

Exploring Hainan Cultural Confidence in the Framework of Hainan Free Trade Port Development

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Abstract: The construction of the Hainan Free Trade Port (FTP) has created significant and unprecedented opportunities for the development of Hainan's economic, social, and cultural spheres. While the FTP initiative primarily aims to enhance Hainan's global economic connectivity, it inevitably influences local culture, raising questions about how Hainanese culture can preserve and even strengthen its distinct identity amid rapid globalization. This paper explores the development of cultural confidence among Hainanese people within the evolving globalized framework of the FTP. Drawing on recent studies and qualitative analysis, the research highlights the foundational elements of cultural identity, historical traditions, and Hainan's unique regional values that shape cultural confidence in this transforming society. Findings reveal that fostering cultural confidence in Hainan not only strengthens local social cohesion but also enriches the international profile of the FTP. Finally, recommendations are proposed for policies, educational programs, and community engagement initiatives to further integrate cultural confidence into the FTP framework, providing a model for culturally sensitive development in other regions in China and beyond.

Keywords: Hainan Free Trade Port; Cultural confidence; Cultural identity; Hainan culture; Globalization; Qualitative analysis

Online publication: December 23, 2024

1. Introduction

The establishment of the Hainan Free Trade Port (FTP), officially launched in 2020, represents a significant strategic step in China's efforts to achieve enhanced economic integration with the global community. As the largest Special Economic Zone in China, Hainan is poised to become a pivotal hub for international trade, tourism, and innovation. However, the introduction of a globalized economic framework has raised critical questions regarding cultural sustainability and identity. Unlike other free trade zones that focus predominantly on economic growth, the Hainan FTP is distinguished by the rich historical, social, and cultural heritage of the

region. The challenge lies in preserving and promoting this unique culture while supporting global outreach.

Cultural confidence, particularly in regions experiencing rapid economic transformation, has emerged as a critical factor in fostering social stability and identity. The construction of the FTP has therefore heightened interest in understanding how cultural confidence can be developed and sustained in Hainan. This paper aims to examine the concept of cultural confidence within the context of the FTP, exploring its impact on local residents and identifying ways in which Hainan's cultural identity can serve as a valuable asset in the FTP's development.

2. Literature review

2.1. Hainan FTP development and cultural integration

Recent scholarship has examined the interaction between economic development and cultural preservation within the context of Hainan's FTP. Studies by Chen and Huang emphasize the importance of cultural sustainability amidst rapid economic expansion. Their research highlights that integrating cultural values into the FTP framework enhances its international appeal, distinguishing it from other global trade hubs ^[1]. For instance, Li and Chen's analysis demonstrates how traditional Hainanese practices, such as the Li ethnic minority's weaving art and regional festivals, contribute significantly to tourism and cultural pride ^[2].

2.2. Concept of cultural confidence in contemporary China

The concept of "cultural confidence" has been a focal point in Chinese sociocultural studies. Scholars such as Li and Chen ^[2] and Liu ^[3] regard cultural confidence as a fundamental aspect of China's modern national identity and a crucial element for preserving social harmony in the face of globalization. Their research underscores the role of regional cultural confidence in fostering pride, resilience, and identity ^[2,3]. Liu, in particular, asserts that cultural confidence in regions like Hainan not only strengthens national pride but also positively influences China's international image by showcasing the diversity of its regional identities ^[3].

2.3. Qualitative research on cultural identity and tourism in Hainan

Given that tourism is a cornerstone of Hainan's economy, qualitative studies by Li and Chen provide valuable insights into how tourism serves as a medium for cultural expression and the reinforcement of cultural identity ^[2]. These studies illustrate the benefits of integrating local culture into tourism activities, demonstrating that such initiatives enrich visitors' experiences while fostering a sense of pride among residents. For example, the annual Hainan International Tourism Carnival features traditional music, dance, and art, enabling tourists and locals to celebrate and experience the region's cultural heritage. Li and Chen argue that such cultural events not only boost tourism but also cultivate cultural pride among Hainanese residents, reinforcing the significance of cultural confidence in regional development ^[2].

2.4. Challenges and recommendations for cultural promotion

Several studies have identified challenges posed by globalization, particularly its potential to erode local cultural practices. To address these issues, scholars recommend the promotion of unique regional traditions, including traditional crafts, cuisine, and language preservation programs ^[1]. Ma and Zhao suggest that the Hainan government allocate funding to support cultural industries, thereby safeguarding cultural traditions while fostering innovation in local businesses ^[4]. Additionally, Wu advocates for the integration of Hainanese culture into the educational curriculum to instill cultural pride among younger generations ^[5].

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to analyze cultural confidence within the context of Hainan's evolving FTP. The data sources include academic articles published between 2018 and 2023, interviews conducted with cultural experts in Hainan, and policy documents issued by the Chinese government addressing FTP development and cultural preservation. This methodological framework facilitates a comprehensive exploration of both theoretical perspectives and practical applications of cultural confidence as they pertain to Hainan's distinctive cultural identity^[6].

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Elements contributing to cultural confidence

The findings indicate that cultural confidence in Hainan is deeply anchored in traditional festivals, language, and art forms. The Hainanese dialect and the indigenous Li brocade weaving, for instance, are esteemed cultural assets that instill pride among local residents. These cultural markers, when introduced to tourists and newcomers, reinforce local identity and heritage. Furthermore, local legends, storytelling traditions, and annual events such as the Sea God Festival provide continuity, enabling residents to remain connected to their heritage amidst modern societal changes.

4.2. Cultural confidence as a pillar for sustainable development

The study highlights that cultural confidence is integral to sustainable regional development. A robust cultural identity not only attracts international visitors seeking authentic experiences but also fosters social cohesion among the local population. Incorporating cultural values into the framework of the FTP allows Hainan to cultivate a globally competitive economy that remains deeply rooted in local traditions, creating a distinctive regional identity. For example, the promotion of Qiong Opera, a traditional Hainanese theatrical performance, as part of the FTP's cultural initiatives has resonated with both local audiences and international visitors, exemplifying the successful integration of cultural heritage into modern development strategies.

4.3. Policy implications and practical recommendations

The research emphasizes the critical role of government support in maintaining and enhancing cultural confidence. Recommended initiatives include funding programs for cultural education, providing support for artisans, and organizing public events that celebrate Hainanese traditions. Subsidies for cultural industries can aid in preserving traditional crafts, while community programs can facilitate the intergenerational transmission of Hainanese heritage. Additionally, incorporating Hainan's history and culture into school curricula through educational reforms could strengthen cultural pride among younger generations.

5. Conclusion

The rapid development of the Hainan FTP has created unprecedented opportunities for economic and cultural advancement in Hainan. However, balancing this growth with the preservation of the island's cultural identity is essential to maintaining social harmony and fostering a sense of pride among residents. The findings of this study indicate that cultural confidence is a critical element, not only for ensuring regional stability but also for enhancing the FTP's global competitiveness.

Investing in cultural preservation and embedding local identity within the FTP framework positions Hainan as a distinctive model of development that integrates economic progress with cultural continuity. Such an approach underscores the importance of fostering cultural confidence to support both social cohesion and international recognition.

Future research could further explore the long-term effects of FTP development on Hainan's cultural confidence through longitudinal studies. These investigations may also provide valuable insights for other regions aiming to reconcile the demands of globalization with the preservation of local identity.

Funding

This article is one of the research outcomes of the 2024 General Project of Education and Teaching Reform Research in Higher Education Institutions of Hainan Province "Research on the Impact of Hainan Culture and Integration Teaching Strategies in College English Teaching" (Project No. Hnjg2024-182).

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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