

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This paper mainly conducted qualitative research through the interview method, and analyzed the integrated marketing of Suzhou cultural tourism brand. The research methods of this paper are as follows:

1. Research Design
2. Key informants
3. Research instruments
4. Data collection
5. Data analysis

Research Design

This research adopts qualitative research methods, to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. In order to collect data, we used two sources: primary data and secondary data. The primary data was obtained through interviews with the study sample. Secondary data were collected from prior reports, studies, and documents related to Suzhou City.

Key Informants

The object of this study was to Suzhou city brand manager. Because of this study is qualitative research, we adopted the purpose sampling method, selected the city brand management related participants. Qualitative research is an exploratory research method that focuses on in-depth understanding and explanation of the phenomenon rather than generalization to a larger aggregation. Purpose-based sampling is a commonly used sampling method in qualitative research, which allows researchers to select participants based on specific criteria to obtain rich and detailed information (Patton, 2015).

To better study the integration of cultural and tourism brands in Suzhou, this paper believes that companies that have participated in the integration process, have certain popularity in the local culture or tourism industry, or have a deep understanding

of the local culture (including natural and cultural culture) in Suzhou and their managers who have worked for more than 5 years should be selected as interview objects. Thus, we have a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of Suzhou cultural tourism brand integration and its problems and influences. According to this requirement, this paper divides the research samples into three groups, each group chooses 5 samples for research, and a total of 15 interview subjects are selected. The details and criteria of choosing and dividing interviewees are shown in table 3.1:

Table 3.1 Key informants

Group	Criteria	Interviewee	Details
1	All these enterprises have participated in the process of cultural tourism brand integration in Suzhou, and have a better understanding of the process	Interviewee 1, the manager of Suzhou Mingcheng Group.	Founded on June 18, 2022, the company is an important strategic deployment made by the Suzhou Municipal Party Committee and the municipal government to further strengthen the protection of Suzhou's historic and cultural cities, and belongs to the representative sample of full support and participation in brand integration
		Interviewee 2 of Suzhou Fengyou Cultural Tourism Company	Founded in March 2021, the company is a representative sample that fully supports and participates in brand integration as a company that promotes the characteristics of Suzhou's famous historical and cultural city through tourism by Suzhou Municipal Committee and municipal Government
		Interviewee 3 of Suzhou Jinyuan Tourism Company	Founded in September 2020, the company is a company that explores the history and culture of Suzhou through tourism under the premise of the promotion strategy of Suzhou Municipal Committee and

Table 3.1 Key informants (cont.)

Group	Criteria	Interviewee	Details
			Municipal government. The company has a certain in-depth understanding of the promotion direction of Suzhou tourism, and has participated in the subsequent integration of Suzhou cultural and tourism brands, which is a representative sample of full support and participation in brand integration
		Interviewee 4 of Suzhou Youth Travel Agency	The company was established in September 2021, after the integration of cultural tourism brands began, social capital participated in the integration of cultural tourism brands and tourism in Suzhou city by raising funds. The company played a strong role in further promoting the integration of cultural tourism brands in Suzhou city, and participated in the subsequent integration of cultural tourism brands in Suzhou City. It is a representative sample that fully supports and participates in brand integration
		Interviewee 5, Suzhou Taihu Xintiandi Cultural Tourism Development Co., LTD	The company was established in December 2021, after the integration of cultural tourism brands began, social capital participated in the integration of cultural tourism brands and tourism in Suzhou city by raising funds. The company played a strong role in further promoting

Table 3.1 Key informants (cont.)

Group	Criteria	Interviewee	Details
			the integration of cultural tourism brands in Suzhou city, and participated in the subsequent integration of cultural tourism brands in Suzhou City. It is a representative sample that fully supports and participates in brand integration
2	These enterprises aim to integrate the cultural elements of Suzhou in the promotion and promotion of tourism brands based on the local culture and historic sites of Suzhou, reflecting a better understanding of the local culture of Suzhou	Interviewee 6, the manager of Suzhou Suyuan Tourism Development Company, and its manager is.	The company mainly promotes and participates in the promotion of Suzhou garden culture, and is committed to combining Suzhou garden culture with modern tourism, so as to better integrate Suzhou garden culture into modern life while obtaining tourism income.
		Interviewee 7 of Jiangsu Gusu Catering Recommendation Co., LTD.	The company mainly promotes and participates in the promotion of Suzhou food culture, and is committed to integrating Suzhou food culture into modern tourism, so that tourists can better perceive the charm of Suzhou local food culture, and make Suzhou food with a certain history better integrate into modern life in a cultural way.
		Interviewee 8 of Suzhou Gaoxin Cultural Tourism Group Co., LTD.	The company mainly promotes and participates in the promotion of Suzhou embroidery culture, and is committed to the integration of Suzhou embroidery culture and tourism, so that tourists can fully understand the charm of

Table 3.1 Key informants (cont.)

Group	Criteria	Interviewee	Details
			local Suzhou embroidery in the process of tourism, and enable local residents with embroidery skills to obtain more income from it, so as to promote the inheritance of Suzhou embroidery and integrate it into modern life in a new way.
		Interviewee 9 of Jiangsu Visionary Cultural Tourism Holding Group Co., LTD	The company is mainly involved in the creation and promotion of Suzhou city image, and is committed to integrating all aspects of Suzhou city image with tourism, so that tourists can fully understand the charm of Suzhou city in the process of tourism, and give tourists a deeper impression in a visual way
		Interviewee 10 of Suzhou Zicheng Cultural Tourism Service Co., LTD.	The company mainly promotes and participates in the promotion of Suzhou food culture, and is committed to integrating Suzhou food culture into modern tourism, so that tourists can better perceive the charm of Suzhou local food culture, and make Suzhou food with a certain history better integrate into modern life in a cultural way.
3	These enterprises are committed to fully researching and exploring the characteristics of Suzhou local culture	Interviewee 11 of Suzhou Culture and Tourism Development Company	The company is mainly committed to exploring the local gardens, humanities and natural culture in Suzhou, and integrating them into the promotion of the tourism

Table 3.1 Key informants (cont.)

Group	Criteria	Interviewee	Details
	(such as garden culture, natural and cultural landscape), and through cooperation with other travel		industry. It has more cooperation with other travel agencies and tourism brand companies, and has a certain reputation in the local tourism industry
	agencies, promote these cultures to foreign tourists.	Interviewee 12 of Suzhou Culture International Co., LTD.	The company is mainly committed to the excavation of local cultural culture in Suzhou, including local historical celebrities, traditional crafts and other cultures with a certain historical background, and integrate them into the promotion of the tourism industry. The company has further expanded the influence of Suzhou culture in the local tourism industry mainly through cooperation with other travel agencies and tourism brand companies, and has a certain reputation in the industry
		Interviewee 13 of Zhongyuan Landscape Design (Suzhou) Co., LTD.	The company is mainly committed to the excavation of local natural culture in Suzhou, including local historical sites, surrounding scenic spots and other natural attractions with a certain historical background, and integrate them into the promotion of tourism industry. The company has further expanded the influence of Suzhou culture in the local

Table 3.1 Key informants (cont.)

Group	Criteria	Interviewee	Details
			tourism industry mainly through cooperation with other travel agencies and tourism brand companies, and has a certain reputation in the industry
		Interviewee 14 of Suzhou High-tech Tourism Industry Group Co., LTD.	The company is mainly committed to the integration of the latest visual technology with the local culture of Suzhou, such as VR, 3D projection technology applied to the display process of local attractions, so that visitors can feel the local cultural charm of Suzhou in a more novel and visual impact way. The company has a certain reputation in the industry mainly through cooperation with other travel agencies and travel brand companies in the scenic spot guidance process
		Interviewee 15 of Suzhou Landscape Tourism Development Co., LTD.	The company is mainly committed to the excavation of natural culture in the suburbs of Suzhou city, including local historical sites, natural scenery and other natural attractions with good viewing value, and combine them with urban tourism to expand new tourist routes. Mainly through cooperation with other travel agencies and tourism brand companies, the company has further enriched the selection of Suzhou tourism routes, and has a certain reputation in the industry

The selection criteria included at least 5 years of experience in city brand management, and the company was either culturally representative or involved in the integration of Suzhou cultural tourism brands, Or the company could represent Suzhou's cultural tourism industry to some extent. Through these criteria, the research samples in this paper can be divided into 3 groups according to the requirements. The details of these three groups are showed as follow:

Group 1: Sample group of enterprises participating in cultural tourism brand integration. The sample group consists of 5 people, represented by interviewee 1-5. All these enterprises have participated in the process of cultural tourism brand integration in Suzhou, and have a better understanding of the process.

Group 2: Sample group of enterprises with certain cultural representation. The representative company is Suzhou Suyuan Tourism Development Company, and its manager is interviewee 6. The company mainly promotes and participates in the promotion of Suzhou garden culture, and is committed to combining Suzhou garden culture with modern tourism, so as to better integrate Suzhou garden culture into modern life while obtaining tourism income. interviewee 7-10.

Group 3: Enterprises with high visibility and representation in the local cultural tourism industry. The representative company is Suzhou Culture and Tourism Development Company, whose manager is interviewee 11. The company is mainly committed to exploring the local gardens, humanities and natural culture in Suzhou, and integrating them into the promotion of the tourism industry. It has more cooperation with other travel agencies and tourism brand companies, and has a certain reputation in the local tourism industry. The other four interviewees are interviewee 12-15.

Research Instruments

The in-depth interview is primarily employed to explore the key elements contributing to the uniqueness of Suzhou's city brand, as well as to assess the effectiveness of Suzhou's integrated marketing communication strategies in promoting the city brand. Additionally, it aims to propose initiatives for enhancing Suzhou's distinct city brand through integrated marketing communication strategies.

The communication effect generally includes the reaction, attitude and behavior of the public to the brand cognition. The interviews in this paper mainly investigate the managers' understanding of Suzhou tourism brands, the arrival of media and the behavioral feedback of Suzhou tourism brands, as well as the effects

and existing problems of integrated marketing communication. Since the research samples in this paper are divided into three groups according to their nature, considering the characteristics of integrated marketing, in order to obtain relatively comprehensive interview results, this paper believes that the three groups of samples should be interviewed with the same questions in terms of brand cognition, the necessity of brand integration, the measures and effects of brand integration. The interview outline shown in the table below:

Table 3.2 Interview guideline

Research Objectives	Issues	Questions
To investigate the key components that contribute to the uniqueness of Suzhou's city brand.	Historical and Cultural Heritage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you provide specific examples of Suzhou's historical landmarks or cultural traditions, especially those related to Jiangnan culture, that have played a significant role in shaping the city's brand identity? 2. How do you perceive the importance of Suzhou's historical and cultural heritage, particularly the elements connected to Jiangnan culture, in attracting tourists and investors to the city? 3. Are there any unique cultural events or festivals in Suzhou that are closely tied to Jiangnan culture and contribute to its city brand? Could you describe their impact?
	Economic Strengths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you identify key industries or sectors that have thrived in Suzhou and have become a core part of its economic brand, with a consideration for how these industries connect to Jiangnan culture? 2. In what ways has Suzhou leveraged its economic strengths, including those influenced by Jiangnan culture, to promote the city and attract investment?
	Market Potential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are there specific demographic or consumer trends in Suzhou, especially those influenced by Jiangnan culture, that make it an attractive market for businesses?

Table 3.2 Interview guideline (cont.)

Research Objectives	Issues	Questions
		2. Can you provide insights into any recent developments or initiatives aimed at tapping into Suzhou's market potential, particularly those that align with Jiangnan culture?
	Quality of Life for Residents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are there specific amenities, services, or cultural aspects, including those rooted in Jiangnan culture, that enhance the living experience in Suzhou and, in turn, contribute to its city brand? 2. How does the perceived quality of life in Suzhou, particularly in connection with Jiangnan culture, impact its ability to retain existing residents and attract new ones?
To study the effectiveness of Suzhou's integrated marketing communication strategies in promoting the city brand.	Online Channels (Social media and Online Advertising)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you provide specific examples of Suzhou's social media campaigns or online advertising initiatives aimed at promoting the city brand? What platforms are commonly used? 2. How does Suzhou engage with its online audience through social media? Are there any particular strategies or content types that have proven to be effective? 3. Can you describe any challenges or obstacles Suzhou has faced in its online marketing efforts, and how have these been addressed?
	Offline Activities and Events	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In your opinion, what makes these offline activities effective in engaging with the target audience, including tourists and potential investors, with a focus on Jiangnan culture? 2. Have there been any instances where offline events related to Jiangnan culture did not yield the desired results? If so, what were the lessons learned?

Table 3.2 Interview guideline (cont.)

Research Objectives	Issues	Questions
	Measuring Brand Visibility and Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are there specific tools or analytics platforms Suzhou relies on to gauge the engagement levels of its target audience, especially with respect to content related to Jiangnan culture? How does it analyze engagement data? 2. Can you provide examples of successful engagement strategies implemented by Suzhou that have resulted in increased interaction and positive brand perception, particularly with a Jiangnan culture theme?
To propose initiatives for enhancing Suzhou's unique city brand through integrated marketing communication strategies.	Synergy Between Online and Offline Marketing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From your experience, what strategies or approaches can Suzhou adopt to achieve greater synergy between its online and offline marketing efforts, especially those emphasizing Jiangnan culture? Are there specific examples or case studies you can draw upon? 2. Can you provide recommendations on how Suzhou can seamlessly integrate its online and offline activities to create a more consistent and compelling city brand message, taking Jiangnan culture into account? 3. Are there potential challenges or risks associated with achieving synergy, particularly in the context of promoting Jiangnan culture, and how can these be mitigated?
	Content Strategies for Showcasing Cultural Heritage and Economic Opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are there innovative content formats or storytelling techniques that Suzhou could consider incorporating into its marketing efforts, with a focus on Jiangnan culture? 2. Can you offer examples of successful content strategies used by other cities or regions with similar attributes, especially those related to Jiangnan culture?

Table 3.2 Interview guideline (cont.)

Research Objectives	Issues	Questions
	Segmentation of Target Audiences	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you suggest specific criteria or variables that Suzhou could use for audience segmentation, considering factors like demographics, interests, or behavior, with a consideration for the influence of Jiangnan culture? 2. Are there lessons from other destinations or industries that Suzhou can draw upon when it comes to targeting specific audience segments, especially those interested in Jiangnan culture? specific audience segments?
General Questions		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What challenges or obstacles have you observed in Suzhou's city branding and marketing efforts, particularly in the context of promoting Jiangnan culture? 2. Can you provide examples of successful city branding initiatives or campaigns from Suzhou or other cities that Suzhou could learn from, especially those that highlight Jiangnan culture? 3. How has Suzhou's city brand evolved over time, and what trends or changes have you noticed, particularly with regards to the emphasis on Jiangnan culture? 4. Are there any best practices or lessons learned in the field of city branding and integrated marketing communication that you believe are particularly relevant to Suzhou, especially with an emphasis on Jiangnan culture?

Data Collection

This paper mainly selects the method of interviewing research samples for data collection and analysis, which is a commonly used qualitative research method. The main function of this method is to extract a representative part of the sample

from many relevant target groups in the industry to be investigated, to conduct research analysis on the research object and infer the characteristics, trends, and changes of the research object. In view of this, this paper selects 15 tourism brand managers from Suzhou cultural tourism industry to conduct in-depth interviews through the interview method, to obtain relevant information about the progress and effect of the current Suzhou cultural tourism brand integrated marketing strategy. Based on the interview results, the paper analyzes the existing problems in the integrated marketing of Suzhou cultural tourism brand and the directions for further optimization and innovation.

In the selection of interview samples, this paper believes that the following criteria should be followed: the economic output value of the brand ranks relatively high in the whole industry; The brand should fully participate in the process of Suzhou cultural tourism brand integration; The brand should have a certain representativeness, for example, its main publicity brand can better represent the cultural heritage of Suzhou city, or the brand has a more obvious promotion role in the history of Suzhou tourism development. These criteria are used to determine the research sample of this paper, and their feelings and opinions on the effect, progress and possible problems of brand integrated marketing are obtained in the interview, so as to obtain enough representative information to support the study of Suzhou cultural tourism brand integrated marketing.

Data Analysis

This research will involve qualitative data analysis using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely accepted method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data.

To begin, start with data preparation, which includes transcribing interviews if they are not already in text format. Organize the interview data meticulously, ensuring each interview is clearly labeled and structured. Next, become familiar with the data by reading through the interview transcripts several times to gain a deep understanding of the content. Take notes and make initial observations about key concepts, patterns, and recurring ideas.

The next step is generating initial codes. Code the data by identifying and labeling sections of text that are relevant to research objectives. These codes should capture meaningful content related to city branding, integrated marketing communication, and the key components you are investigating. Afterward, search for themes by

grouping similar codes together to form preliminary themes. These themes should reflect the main topics or patterns in collected data. Be open to discovering unexpected or emerging themes during this phase.

Then, review and define the themes, ensuring they accurately represent the content and context of interviews. Define each theme with clear and concise descriptions. Additionally, the researcher will use data charting to create a data chart or matrix to organize coded data under each theme. This helps visualize how different participants' responses align with each theme and facilitates the comparison of responses across interviews.

The interpretation phase, the researcher will look for patterns, variations, and relationships. Pay attention to nuances and differences in participants' perspectives. Discuss the implications of research findings in relation to research objectives and the conceptual framework. Also, ensure the validity and reliability of your analysis by considering issues of validity and reliability, which can be achieved through member checking (where participants review the findings).