Exploration on Spiritual Healing Value of Youth Cultural Tourism from the Perspective of Cultural Media

Luanxi Zou

Broadcasting and Hosting Art Major, Neijiang Normal University, Neijiang 641100, China

379370829@qq.com

Abstract. This article analyzes the spiritual healing value of cultural media on youth cultural tourism, with the core research object being the 18-35 age group. Based on publicly available research data from the Institute of Psychology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the China Tourism Research Institute, this study adopts the methods of current situation induction and logical analysis. Data shows that the detection rate of depression risk among young people aged 18-24 is 24.1%, and workplace competition pressure and information overload have led to the normalization of negative emotions among young people; the post-90s and post-00s generations have become the core groups of cultural and tourism consumption, accounting for 36.6% and 16.2% respectively. Their travel motivation has shifted from traditional sightseeing to physical and mental adjustment and emotional relief. Through cultural media such as short videos, digital cultural heritage and museum platforms, and interest communities, four mature cultural and tourism healing practice models have been formed in the market by connecting young people with local cultural resources through content empathy, social connection, and digital interaction. Based on this, targeted optimization strategies are proposed to provide practical reference for empowering inclusive youth psychological counseling and leveraging the social-psychological supplementary value of the cultural tourism industry.

Keywords: Cultural Media, Youth Cultural Tourism, Spiritual Healing, Emotional Value, Digital Experience.

1. Introduction

The mental health issues of contemporary youth are becoming increasingly prominent. According to publicly available data from the Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, the detection rate of depression risk among young people aged 18-24 is 24.1%, higher than the national average. The fast-paced urban life and workplace competition continue to consume the psychological energy of young people. The implicit internal friction of high-frequency online socializing also makes the need for emotional counseling more urgent. The distribution of affordable psychological counseling resources in China is uneven, and most young people find it difficult to obtain regular professional guidance. Therefore, outdoor cultural tourism has become a low-cost way to regulate emotions.

The special research on scenic travel jointly released by China Tourism Research Institute and Mafengwo shows that the consumption proportion of post-90s (36.6%) and post-00s (16.2%) exceeds 50%, making them the main consumer group for cultural and leisure tourism. Digital media has become the main channel for young people to obtain travel information, with online cultural relics, short videos, and social platforms being the core carriers. The authoritative industry research results confirm that over 80% of young people use online media as the main reference media for selecting travel destinations, and the output content directly determines individual travel planning and expected travel experience [1].

Consumer demand shifts have reshaped the traditional operation logic of the cultural tourism industry. The previous model of relying on natural scenery and historical sites to attract tourists is no longer suitable for the new needs of young people. The market share of healing cultural and tourism products that focus on physical and mental relaxation is steadily increasing. The cultural and tourism industry has broken away from a single leisure function, and the value of spiritual healing has become the core direction of industry upgrading. Multiple cultural and tourism authorities rely on local history

and natural resources to implement various immersive healing experience projects, expanding the real-world cases of healing-oriented tourism. This article takes cultural media as the research perspective, combines social reality and industry practice, clarifies how media integrates into youth tourism practices, analyzes the internal logic of cultural tourism healing, and proposes optimization paths for existing problems in the industry.

2. The Crisis of Youth Mental Health and the Rise of the Demand for Cultural and Tourism Healing

According to data from the Institute of Psychology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the detection rate of depression risk among young people aged 18-24 is relatively high, far exceeding the national average level [2]. Contemporary youth face multiple psychological pressures. The high-pressure competition in the workplace and the insularity of social circles are continuously consuming the psychological energy of young people. According to relevant data, more than half of young people experience persistent low mood every month. Psychological counseling is unaffordable for most young people due to unbalanced resource distribution and high costs. Normalized professional intervention is extremely difficult for most ordinary young people to afford. Primary psychological service stations are mostly concentrated in large and medium-sized cities, and there is a significant gap in related supporting facilities in county-level areas. From the actual situation, low-cost, easy-to-participate-in outdoor cultural tourism has become the preferred choice for young people to regulate their emotions.

Young people's consumption preferences for cultural tourism have also changed markedly. The China Tourism Research Institute has conducted years of research and clearly documented this change. Young people in their early years were enthusiastic about checking in at popular landmarks and taking photos of tourist attractions; In the past three years, the number of orders for immersive slow travel and in-depth local cultural tours has been steadily increasing. The core demand for travel has long shifted from visual check-in to physical and mental rest, as well as emotional recovery [3]. The post-90s generation accounts for 36.6% of scenic travel consumption, the post-00s generation accounts for 16.2%, and the combined proportion of the two generations is 52.8%. Natural recuperation and local folk cultural tourism projects have contributed more than half of the consumption increase by young people, and the growth rate of customer sources far exceeds that of conventional tourist attractions.

Demand shifts directly drive the upgrading of cultural tourism formats. Cultural and tourism departments in various regions are developing projects that are suitable for youth emotional relaxation by combining local resources. Forest hiking, mountain meditation, and starry sky camping are rapidly becoming popular as light healing scenes. Many county-level cultural and tourism sectors have also begun to rely on rural ecological resources to implement similar experiential projects. Youth travel has distinct characteristics: when feeling down, they temporarily plan short trips; Prefer destinations with strong cultural heritage and low foot traffic; Accustomed to using social media to record travels and sort out their emotions a second time. This behavior continuously strengthens the deep connection between cultural media and healing tourism. Cultural tourism is no longer just about leisure attributes, and the value of spiritual healing has become the core direction of industry upgrading. Healing products that combine emotional and social value are the focus of market competition.

3. The Triple Empowerment Mechanism of Cultural Media for Youth Cultural and Tourism Healing

Digital cultural tourism has taken hold, and cultural media now deeply shapes young people's travel choices and experiences. The healing effect can be broken down from three aspects: content, technology, and community, which helps realize the healing value of cultural tourism [4].

The guiding effect brought by content supply is concentrated in the early stage of travel decision-making. Mainstream new media in China, based on local cultural contexts and active intangible cultural heritage resources, continue to produce lightweight historical popular science content, and shape visitors' psychological expectations naturally through daily information flow push. According to the 2025 ByteDance Intangible Cultural Heritage Annual Report, the annual playback of intangible cultural heritage short videos exceeded 806.5 billion times, offline intangible cultural heritage experience merchants increased by 106% year on year, and online traffic has significantly transformed into physical cultural tourism. A large number of young people rely on folk documentary and ancient architectural photography to form cultural empathy, and generate the desire for on-site visits. The emotional experiences accumulated online have become an important psychological foundation for offline healing activities [5].

The permanent free digital cultural relic library of the Palace Museum houses over 100,000 high-definition cultural relic images. In the past two years, the scale of online reading for young people has continued to increase, and the immersive online viewing experience has directly driven a steady increase in the number of visitors to the Forbidden City.

Traveling in different places can easily lead to feelings of unfamiliarity and tension, and digital services can effectively alleviate such problems. AR cultural relic restoration and intelligent digital navigation systems have been implemented in large and medium-sized cultural and museum venues across the country. VR panoramic tours of the Forbidden City and real-life AR guided tours of the Yongle Palace are representative projects; At the same time, self-service explanation terminals are widely deployed in small and medium-sized cultural and museum exhibition halls in the county, effectively reducing social anxiety caused by interpersonal communication and expanding the space for tourists to explore independently.

Community sharing after the trip is an important part of the healing effect of media. The process of young people organizing travel images on social media platforms is also a process of sorting out their inner emotions. Interactive comments within social circles form a lightweight psychological mutual-aid scenario, and the soothing experience gained from a single trip lasts beyond the journey itself. According to the 2025 White Paper on Cultural Tourism Consumption Behavior, 76.4% of Generation Z consumers are willing to pay a premium for emotional attributes attached to products. Healing feelings are the core consumption incentive, and high-frequency social sharing strengthens the connection between media and healing tourism.

4. Four Typical Models and Media Applications of Youth Cultural and Tourism Healing

Various media exert differentiated effects in tourism scenarios based on their content traits and interaction modes. Four healing-oriented tourism models tailored to young people's psychological needs have taken shape across China through local practices. The relevant operational data is archived and retained by the cultural and tourism authorities in various regions, and many mature solutions have been replicated and implemented in many parts of the country.

Natural immersion mode, with native mountain forests and river and lake resources as the core carrier. New media such as TikTok and Xiaohongshu continue to update nature documentary short films to guide urban youth into the countryside space to ease their mood. According to public data from the State Forestry and Grassland Administration, the total number of ecological tourism receptions in China exceeded 3 billion in 2025, and the forest health industry has entered a rapid expansion stage. The health and wellness parks in the suburbs of Beijing and Chengdu have shown significant results in attracting traffic through online content, with an average annual growth rate of over 15% for young customers aged 18-35 for three consecutive years. Being in the original ecological environment can temporarily isolate the mental tension caused by massive information flow and ease mental stress [6].

The cultural traceability model relies on historical ancient architecture and intangible cultural heritage workshops as physical support for projects, and digital cultural and museum content often completes historical science popularization groundwork first. Shanxi and Shaanxi are rich in ancient architectural resources, and online cultural and museum content continues to be transformed into offline on-site passenger flow. In 2025, the Pagoda of Fogong Temple received over 3 million visitors, and Xixian Xiaoxitian received 1.5068 million visitors. According to statistics from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Black Myth: Wukong has linked 27 filming locations of historical sites and attracted a total of 5.3692 million tourists. Field visits to historical relics can deepen individual cultural identity and alleviate negative emotions induced by wandering. The passenger flow records released by cultural and tourism institutions in various regions can confirm the audience size of this model.

The art co-creation mode relies on the implementation of pottery and intangible cultural heritage handicraft workshops, and the handmade products completed by participants are publicly displayed on social platforms. 59 markets were held in Taoxichuan, Jingdezhen in 2025, with nearly 3 million visitors throughout the year. Youth are the core group for handmade experiences. Hands-on creation has become an effective channel for emotional release, and positive comments after the release of the work gradually form a complete healing loop of "creation-sharing psychological gain".

Community linkage mode, various online interest communities become recruitment carriers for offline markets and small music festivals. Since its establishment in June 2025, Chongqing Changshengqiao Aesthetic Market has attracted over one million visitors and gained over 6 million online views. The offline gathering of like-minded young people effectively alleviates normalized social loneliness [7]; Local cultural and tourism operation data can confirm the implementation effect of this type of model.

5. Evaluation and Data Support of the Effect of Cultural Media Empowering Cultural Tourism Therapy

Drawing on recent industry surveys, platform white papers and social research, we assess healing effects from three dimensions: subjective experience, behavioral choice and content creation. The analysis cross-verifies multiple types of data, integrating both macro trends and individual perceptions, and draws conclusions consistent with industry practices.

Focusing on the subjective feelings of young people, industry research has provided intuitive and quantifiable feedback. The results of the 2025 National Youth User Survey by Tongcheng Travel show that cultural travel that has been screened and deeply planned through cultural media has a much better emotional soothing effect than random check-in style travel. According to research conducted by the China Tourism Research Institute, young people who maintain a habit of low-frequency short distance cultural travel for a long time have a significantly lower frequency of self-reported emotional distress compared to those who lack outdoor travel for a long time. The historical popularization and scene rendering completed in advance by cultural media are essentially emotional foreshadowing, which can effectively awaken cultural resonance among young people and lay a solid psychological foundation for offline healing experiences [8].

The differences in subjective feelings will ultimately be projected onto actual travel choices. Observing the changes in youth travel behavior in recent years, the structural adjustment of cultural and tourism consumption is particularly prominent. Based on the annual operational data of both Ctrip and Tongcheng platforms, the popularity of humanistic recuperation and intangible cultural heritage experience therapy tourism products continues to rise, with young people becoming the core consumer group. The length of stay for young people's travel has steadily increased, and the proportion of one-day hasty sightseeing check-in tours has been declining year by year. Immersive slow experiences have gradually become the mainstream of travel [9]. Cultural media guides young people to shift from landscape check-in to physical and mental immersion, reshaping their consumption logic.

This preference change is also directly reflected in the creative tendency of youth cultural and tourism content. Sorting out the trend of youth cultural and tourism content release on social media platforms in the past two years can clearly capture the shift in creative focus. As reflected in a survey conducted by China Youth Daily, in the past three years, the output of cultural and tourism content released by young people has steadily increased in terms of physical and mental insights and humanistic experiences, while the proportion of content related to simply checking in at tourist attractions has continued to decline. This trend directly reflects that the core appeal of youth travel has shifted from "visual sightseeing" to "spiritual rest", and cultural media continues to play a guiding role in demand iteration, promoting the industry to shift from flow-oriented to quality-oriented.

6. Optimizing the Practice Path of Empowering Youth with Cultural and Tourism Healing through Cultural Media

Combining domestic tourism practices, new media operation rules and local pilot experiences, this paper proposes four practical approaches to upgrading healing tourism via cultural media. The optimization ideas are based on existing policies and mature business models, avoiding unfeasible or empty plans.

In terms of content construction, the cultural and tourism department actively connects with short video platforms, abandoning the homogeneous copywriting logic of internet-famous check-in content, and closely focusing on local intangible cultural heritage, local customs, and ancient architecture to shoot documentary short content. The cultural and tourism authorities in Zibo and Lanxi have already established long-term cooperation mechanisms with TikTok and Kuaishou, and the passenger flow increment brought by short video diversion has been included in the local annual cultural and tourism statistics account. Based on local reality, documentary content is more likely to impress young tourists who prefer in-depth tourism, subtly build cultural empathy, and provide support for psychological healing during field trips [10].

The focus of digital technology implementation is on the lightweight transformation of county-level cultural and museum scenes. In accordance with the relevant requirements of the "Action Plan for Innovative Development of Smart Tourism" of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, counties such as Qingchuan in Sichuan and Xinxian in Henan have successively implemented a comprehensive smart tourism system, and intelligent explanation devices for scenic spots have been fully installed. The widespread deployment of affordable digital navigation tools can reduce the anxiety and stress of young tourists when they are in unfamiliar scenic spots, and lower the psychological burden of traveling alone.

In terms of industrial cooperation, we will continue to use the "cultural heritage + psychological science" model that has been piloted in multiple regions [11]. The Jinsha Site uses traditional color culture to create a healing themed special exhibition, and the Sichuan University Museum has launched a museum healing research project. The operator relies on the real data accumulated from the pilot to fine tune the experience content, interspersing simple psychological guidance in folk customs and ancient architecture visits, without the need for additional job positions, balancing service quality and operational efficiency.

At the level of public facilities, relying on the existing youth public welfare service system, local cultural and tourism authorities join hands with youth league committees and communities to launch low-cost short-distance cultural and tourism experiences. The Beijing Youth League Committee organizes regular visits to the old city, and Yuci collaborates with local youth league organizations to launch community-beneficial cultural tourism activities. By relying on public resources to reduce travel costs, the coverage of healing cultural and tourism for ordinary youth continues to expand.

7. Conclusion

This paper explores how cultural media empower spiritual healing in youth cultural tourism, covering empowerment mechanisms, practical models and optimization paths. It clarifies the key value of cultural media in youth emotional counseling and cultural identity construction. Research has found that contemporary youth are affected by workplace pressure, information overload, and other factors, leading to the normalization of negative emotions and an urgent need for psychological regulation. However, professional psychological counseling has high costs and narrow coverage, and cultural tourism has become an important carrier for universal healing with low costs and high accessibility. Through the triple paths of content empathy, digital interaction, and community connection, cultural media breaks down the information barriers between youth and local cultural and tourism resources, forming four well-established healing models: natural immersion, cultural tracing, artistic co-creation, and community linkage. This not only enriches the spiritual value dimension of the cultural and tourism industry, but also provides a supplementary path for the construction of the social psychological service system.

This study has limitations due to objective research conditions. The research data are all from publicly available industry reports and research materials, without conducting on-site interviews or first-hand questionnaire surveys, lacking in-depth evidence from individual experiences; The case selection is concentrated in mature regions of cultural and tourism development, with relatively few samples of county-level and niche healing formats, making it difficult to fully reflect the practical differences in different regions; At the same time, there has not been a more detailed quantitative analysis of the differentiated empowerment effects of different media types such as short videos and interest communities, as well as different age groups of young people. The generalizability of the findings requires further validation.

Subsequent research can be expanded in three directions: long-term tracking of the operation of healing cultural tourism pilot projects in various regions, and observation of changes in user experience; Promote interdisciplinary integration of culture and tourism, psychology, and media studies, and improve the quantitative evaluation system for media empowerment; Based on the county-level cultural and tourism scene, explore the adaptation mode of niche resources, and make cultural tourism healing accessible to more young people.

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