

Practical Values and Practical Paths for the Integration of Tourism and Education in the New Era

Na Su*

Hainan Vocational University of Science and Technology, Haikou 571126, Hainan, China

Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

Copyright: © 2026 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: With the in-depth advancement of the cultural and tourism integration strategy in the New Era, cross-border linkages between the tourism industry and education have gradually become a key driver for industrial upgrading and educational reform. The integration of tourism and education breaks the single recreational nature of traditional tourism and the closed model of classroom teaching, realizing two-way empowerment: transforming tourism resources into educational resources and embedding educational resources into real scenarios. In recent years, China's study travel market has entered a stage of rapid growth with a scale of over 100 billion yuan, showing strong momentum. However, it also exposes structural problems such as superficial integration, homogeneous products, weak faculty, and inadequate industry governance. This paper systematically analyzes the diverse practical values of tourism-education integration, identifies current development bottlenecks, and proposes optimized paths from five dimensions: institutional improvement, curriculum development, talent cultivation, digital empowerment, and brand building. It aims to promote the deep, standardized, and high-quality integrated development of tourism and education, and provide references for the implementation of quality-oriented education and the upgrading of the cultural and tourism industry.

Keywords: New era; Cultural and tourism integration; Tourism education; Study travel; Practical paths

Online publication: March 26, 2026

1. Introduction

Against the background of high-quality development, the construction of all-for-one tourism and the reform of quality-oriented education in the New Era are advancing simultaneously. The integrated model of "tourism + education" has been increasingly mature, becoming an emerging growth point for the innovative development of the cultural and tourism industry^[1]. The traditional sightseeing tourism model is highly homogeneous, which can hardly meet the public's demand for high-quality, experiential and connotative cultural and tourism consumption. Traditional classroom teaching focuses too much on theoretical instruction and lacks practical experience scenarios, making it difficult to fully meet the practical requirements of cultivating students' moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic and labor abilities in an all-round way.

Driven by both policy support and market demand, the scale of the tourism-education integration industry has continued to expand. Relevant statistics indicate that the market size of China's study travel industry reached 213.2 billion yuan in 2025, representing a year-on-year growth of 19.04%. The overall market size of China's study travel sector is projected to surpass 300 billion yuan by 2028, reflecting strong momentum in industry development^[2]. As the primary

carrier of tourism-education integration, study travel can transform resources such as natural ecology, historical relics, revolutionary culture, and rural folk customs into practical educational scenarios, effectively expanding the space for talent cultivation. Meanwhile, it drives the iterative upgrading of tourism products based on educational demand, thereby achieving the coordinated improvement of social, educational, and economic benefits ^[3].

With the rapid expansion of the industry scale, the standardized construction lags behind and the connotative development is insufficient. It is urgent to build a scientific and perfect development system to promote the tourism-education integration towards in-depth, high-quality and normalized development.

2. Practical values of the integration of tourism and education in the new era

2.1. Educational value: Expanding educational scenarios and improving the quality-oriented education system

For a long time, China's basic education has been plagued by weak practical teaching, single scenarios and insufficient experience, resulting in limited effects of practical, aesthetic and ecological education. Relying on outdoor real-scenario resources, tourism-education integration extends the classroom to natural landscapes, cultural venues, revolutionary bases and rural fields, constructing immersive, experiential and inquiry-based teaching scenarios and truly practicing the educational concept of integrating knowledge with practice ^[4].

From the perspective of market consumption characteristics, the core demands of most families participating in study travel activities focus on cultural cognition, ability training and comprehensive quality improvement, reflecting that tourism-education integration is highly consistent with the direction of quality-oriented education reform in the New Era ^[2]. Through diverse practices such as field research, teamwork, cultural experience and natural observation, students can effectively exercise innovative thinking, practical ability and social adaptability, foster patriotism, ecological awareness and cultural confidence, effectively make up for the shortcomings of traditional classroom education, and further improve the all-round education system.

2.2. Industrial value: Enriching product formats and boosting the transformation of the cultural and tourism industry

China's traditional tourism industry has long relied on the sightseeing mode, with a single product structure, low added value and gradually weakened growth momentum. The integration of educational elements effectively enriches the cultural connotation and functional attributes of tourism products, promoting the transformation of the tourism industry from the traditional "ticket economy" to a new development model of knowledge experience and cultural immersion ^[5].

New business forms of tourism-education integration continue to expand, maintaining a growth rate higher than the average level of the cultural and tourism industry for many years. It effectively drives the coordinated development of upstream and downstream industries such as study camp construction, curriculum research and development, cultural and creative products, guidance services and activity operation, continuously extending the cultural and tourism industrial chain and expanding industrial profit space ^[6]. Meanwhile, tourism-education integration can revitalize idle resources such as rural areas, ecology and intangible cultural heritage, tap the development value of niche resources, promote the efficient utilization of regional cultural and tourism resources, and inject sustained impetus into the high-quality development of local cultural and tourism.

2.3. Social value: Inheriting regional culture and improving social civilization literacy

Various natural and cultural tourism resources carry China's excellent traditional culture, revolutionary culture and rural folk culture, serving as important carriers for cultural communication and value cultivation ^[7]. Tourism-education integration carries out cultural education activities through real-scenario experience, enabling teenagers to get close to historical culture, folk skills and revolutionary stories, promoting the inheritance of excellent culture from generation to

generation and continuously enhancing national cultural identity and pride.

Normalized study practice can popularize public concepts such as ecological protection, civilized travel and social responsibility, guide the public to establish green, civilized and rational travel concepts, continuously improve national civilization literacy and ecological awareness, contribute to the construction of urban and rural spiritual civilization, and consolidate the civilized foundation for harmonious social development.

2.4. Talent value: Connecting industrial needs and cultivating interdisciplinary cultural and tourism talents

The new business form of cultural and tourism integration puts forward higher requirements for the comprehensive ability of practitioners. The industry is in urgent need of interdisciplinary talents with tourism operation, education and teaching, cultural interpretation and activity organization capabilities^[8]. At present, there are obvious shortcomings in the industrial talent structure: traditional tourism service personnel lack teaching design ability, and school teachers lack experience in cultural and tourism activity organization and market operation, leading to a prominent mismatch between talent supply and demand^[4].

The development of tourism-education integration forces colleges and universities to optimize talent training programs, promote in-depth integration of industry and education, improve the teaching system around study curriculum development, practical teaching organization and cultural and tourism resource development, and cultivate interdisciplinary talents adapting to market development in a targeted manner, effectively filling the industrial talent gap and providing talent guarantee and intellectual support for the sustainable development of the tourism-education integration industry.

3. Existing problems in the integrated development of tourism and education in the new era

3.1. Imperfect multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism and low industrial standardization

At present, tourism-education integration is mostly promoted spontaneously by market entities. The linkage and coordination mechanism among the government, schools, enterprises and society is not yet sound, and cross-departmental overall governance is insufficient^[9]. Industrial surveys show that more than 40% of study travel cooperations in China are short-term one-off projects, and the proportion of long-term stable, school-enterprise co-constructed and normally operated study travel bases is relatively low. The division of powers and responsibilities among the education, culture and tourism, and market supervision departments is not clear enough. Industrial access standards, curriculum norms, safety management and evaluation systems have not been fully unified, resulting in a low industrial entry threshold. Malpractices such as low-price competition, false publicity, and prioritizing sightseeing over education occur from time to time, restricting the standardized and high-quality development of the industry^[2].

3.2. Severe product homogenization and superficial mining of educational connotation

In the process of rapid industrial expansion, some operators highlight problems of emphasizing profit over quality and form over connotation^[5]. More than 70% of study travel products on the market still stay in the shallow mode of scenic spot visits and simple explanations, lacking clear teaching objectives, hierarchical curriculum systems and complete achievement evaluation mechanisms^[3]. Most products are not designed differently according to the cognitive laws and age characteristics of students at different school stages, with similar content and a single form, insufficient inquiry, practical and innovative content, and ineffective exertion of educational value, which not only causes waste of cultural and tourism resources but also reduces public study travel experience and recognition.

3.3. Large gap in professional teachers and insufficient team professionalization

The shortage of professional study travel instructors is a key bottleneck restricting the quality upgrading of tourism-

education integration^[6]. According to 2025 industrial talent statistics, the gap of certified professional study travel instructors in China exceeds 200,000, and less than 18% of on-the-job practitioners have systematic teaching ability, curriculum design ability and emergency response capacity^[5]. At present, most study travel leaders are transformed from tour guides or scenic spot staff, lacking systematic education and training; school teachers lack practical organization experience and have limited on-site guidance, resource explanation and emergency management capacity. The overall faculty level cannot adapt to the high-quality development demand of the 100-billion-level study travel market.

3.4. Insufficient digital integration and lagging construction of smart study travel

The development of tourism-education integration in China is still dominated by offline real-scenario activities, with a slow digital transformation process^[1]. At present, less than 15% of study travel bases have built smart study travel service platforms and online curriculum resource libraries. Most regions face problems such as scattered resources, blocked information and lagging curriculum updates. Smart models such as VR virtual study travel, digital exhibition halls and online-offline hybrid study travel are less popular, which can hardly adapt to the development trend of smart education and smart tourism. The industrial innovation impetus is insufficient, and the level of resource sharing and efficient utilization needs to be improved^[7].

4. Practical paths for the in-depth integration of tourism and education in the new era

4.1. Improving the collaborative governance system and standardizing industrial development order

The government should strengthen top-level design, improve industrial access standards, curriculum norms, safety management systems and comprehensive evaluation mechanisms for study travel in accordance with national cultural, tourism and education development policies^[1,9]. Break down collaboration barriers among education, culture and tourism, market supervision and other departments, and establish a supervision system with clear powers and responsibilities and efficient linkage. Actively build a cooperation platform with government overall planning, school leadership, enterprise operation and social participation, support long-term stable school-enterprise co-constructed study travel bases, and reduce fragmented and formal cooperation projects. Continuously strengthen industrial rectification, severely crack down on unhealthy phenomena such as vicious low-price competition, false publicity and sightseeing-oriented study travel, and promote the transformation of the industry from scale expansion to quality improvement and standardized development.

4.2. Deeply mining the educational connotation of resources and constructing a hierarchical curriculum system

All regions should be based on characteristic resources such as revolutionary culture, ecological resources, intangible cultural heritage skills and rural folk customs, and deeply explore the popular science, ideological and political, and educational values of resources^[10]. Abandon the homogeneous sightseeing development model and construct a hierarchical curriculum system according to the cognitive characteristics of students at different school stages: the primary school stage focuses on interesting experience and cognitive enlightenment; the middle school stage focuses on practical inquiry and ability training; the higher education stage focuses on research innovation and academic practice. Simultaneously improve the teaching syllabus, practical tasks, study travel manuals and evaluation standards, create systematic, normalized and curriculum-based study travel products, and truly realize the integration of travel and learning and the application of knowledge.

4.3. Deepening industry-education integration and building a professional faculty

Colleges and universities should optimize the curriculum of cultural, tourism and education-related majors combined with industrial development needs, and add practical modules such as study travel curriculum design, outdoor practical teaching, safety emergency response and cultural and tourism resource development^[10]. Improve the mechanisms of

school-enterprise two-way training, mutual employment of teachers and on-the-job training, perfect the professional certification system for study travel instructors, and continuously expand the professional faculty. Meanwhile, absorb inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, literature and history experts, industrial backbones and front-line teachers to form part-time study travel teams, enrich the faculty structure, and comprehensively improve the quality of study travel teaching and service ^[6].

4.4. Accelerating digital empowerment and upgrading and constructing a new smart study travel model

Relying on digital technologies such as big data, VR/AR and artificial intelligence, build a regional smart study travel resource sharing platform, integrate study travel bases, high-quality curricula, faculty resources and teaching cases, and realize inter-regional resource interconnection ^[1]. Actively develop virtual study travel scenarios, digital cultural exhibition halls and online popular science curricula, and construct a hybrid study travel model of “online preview + offline practice + online review”. Break through time and space constraints with digital means, expand the coverage of high-quality study travel resources, and promote the upgrading of tourism-education integration towards intelligence, refinement and modernization.

4.5. Building characteristic brand IP and promoting high-quality industrial upgrading

All regions rely on their own resource endowments to differentially build characteristic brand systems such as revolutionary ideological and political study travel, ecological popular science study travel, intangible cultural heritage aesthetic education study travel and rural labor study travel ^[5]. Integrate regional cultural, tourism and education resources, build a complete industrial chain integrating resource development, curriculum research and development, activity implementation, achievement display and brand communication, and solve the problem of homogenization with high-quality, characteristic and branded development. Continuously release the educational, cultural and industrial values of tourism-education integration, and lead the industry to achieve sustainable and high-quality development.

5. Conclusion

The in-depth integration of tourism and education is an inevitable trend for the reform of quality-oriented education, the upgrading of the cultural and tourism industry and the construction of a culturally powerful country in the New Era. At present, China’s tourism-education integration industry continues to expand in scale and release market vitality, with outstanding advantages in improving education quality, empowering industry, inheriting culture and cultivating talents. Meanwhile, problems such as imperfect coordination mechanisms, product homogenization, faculty shortage and digital lag still restrict the in-depth development of the industry. In the future, guided by the fundamental task of fostering virtue through education, we should continuously improve the collaborative governance mechanism, deeply explore the educational connotation of resources, strengthen the construction of talent teams, promote digital empowerment and innovation, and cultivate characteristic brand IP, to promote the transformation of tourism and education from superficial superposition to in-depth symbiosis, realize multi-win-win in education, industry, culture and society, and contribute to the coordinated high-quality development of cultural, tourism and education.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2021, 14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural and Tourism Development, visited on 2026-02-20, <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202106/03/WS60b88a01a31024ad0bac36f8.html>.
- [2] II Media Research, 2025, 2025 China Study Travel Market Development and Consumer Behavior Survey Report, visited on 2026-02-20, <https://www.iimedia.cn/c400/108371.html>.
- [3] Zhang XM, Ding HK, 2024, Study Travel: Development Evolution, Value Implication and Innovative Paths. *Journal of Taishan University*, 46(1): 140–144.
- [4] Qin YP, He JY, 2024, Construction of Practical Courses for Study Travel in Colleges and Universities Based on the Concept of “Major-Innovation Integration”. *Journal of Luoyang Normal University*, 43(10): 59–63.
- [5] China Tourism Academy, 2025, 2024–2025 China Study Travel Development Report, visited on 2026-02-20, <https://www.ctaweb.org.cn/>.
- [6] Wang YY, 2024, Research on the Innovation of Industry-Education Integration Mechanism for Study Travel from the Perspective of Industrial Chain. *Journal of Qingdao Technical College*, 37(5): 32–36.
- [7] Song YP, Lian KP, 2025, Research on the Service Path of Study Travel in Public Libraries Under the Background of Cultural and Tourism Integration. *Journal of Agricultural Library and Information Science*, 37(8): 92–103.
- [8] Bai HW, 2025, Research on the Talent Training Path for Study Travel Product Design from the Perspective of Interdisciplinary Integration. *Sichuan Labor and Social Security*, (11): 57–58.
- [9] General Office of the CPC Central Committee, General Office of the State Council, 2020, Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era, visited on 2026-02-20, https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2020-10/15/content_5551609.htm.
- [10] Jiang JY, Qiu XY, Xie J, 2024, Research on the Development Strategy of Rural Study Travel Resources in Characteristic Towns from the Perspective of Symbiosis Theory—Taking Wengyuan Jiangwei Orchid Town, Shaoguan City, Guangdong Province as an Example. *Business Economy*, (12): 105–108.

Publisher’s note

Whioce Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.