with general audiences can provide insights into the influence and dissemination of private photographic works at the mass level.

(3). Specific groups (art lovers and photography enthusiasts):

Art lovers and photography enthusiasts usually have a deeper understanding and acceptance of photography works. They may pay more attention to details when viewing the works and have a keener sense of the artistry and emotional expression of the works. By interviewing this group, a more detailed and professional evaluation of private photographic works can be obtained.

(4).Government officials:

Refers to the decision-making level of the cultural sector, including local and national officials. The government plays an important role in policy guidance.

2. Research instruments

The research instruments primarily utilized in this study include observation sheets for systematically recording observed behaviors and events, archival and literature resources for secondary data analysis, and data analysis software for processing and interpreting the collected data.

3. Data Collection

In this study, data collection was divided into several levels. Firstly, specific data on Foto Festival in Lianzhou, including the number of visitors, economic and socio-cultural influences, were collected through archives and government reports.

Secondly, the document collection section includes relevant research papers, books and reports, focusing on analysing key concepts, theoretical frameworks, research methods and data results in the literature, and comparing the results of different literatures on the research topic.

4.Research analysis

Quantitative data analysis: Descriptive statistical analysis (growth rates, etc.) using statistical software (e.g. Excel, SPSS, etc.) and possibly correlation and regression analyses to explore variable relationships in order to reveal the specific influence of the Lianzhou Foto Festival on visitor numbers, economic and socio-cultural impacts.

Qualitative data analysis: coding of observations, interview transcripts and internet content to identify themes and reveal the social and cultural influences of the Lianzhou Foto Festival on Lianzhou City through content analysis or thematic analysis.

Comprehensive analysis: combining the results of quantitative and qualitative analyses to form a comprehensive framework of understanding that reveals the tourism, economic, social and cultural influences of the Lianzhou Foto Festival on Lianzhou City.

Research Conceptual Framework

This diagram represents the logical flow of the study of the Lianzhou Foto Festival (2005-2019). Below is a breakdown of the framework:

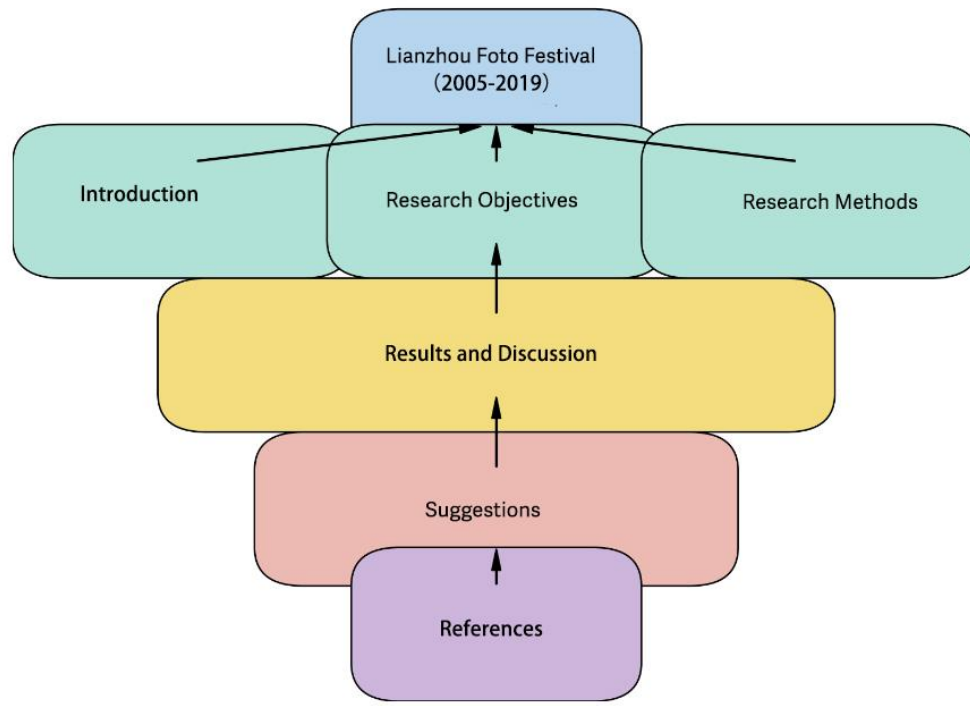


Figure 1: Research Conceptual framework
Source: Created by researchers, 2024

Research Results

1.The development of Lianzhou Foto Festival. Found that:

1.1 Initial vision and objectives

1.1.1 Goal Setting

The initial vision and objectives of Lianzhou Foto Festival stemmed from the vision of the Lianzhou Municipal Government in early 2005, which aimed to achieve multifaceted strategic objectives through the creation of an international annual photography exhibition. The primary goal was to enhance the image of Lianzhou and establish it as a cultural landmark with international recognition. The Lianzhou Municipal Government, in collaboration with photography professionals, hopes to showcase Lianzhou's deep cultural heritage and unique regional charms through the art form of photography, thus establishing the brand image of "China's City of Photography" both at home and abroad. In addition, the establishment of the festival is also aimed at promoting economic transformation, using cultural activities to drive local economic development, especially in tourism and cultural industries. Through continuous operation, the Lianzhou International Photography Festival seeks to build a platform integrating academics, creation, exhibition and trade, aiming to create a win-win situation for both culture and economy, and to promote Lianzhou's transition from a traditional economic model to a more diversified and modern cultural economy. The implementation of

this goal not only enhances Lianzhou's domestic and international popularity, but also significantly contributes to the growth of tourist arrivals and tourism revenue.

1.1.2 International Influence

Since the establishment of Lianzhou Foto Festival in 2005, the construction and deepening of its international influence has embodied an internationalisation path from "double vision" to "no joy, no work".

(1) "Dual Vision: Starting from Lianzhou"

In 2005, Lianzhou International Photography Festival set sail with this theme, marking its pursuit of not only displaying photographic art, but also exploring photography as a tool for cross-cultural dialogue. By focusing on Lianzhou, the festival aims to transcend geographical limitations and build bridges of international exchange.

(2) Combination of Academic and Internationality

Lianzhou Foto Festival adheres to both academics and internationalisation, inviting masters and scholars of photography from home and abroad, and organising high-level academic forums and exhibitions on themes such as "Does the World Exist!" and others, which show that it has a strong presence in the global community. Themes such as "Does the World Exist!" show its academic pursuit and international vision in the global photography art world.

(3) Establishment of International Cooperation Network

With the continuous holding of the annual exhibition, Lianzhou Foto Festival has established close cooperation with major art galleries, museums and photography festivals around the world, which not only attracts the participation of many international photographers, but also promotes cross-border exchanges of photographic works, and further consolidates its international status.

(4) Deepening and Innovating the Theme Year by Year

From the initial "Double Vision" to the later "No Fun, No Work", the theme of Lianzhou Foto Festival has evolved year by year, constantly exploring the new boundaries of photographic art, reflecting the festival's sensitivity to the issues of the times and the pursuit of artistic innovation, which is an important factor in its growing international influence. This is also an important factor for its increasing international influence.

(5) As a cultural exchange platform

By displaying diversified photography works, Lianzhou Foto Festival not only promotes the international exchange of photography art, but also becomes a window for the display of Chinese culture to the outside world, attracting the attention of global photography enthusiasts and professionals, and enhancing the cultural soft power of Lianzhou and even China.

Through continuous academic exploration, internationalised exhibition contents, extensive international cooperation and constantly innovative theme settings, Lianzhou Foto Festival has gradually built up and expanded its status and influence in the international photography community, and become an important bridge connecting China and the world of photography art.

1.2 Main Activities and Features

1.2.1 Academic and Communication

Lianzhou Foto Festival has demonstrated its uniqueness and international influence in terms of academics and exchanges, and strengthened its position as a platform for international photography exchanges through a series of well-designed activities.

(1) Photographer of the Year Award

This award aims to recognise photographers who have demonstrated outstanding talent and innovation in the field of photography. Through a professional judging system, this award not only raises the international profile of the winners, but also inspires photographers around the world. Winners such as Luo Dan and Chen Xiaoyun, whose works have not only received attention domestically, but have also been disseminated on the international stage, highlighting the authority and influence of the Lianzhou Foto Festival.

(2) Academic Forum

The academic forums of Lianzhou Foto Festival are known for their profound themes and the hosting of famous cultural critics such as Zhu Dake, which provide new perspectives for the photography community to think about. These forums promote the deepening of photographic theory and practice through in-depth discussions on interdisciplinary topics such as photographic art, sociology, and anthropology. For example, "The History and Status of Landscape Photography" explores the social and cultural significance of the art of photography and greatly enriches the academic study of photography.

(3) New Photography Award

As a programme aimed at discovering and supporting young photographers, the New Photography Award provides opportunities for emerging photographers to showcase their work and develop their careers. Artists such as Chen Zhe, Sun Yanchu, and Liu Yuan have gone international through this platform. The establishment of this award not only enriches the content of the festival, but also demonstrates the Lianzhou Foto Festival's support and cultivation of new forces in the art of photography, and shows its concern and commitment to the future development of photography.



Figure 2: Still addicted

Source: Sun Yanchu, 2011, the 7th Lianzhou Foto Festival

This session brings together experts from the global art world, including art museum curators, festival directors, publishers, etc. It provides valuable opportunities for international exchange for Asian, especially Chinese, photographers, builds an open network for

international photographic exchanges, and facilitates the international presentation of works and co-operation.

Through these activities, Lianzhou Foto Festival not only promotes the academic research of photographic art, but also strengthens the connection between the domestic and international photographic community, builds a solid bridge for the globalisation of the photographic culture of exchange and understanding, and significantly enhances the status of Lianzhou and even China in the international photographic community. These activities highlight the uniqueness and international influence of Lianzhou Foto Festival in terms of academics and exchanges, making it an important event for the global photography community.

1.2.2 Exhibition Diversity



Figure 3: Lartigue outdoors

Source: Lartigue, 2014, the 10th Lianzhou Foto Festival

Since the opening of Lianzhou Foto Festival in 2005, the diversity of its exhibitions has demonstrated the continuous exploration and deepening of the boundaries of photographic art. Each edition of the festival is centred around a unique and profound theme, reflecting the interaction between photography and society and culture. For example, from the initial "Double Vision - From Lianzhou", which advocates two-way observation through the medium of photography and explores the expression and self-reflection of photography, to "Does the World Exist?" The festival encourages artists to use the language of photography to reconstruct and examine reality, demonstrating the unlimited potential of photography as a tool for reflection and creation. In addition, exhibitions such as "Landscapes Towards Society" not only demonstrated the international dialogue of photographic art, but also emphasized the reflection and criticism of photography on social reality, promoting the exploration of the local characteristics of Chinese landscape photography. Through these well-planned exhibitions, Lianzhou Foto Festival has not only become a platform for the display of photographic art, but also an active place for academic exchanges, promoting international exchanges of

photographic theories and practices, and providing the audience and participants with a rich visual experience and space for reflection.

1.3 Co-operation and Influence

1.3.1 International Co-operation

Lianzhou Foto Festival has demonstrated a far-reaching vision and strategy in establishing its international co-operation, especially in its close ties with art galleries, museums and international photo festivals. Since its inception, Lianzhou Foto Festival has been committed to building a global platform for photographic art exchange, and has significantly enhanced its international influence by inviting the participation of internationally renowned curators and photographers, as well as by co-operating with the world's major cultural organisations.

For example, by planning and presenting exhibitions with international perspectives, such as the theme exhibition "Does the World Exist? For example, by planning and presenting exhibitions with international perspectives, such as "Does the World Exist!" and other thematic exhibitions, Lianzhou Foto Festival has not only attracted the attention of global photographic artists, but also facilitated cooperation with international scholars, such as a doctorate from the Department of Architecture of Harvard University, in designing the exhibition space and enhancing the academics and artistry of the exhibitions. Such international co-operation not only enriches the content of the exhibition, but also enhances the academic standard and international reputation of the festival.

The festival's academic committee and invitation-based exhibition strategy emphasises interaction with the international academic community. For example, the establishment of the Academic Forum, chaired by cultural critics such as Yang Xiaoyan, has attracted the participation of theorists and curators from all over the world, which has demonstrated its important position in international academic exchanges on photography. In addition, Lianzhou Foto Festival provides Asian, especially Chinese, photographers with the opportunity to communicate directly with experts in the international art world, including art museum curators and festival directors, through the "Meet the Image Experts" programme. This not only promotes the international presentation of works, but also opens the way for photographers' international careers.

Through these international co-operation and exchange activities, Lianzhou Foto Festival has succeeded in bringing the small city of Lianzhou to the forefront of international photography. It not only provides a stage for artists to showcase their works, but also promotes a global dialogue on the art of photography and achieves cross-border dissemination and understanding of photographic culture. The success of Lianzhou Foto Festival provides valuable experience for other cities and festivals, demonstrating how to enhance the cultural influence and artistic level of a place through international cooperation.

1.3.2 Exhibition Scale

Since 2005, Lianzhou Foto Festival has gradually built up its unique exhibition scale and influence.

Year	Number of participating photographer	Number of works displayed	Topic overview
2005	221	1658	Double vision. - From Lianju
2009	262	3985	Presence and representation
2011	386	7522	Towards the social landscape
2015	475	9875	Expanding territory
2019	534	11589	No pleasure, no work

Table 1: Overview of Scale of Lianzhou Foto Festival (2005-2019)

Source: Lianzhou Photography Festival

In the early days, such as 2005, thousands of works from over 200 photographers from more than 20 countries and regions were exhibited, and this scale has been increasing year by year until 2011, when the number of exhibited works reached more than 7,500, demonstrating the huge capacity of Lianzhou Foto Festival in artistic display. Each festival attracts officials, experts, scholars and master photographers from more than 20 countries and regions, as well as up to more than 100,000 visitors, reflecting its wide international participation and public appeal. The scale of the exhibition is not only reflected in the number of exhibitions, but also in the deepening and diversification of themes, such as "Does the World Exist!" and "Landscapes Towards Society" demonstrated the festival's deep exploration of the art of photography and social issues. Academic and exchange activities, including academic forums, new photography awards, image experts meet, etc., the scale and quality of these activities have increased year by year, promoting international academic exchanges and talent discovery.

Lianzhou Foto Festival has not only attracted more and more international and domestic photographers to participate over time, but the number of works on display has also shown significant growth, reflecting its continuous growth and increased influence as an international photography exchange platform. The choice of each theme reflects the festival's profound thinking and exploration of photographic art and social reality.

2. The economic impact of Lianzhou Foto Festival on Lianzhou City. Found that:

2.1 Tourism growth

2.1.1 Visitor Volume and Income

Year	Number of visitors (tens of thousands)	Rate of increase	Revenue (RMB100 million yuan)	Rate of increase
2012	521.8	-	22.8	-
2013	665.5	27.50%	31.6	38.60%
2014	734.3	10.30%	35.9	13.60%
2015	794	8.10%	39.2	9.20%
2016	878	10.60%	43.6	11.20%
2017	942.8	7.40%	47.2	8.30%
2018	1006	6.70%	50.6	7.20%
2019	1057.8	5.20%	53.65	6.00%

Table 2: Tourism in Lianzhou City over the years

Source: Extracted from Lianzhou City National Economic and Social Development Statistics Bulletin.

It grew from 5,218,000 trips in 2012 to 10,578,000 trips in 2019, an increase of about 102.5%, with a compound annual growth rate of about 12.8%. This indicates that the attractiveness of Lianzhou City as a tourist destination continues to grow, possibly due to the improvement of tourism infrastructure and diversification of tourism products.

Revenue grew from 2.28 billion yuan in 2012 to 5.365 billion yuan in 2019, an increase of about 134.8%, with a CAGR of about 14.3%. Although the growth rate gradually slowed down with the increase of the base, the overall upward trend was maintained, reflecting the increased contribution of the tourism industry to the economy of Lianzhou City.

Between 2013 and 2015, the growth rate was relatively high, and then slowed down in the following years, but still maintained positive growth, especially after 2016, when the absolute amount of growth in total revenue was still considerable despite the slowdown in the growth rate. This growth trend indicates that tourism has become an important driver of economic growth in Lianzhou City, and has a significant role in optimising the economic structure and increasing the proportion of the tertiary industry.

2.1.2 Lianzhou image enhancement

Since its establishment in 2005, Lianzhou Foto Festival has not only brought significant economic benefits to the local area, but also established a unique and distinctive cultural image of Lianzhou City. The promotion of ancient architecture tourism and hot spring tourism has significantly enhanced its tourism image and attractiveness. The photography festival in Lianzhou City can be analogised to attract photography enthusiasts and cultural tourists by focusing on photography as a form of culture and art, increasing tourists' awareness of and interest in Lianzhou's natural scenery and cultural features.

Referring to the table of Lianzhou City's tourism over the years, the sustained growth in the number of tourists received and tourism revenue from 2012 to 2019, although the direct growth is not directly quantified in relation to photography festivals, such cultural events tend to stimulate the vitality of the tourism market, especially during holidays and special festivals, such as the photography festivals organised in Lianzhou City, which likely contributed to the increase in the number of tourists and tourism income boost. Photography festivals, as a form of cultural branding, can enhance Lianzhou's visibility and showcase its unique natural scenery and cultural features to domestic and international tourists, which in the long run can help to form a unique tourism brand image. For example, if Yuxi County has increased the visibility of the county's tourism through the organisation of branded cultural and sports activities, the Lianzhou Foto Festival is likely to have a similar effect.

By organising cultural activities such as photography festivals, Lianzhou can not only directly increase tourism revenue, but also promote the development of related industries such as catering, accommodation, transportation and souvenir sales, thus optimising the economic structure and enhancing the service function of the tertiary industry, similar to the contribution of the tourism industry in Conghua District to the industrial restructuring.

Lianzhou Foto Festival has a positive effect on the enhancement of tourism attraction and image enhancement of Lianzhou City by improving cultural influence, increasing visitor experience and attracting tourists. Lianzhou Foto Festival has significantly enhanced the tourism attractiveness and cultural image of Lianzhou City through various efforts in brand building, multi-cultural exchange, theme innovation, digital exhibition and international cooperation. The festival has not only become an important economic growth point for Lianzhou City, but also established a unique cultural brand at home and abroad, and promoted the overall development of local economy and society.

2.2 Economic Transformation

Year	GDP	Primary industry	Percent	Secondary industry	Percent	Tertiary industry	Percent
2012	1001479	241719	24.10%	255992	25.60%	503768	50.30%
2013	1099764	258945	23.50%	266127	24.20%	574692	52.30%
2014	1171174	275350	23.50%	269448	23.00%	626376	53.50%
2015	1259704	301640	23.90%	283959	22.50%	674105	53.50%
2016	1372352	352449	25.70%	307029	22.40%	712874	51.90%
2017	1460655	359742	24.60%	323115	22.10%	777798	53.20%
2018	1568920	375530	23.90%	342254	21.80%	851136	54.20%
2019	1554800	419900	27%	431300	27.70%	703500	45.30%

Table 3 : Lianzhou City's industrial revenue and GDP over the years (Unit: RMB 10,000)

Source: The data is derived from Qingyuan City Statistical Yearbook.

From the data from 2012 to 2019, the GDP of Lianzhou City has continued to grow, from RMB 100,147,900,000 to RMB 155,480,000,000. In terms of industrial structure, the following features are presented:

Primary industry: the share shows an overall decreasing trend, from 24.10% to 27%, indicating a gradual decrease in the share of agriculture in the economy, but a slight increase in 2019, possibly due to agricultural restructuring or the promotion of specific agricultural activities.

Secondary sector: a relatively stable and slightly fluctuating share of 27.70 per cent in 2019, indicating that the position of manufacturing and industry in the economy remains stable, but the growth drivers may require new catalysts.

Tertiary sector: significant growth, with the share increasing from 50.30% to 45.30% in 2019, showing the expansion of the service sector, which may be driven by activities such as culture and tourism.

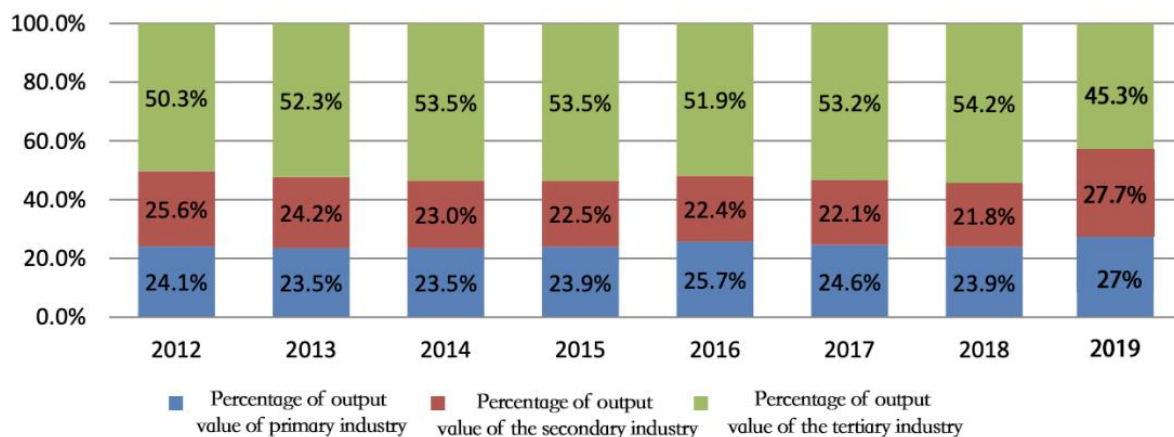


Figure 4: Industry and GDP of Lianzhou City over the years

Source: The data is derived from Qingyuan City Statistical Yearbook.

As an important cultural event, Lianzhou Foto Festival attracts a large number of domestic and foreign tourists, driving the development of related industries. For example, the accommodation, catering, transport and entertainment industries have benefited from the flow of visitors brought by the photography festival. In addition, the Photo Festival has also promoted the development of cultural and creative industries, such as the sale of artefacts, exhibitions of photographic works and the development of cultural derivatives. All these provide new employment opportunities and sources of income for local residents, further promoting the adjustment and optimisation of the economic structure.

Lianzhou Foto Festival not only brings direct economic benefits to the local community, but also promotes the transformation of Lianzhou City's economy from traditional agriculture and industry to a modern economic structure based on service and cultural industries by enhancing the cultural brand and attracting tourists. This transformation not only enhances the economic vitality of Lianzhou City, but also provides residents with more development opportunities and a higher quality of life.

Discussion

1. research results

The results of this research provide a comprehensive understanding of the development and economic influence of the Lianzhou Foto Festival from 2005 to 2019. The research findings highlight several key aspects:

1.1 The development of the Lianzhou Foto Festival:

The study shows that the Lianzhou Foto Festival has successfully evolved from a local event to a major cultural festival with international recognition.

1.2 Economic influence on Lianzhou:

The influence of the festival on Lianzhou's economy is reflected in the significant growth of tourism and the transformation of the city's economic structure. From the data made public by the Lianzhou Municipal People's Government Office, the number of people travelling to Lianzhou more than doubled between 2012 and 2019, and the tourism revenue increased significantly. The photography festival has played a crucial role in the structural transformation of Lianzhou's economy from a traditional agricultural and industrial structure to one that focuses more on services and cultural activities.

2. Consistency with previous studies:

The results of this study are consistent with the results of previous studies on the Lianzhou Foto Festival and its influence. Yu Hongyang's 'Lianzhou, a Small Mountain City's Beautiful Encounter with Light and Shadow' points out that the Lianzhou Foto Festival has shaped the cultural brand; Chen Yuanpeng points out that the Lianzhou Foto Festival has enhanced Lianzhou City's international influence; Zhou Dongmei's 'The Marketing Strategy of Lianzhou Foto Festival' mentions that the Lianzhou Foto Festival has had a great influence on Lianzhou City's tourism economy; and Han Jing's 'The Photography Exhibition Drives the Economy - Tourism Benefits the Most' mentions that Lianzhou Foto Festival has driven the local economy and culture. This study confirms and extends these findings by providing updated data and a more detailed analysis of the festival's influence over a longer period of time.

3. Inconsistencies with existing literature

Most of the existing studies are descriptive studies based on one particular edition of the Lianzhou Foto Festival, and this study is consistent with much of the existing literature, but

it also offers new insights, particularly in terms of exploring the specific mechanisms by which the festival impacts on the local economy and cultural landscape. For example, detailed analyses of visitor growth and economic data provide empirical evidence that complements the more qualitative assessments of previous studies. In addition, this study looks at the important role that international co-operation plays in expanding the influence of photography festivals, highlighting the critical nature of this point which has not been fully explored in earlier studies.

In conclusion, the discussion of the findings suggests that the Lianzhou Foto Festival has played an important role in shaping the cultural and economic landscape of Lianzhou City. The festival has been successful in achieving its original objectives and has contributed to local development through internationalisation and cultural branding. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing a nuanced data analysis of the influence of the photography festival, which provides valuable insights for future cultural events in similar contexts.

Suggestions

1. deepen the photography education programme, set up a resident artist programme, record rural changes, participate in rural cultural construction, and promote a virtuous cycle of art and social development.

2. pay attention to the training of local photographers in exhibitions and seminars, encourage the creation of photographic works reflecting the social reality of Lianzhou and China, and construct a photographic theory system with Chinese characteristics.

3. pay continuous attention to social issues and cultural heritage, explore environmental protection and urban-rural relations through photography, protect Lianzhou's cultural heritage, and promote the preservation and innovation of cultural diversity.

Through these strategies, Lianzhou Foto Festival will not only continue to promote academic research and practical innovation in the art of photography, but also further consolidate the cultural brand of Lianzhou City, and inject lasting cultural power into the city's comprehensive development.

References

- Duan, Y., Bao, K., Wang, N., Nan, W., & Duan, L. (2014). Lianzhou: Ten years of rage - Dialogue with Duan Yuting, artistic director of Lianzhou International Photography Annual Exhibition. *Chinese Photographer*, (12), 24-41.
- He, K. (2021). Characteristics of Chinese landscape photography [Master's thesis, Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts]. *Online*. Retrieved from <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27399/d.cnki.gxamx.2021.000111>
- Jin, L. (2016). An international photography exhibition of county-level cities in China. *21st Century Business Review*, (01), 102-103.
- Li, S., Wang, B., Yang, L., & Tang, M. (2016). 2015 Research report on the development of photographic art in China. *Chinese Photographer*, (05), 88-99.
- Yu, H. (2015). Lianzhou, a small mountain town with a beautiful encounter of light and shadow. *Well-off*, (24), 62-63.
- Zhou, D. (2015). Research on marketing strategy of Lianzhou Photography Annual Exhibition. *Knowledge Economy*, (23), 68-69. <https://doi.org/10.15880/j.cnki.zsjj.2015.23.041>