

# Sustainable Implementation of Cultural Landscapes in Urban Tourism: A Case Study of Kaifeng, China

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## Abstract

Cultural landscapes play a crucial role in harmonizing heritage conservation and urban tourism development, particularly in historic cities. This study investigates the sustainable implementation of cultural landscapes in Kaifeng, China, a city celebrated for its rich cultural heritage and historical significance. Through qualitative data gathered from in-depth stakeholder interviews and field observations, the research highlights initiatives such as the revitalization of historic neighborhoods, the development of cultural landmarks like towers, and the restoration of river systems as drivers of local sustainable tourism. The findings reveal that integrating cultural landscape conservation, community engagement, and innovative planning tools creates dynamic urban spaces that balance cultural identity with economic growth and enhance the sustainability of urban tourism. This study offers practical insights for policymakers and urban planners seeking to implement sustainable cultural landscapes in historic cities.

**Keywords:** Urban Cultural Landscape, Sustainability Implementation, Urban Tourism, Sustainable Tourism

## Introduction

Cultural landscapes represent the intricate interplay between natural and human elements, embodying historical continuity, cultural identity, and environmental stewardship (Eliasson et al., 2022). As recognized by UNESCO, these landscapes serve as vital connections between tangible and intangible heritage, offering a multidimensional framework for sustainable urban development (UNESCO, 2021). The integration of cultural landscapes within urban spaces is particularly crucial in historic cities, where the preservation of heritage must be balanced with modern development and economic growth.

Urban cultural landscapes serve as dynamic spaces where history, community, and tourism intersect, playing a pivotal role in enhancing cultural experiences, fostering social cohesion, and promoting sustainable urban growth (Zou et al., 2022). In the contemporary urbanization era, sustainable tourism emerged as a critical framework for mitigating the adverse effects of rapid development on cultural heritage while ensuring economic and social benefits for local communities (Lamoria, 2024). However, achieving sustainability in cultural landscapes is often challenging, as cities must navigate competing demands for heritage conservation, urban expansion, and commercial tourism development. Many studies on sustainable tourism tend to focus on iconic global cities, overlooking the nuanced interactions between cultural landscapes and urban tourism in mid-sized historical cities, particularly in developing nations.

Kaifeng, one of China's most historically significant cities, presents a compelling case for examining the sustainable integration of cultural landscapes into urban tourism. Renowned as an ancient capital of multiple dynasties, Kaifeng's cultural heritage forms the backbone of its tourism sector. However, the city faces increasing pressures to modernize while preserving its historical character. The need for this study arises from the urgent demand for strategic urban planning that safeguards cultural landscapes from over-commercialization while leveraging their potential for sustainable economic development. Current efforts in Kaifeng, such as the revitalization of historic neighborhoods, the restoration of water systems, and the integration of Song Dynasty cultural elements into tourism attractions, provide a unique opportunity to evaluate best practices and challenges in balancing conservation with urban growth.

This research aims to bridge existing gaps by examining the planning, implementation, and perception of cultural landscapes in Kaifeng through a qualitative lens. Utilizing stakeholder interviews and site observations, the study explores how urban tourism can harness cultural landscapes to foster sustainable development while maintaining authenticity and historical integrity. The findings will contribute to a broader understanding of how mid-sized historical cities can develop cultural tourism frameworks that harmonize economic benefits with heritage conservation. The study provides valuable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and heritage conservationists, offering practical recommendations for integrating cultural landscapes into sustainable urban tourism models. By advancing knowledge in this area, the research underscores the importance of cultural landscapes not merely as passive heritage sites but as active, evolving components of urban environments that contribute to long-term cultural and economic sustainability.

## **Literature Review**

### *Cultural Landscapes: Definition and Role in Urban Tourism*

Cultural landscapes are essential in shaping and elevating the image of urban tourism destinations, serving as tangible and intangible symbols of historical continuity and cultural identity (Zhou, 2024; Quintana et al., 2018). They contribute to sustainable tourism development by facilitating the creation of new touristic routes and fostering shared intersubjective perceptions, which enhance the experiential depth of urban spaces (Della Spina & Giorno, 2021). As dynamic integrative spaces, cultural landscapes encapsulate a city's distinctive heritage and aesthetic values, offering visitors authentic experiences that differentiate destinations while fostering deeper emotional and cultural connections (Zhu & Chiou, 2022).

By preserving iconic landmarks, traditional architecture, and intangible cultural practices, cultural landscapes craft compelling narratives that strengthen a city's brand identity and cultural resonance with global audiences (Zhu & Chiou, 2022; Olivadese & Dindo, 2024). Furthermore, effectively managed cultural landscapes enhance a city's competitiveness by aligning local identity with global tourism trends, demonstrating a harmonious balance between tradition and modernity (Mrđa et al., 2016). However, the strategic integration of cultural landscapes into urban tourism planning is crucial to mitigating the risks of over-commercialization, which can erode authenticity and undermine the intrinsic value of these cultural assets (Della Spina & Giorno, 2021). When properly managed, cultural landscapes not only attract visitors but also solidify a city's reputation as a culturally rich and sustainable destination (Vaz, & Agapito, 2020; Pavković et al., 2021).

#### *Challenges in Integrating Cultural Landscapes into Urban Tourism*

Integrating cultural landscapes into urban tourism often threatens their authenticity, transforming them into generic attractions and diminishing their unique identity (Hafiz, 2023; Chen et al., 2023). Homogenized tourist experiences further erode their distinctiveness, reducing their appeal to visitors seeking authentic cultural engagement (Zhang et al., 2021). Additionally, urbanization and tourism development disrupt local communities by increasing living costs, displacing residents, and marginalizing local voices in decision-making processes (Kim & Holifield, 2022; Gant, 2018). The absence of robust policies and sustainable management frameworks exacerbates these challenges, leaving cultural landscapes vulnerable to neglect (Akürk&Dastgerdi, 2021). Addressing these issues requires inclusive approaches that balance preservation with tourism growth (Olasunmbo, 2021).

As Taylor (2018) emphasizes, cultural landscapes often face the dual pressures of maintaining historical authenticity and adapting to the economic demands of urban tourism. These pressures can lead to over-commercialization, where the cultural value of landscapes is overshadowed by economic priorities, thereby undermining their intrinsic worth. For instance, poorly managed tourism facilities can further accelerate the degradation of cultural landscapes (Adhika & Putra, 2020; Ginting & Sasmita, 2018), emphasizing the need for planning frameworks that integrate cultural preservation with modern amenities. Recent studies also highlight the role of technological advancements in mitigating these challenges. Hu (2023) point out that technologies like augmented reality (AR) and interactive digital platforms can provide innovative ways to engage tourists without compromising the physical integrity of cultural landscapes.

#### *Sustainability in Urban Cultural Landscapes*

The sustainable management of cultural landscapes within urban tourism requires a comprehensive approach that balances cultural preservation, environmental stewardship, and economic growth (Nocca, 2017). Rapid urbanization and the expansion of tourism in countries like China have heightened the need for sustainable strategies that protect the integrity of cultural landscapes while meeting modern development demands (Chen & Lin, 2022). Collaboration among multidisciplinary professionals has emerged as a critical factor in addressing the complexities of these landscapes, enabling innovative solutions that integrate heritage conservation with urban planning (Smith et al., 2021).

Cultural landscapes hold significant social, cultural, and economic value in urban tourism. Their authenticity and distinctiveness are vital for creating competitive and sustainable tourism destinations (Li et al., 2023). Beyond their economic role, these landscapes foster community identity and social cohesion, providing residents and visitors with a sense of belonging and shared cultural heritage (Zhu & Chiou, 2022). To ensure sustainability, effective governance frameworks are needed to align the interests of diverse stakeholders, including local communities, policymakers, and tourists, mitigating the risks of over-commercialization and environmental degradation (Kim et al., 2023).

China's proactive investments in green infrastructure and sustainable tourism practices, such as eco-friendly transportation systems, illustrate the potential of integrating sustainability into urban cultural landscape management (Huang et al., 2023). However, achieving long-term sustainability requires a more inclusive approach that emphasizes community engagement, resource conservation, and equitable economic benefits (Sharma, 2022). Comprehensive planning that prioritizes stakeholder collaboration and adaptive management practices is essential to maintain the authenticity and resilience of cultural landscapes in urban tourism (Taylor & Lennon, 2022).

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a case study approach to investigate the role of cultural landscape sustainability in promoting urban tourism in inland Chinese cities. Qualitative research methods collected and analyzed data through on-site observations and stakeholder interviews. These methods aimed to capture the subjective experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders, providing a holistic understanding of how cultural landscapes contribute to sustainable urban tourism. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data collected from interviews and observations. NVivo software was used to facilitate the coding process, enabling the identification of recurring patterns and themes. This approach allowed for a systematic examination of stakeholder perspectives, ensuring that the analysis was both comprehensive and grounded in the data. Key themes, such as cultural heritage preservation, community engagement, and urban renewal, were derived from this process and are discussed in the subsequent sections.

### *Study Area*

Kaifeng, located in eastern Henan Province, as show in Fig1, is one of China's seven ancient capitals, celebrated for its rich cultural heritage and historical legacy (Huang et al., 2021; Jian.2002). Known for its role during the Song Dynasty, Kaifeng's historical significance lies in its well-preserved relics and cultural landscapes. Spanning an urban area of 6,240 square kilometers with a population of 4.824 million, Kaifeng is home to over 70 registered cultural relics, including iconic landmarks like the Iron Pagoda and Millennium City Park (Jian.2002). These sites highlight the city's commitment to preserving its unique cultural identity. Recent initiatives emphasize the integration of heritage conservation with tourism development, such as the 2022 designation of Kaifeng as a national pilot city for cultural and tourism consumption. These efforts aim to transform Kaifeng into a sustainable model of cultural tourism by balancing historical preservation with innovative urban planning.

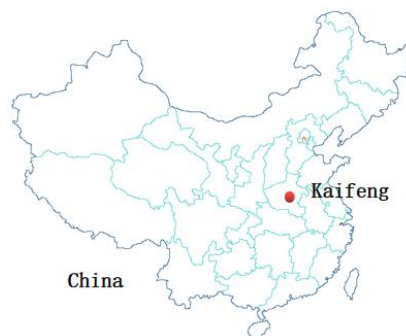


Fig 1: Kaifeng location of China

*Data Collection*

Data for this study were gathered from January to March 2023 in Kaifeng's historical areas, focusing on landscape theme parks, tourist attractions, and historic districts. A total of 8 stakeholders participated in in-depth interviews, ensuring diverse perspectives. Participants included academic experts, cultural tourism planners, local volunteers, visitors, and residents, selected through purposeful sampling to represent a range of roles and experiences. Interviewees, spanning different age groups and professional backgrounds, provided insights into the practical challenges and perceptions of cultural landscape sustainability. Observational data complemented the interviews, offering a comprehensive view of site-specific interactions. All data were analyzed thematically, focusing on patterns of stakeholder engagement, heritage preservation practices, and the integration of cultural landscapes into urban tourism.

Table 1

*Interviewer information*

No.	Age	Gender	Role	Occupation
Manager	38	Female	Manager of Kaifeng Cultural Tourism Planning Department	Manager
Expert	40	Male	Tourism Planning and Management Lecturer	Lecturer
Tourist1	63	Female	Retired teacher	High School Teacher
Tourist2	21	Male	Student	University student
Tourist3	26	Female	Civil Service	Civil Service
Local1	62	Male	Local people live near scenic spots	Retirees
Local2	40	Male	Local people work in the scenic area	Seller
NGO	44	Female	Civil service	Kaifeng Blue Sky Volunteer

**Findings: Key Themes in Kaifeng's Urban Tourism**

This section presents the key findings of the study, focusing on the role of cultural landscapes in Kaifeng's sustainable urban tourism development. Through stakeholder interviews and field observations, themes such as cultural heritage preservation, community engagement, and urban renewal are analyzed to demonstrate how these initiatives contribute to balancing heritage conservation and economic growth.

*Cultural Heritage and Preservation*

Manager:

Kaifeng is distinct in its tourism offerings from other tourist cities mainly because it has relatively few natural resources and instead relies heavily on its rich cultural heritage and unique city culture. In Kaifeng, cultural landscapes and heritage sites are considered the pillars of the tourism industry. Tangible cultural heritage, such as the Iron Pagoda, plays a crucial role in Kaifeng's tourism. The Iron Pagoda, built in 1046, has stood for nearly a thousand years and is one of the only surviving relics from the Northern Song Dynasty. Based on this important cultural heritage, Kaifeng has established Iron Pagoda Park, which has become a major tourist attraction. Currently, Iron Pagoda Park is undergoing upgrades to incorporate more elements of Northern Song culture and garden culture in order to enhance its appeal to visitors. By preserving and showcasing these important features from the Song Dynasty, Kaifeng integrates cultural heritage into the city's planning and development. This ensures not only the preservation of cultural heritage but also enhances Kaifeng's uniqueness as a tourism destination. In addition, Kaifeng's Millennium City Park, although not an actual relic from the Song Dynasty, is based on the painting *Along the River During the Qingming Festival*, recreating the city's culture from the Northern Song period on a 1:1 scale. This reproduction of historical culture has become a key element in Kaifeng's tourism development and a major draw for tourists.

Explanation: Manager considers Kaifeng to be unique in terms of tourism, as the city has relatively few natural resources and relies heavily on its rich cultural heritage and distinctive city culture. Cultural landscapes are regarded as the pillars of Kaifeng's tourism industry. One of the key tangible cultural heritage sites, as Manager took the Iron Pagoda as an example. The Iron Pagoda Park has undergone preservation and modernization efforts, transforming it into a vibrant cultural attraction while retaining its historical essence, and it plays an important role in Kaifeng's tourism. The park is currently undergoing upgrades to incorporate more elements of Northern Song culture and traditional garden culture. Figure 2 compares the Iron Pagoda's historical appearance and current state, highlighting its transformation into one of Kaifeng's most famous cultural attractions. Schlanger (2023) emphasized that effective management of cultural landscapes involves identifying and protecting essential landscape features as a foundation for sustainable development. Reflecting this approach, Kaifeng has seamlessly incorporated cultural landscape preservation and heritage protection into its urban planning framework. By doing so, the city highlights cultural heritage not as an obstacle to modernization but as a strategic asset that enriches urban development, promotes tourism, and ensures the long-term sustainability of its urban areas.

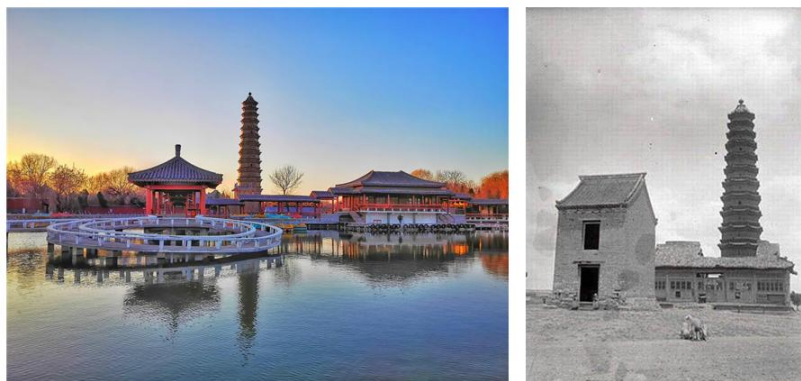


Figure 2: Transformation of the Iron Pagoda Landscape: Historical and Current State

The manager highlighted Kaifeng's dedication to preserving cultural heritage, as exemplified by the one-to-one restoration of Qingming Shanghe Tu (Along the River During the Qingming Festival) into a theme park. While not an original Northern Song Dynasty site, the park's design and cultural essence draw heavily from the legacy of that period, ensuring the experiential transmission of Song Dynasty heritage. This aligns with Olivadese and Dindo (2024) assertion that when effectively managed, cultural landscapes can serve as dynamic spaces for preserving historical narratives while fostering public engagement. By recreating scenes from the iconic painting, Kaifeng reinforces its cultural identity and provides a platform for visitors to engage with and understand traditional culture. As illustrated in Figure 3, millennium City Park recreates scenes from the iconic painting "Along the River During the Qingming Festival," offering visitors an immersive experience of Song Dynasty culture.



Fig 3: Recreation of Cultural Landscapes in Theme Park Development

#### Expert:

Kaifeng's cultural resources are pretty concentrated, mostly around the downtown area. Most tourists spend about three days here, which is just enough to see the main Song culture attractions. The tourist spots are pretty compact, and since Kaifeng is a relatively small city, getting around—even on an e-bike—is super easy. That said, Kaifeng doesn't quite have the charm to make tourists want to stay longer. Part of the issue is that the depth of Song culture hasn't been fully tapped into, and there's still a lot of work to do in terms of preserving and passing it down.

Explanation: Expert 1 noted that the concentration of Kaifeng's cultural and tourism resources, along with its compact layout, makes it easy for tourists to explore the city's cultural attractions in a short amount of time. Figure 4 shows the industrial layout of Kaifeng Old Town, which is also the core area for cultural tourism. The centralized layout of Kaifeng's cultural and tourism resources enhances visitor accessibility while highlighting the city's heritage-focused development strategy.

However, despite its rich cultural heritage and convenient tourism environment, Kaifeng still struggles to attract tourists for longer stays. This could be attributed to the insufficient exploration of Song culture and gaps in its preservation and inheritance. The limited exploration of Song culture's deeper aspects poses challenges to achieving long-term sustainability. By delving deeper into the essence of Song culture and integrating modern presentation methods and cultural activities, Kaifeng could enrich the cultural experience and enhance its appeal, encouraging longer tourist stays and unlocking the full potential of its tourism industry.

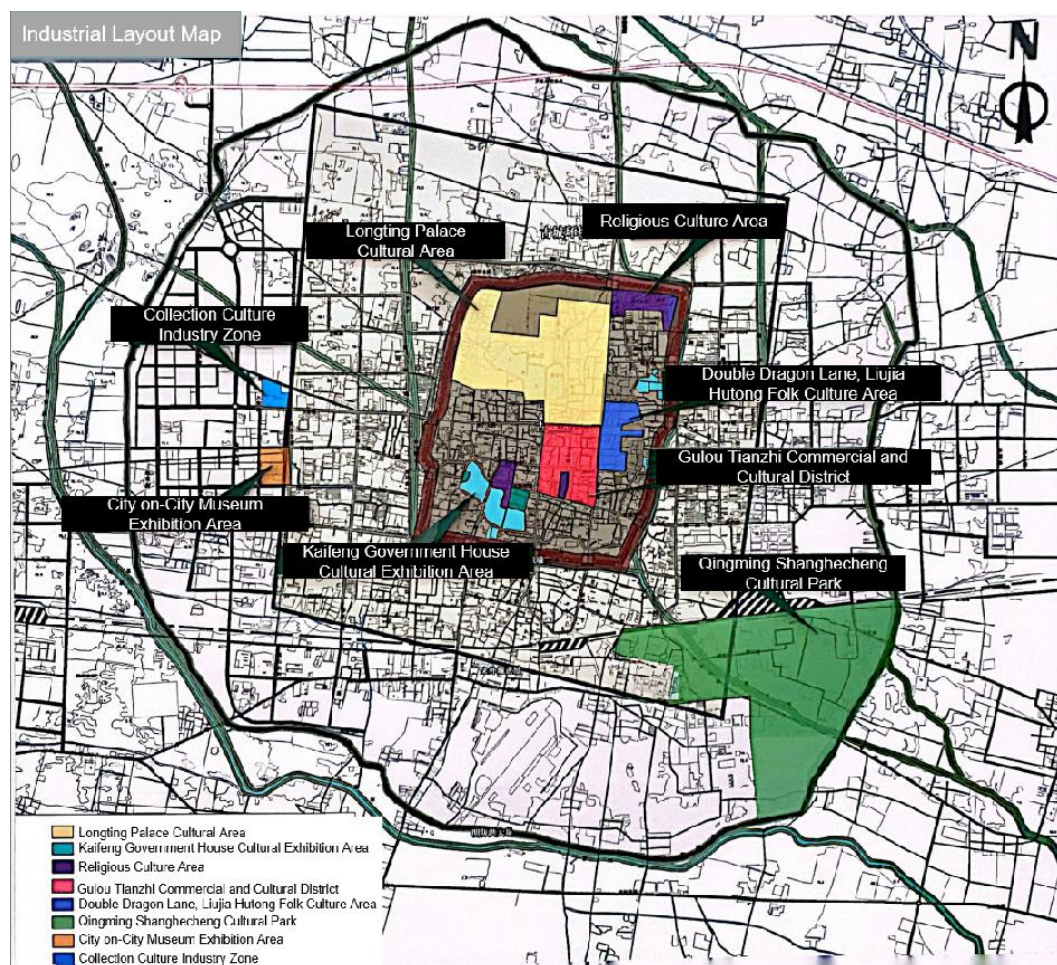


Figure 4: Core Industry Layout of Kaifeng's Cultural Tourism Zone

Work Plan for Building a National Cultural and Tourism Consumption Pilot City 2022 issued by Kaifeng government, which emphasizes sustainable tourism and the revitalization of the Song Dynasty's historical core. The Iron Pagoda integrates heritage preservation with urban renewal, showcasing Song Dynasty Garden culture while fostering tourism and local pride. Similarly, Millennium City Park transmits intangible heritage through immersive experiences, blending historical narratives with modern tourism needs. These initiatives align with the city's strategy to balance cultural preservation and economic development.

#### *Community Engagement in Cultural Preservation*

NGO:

Song culture is a significant period in Chinese history, not only shaping Chinese society at the time but also leaving a lasting influence on East Asian culture as a whole. Volunteers from the Volunteer Association help keep Song culture alive by participating in various activities, like protecting cultural relics, restoring ancient buildings, and preserving cultural sites. We also help organize cultural exhibitions and other events to make Song culture more accessible and familiar to a wider audience.....We will organize retired employees to participate in cultural exchanges during festivals and spread Song culture.

Explanation: From the perspective of an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization), volunteers of the Volunteer Association are committed to the preservation and transmission of Song culture through their participation in volunteer work such as cultural heritage conservation



and the restoration of ancient buildings. These activities help to enhance the sustainability of cultural heritage and expand community participation through cultural exhibitions and other forms, promoting more people's understanding of and interest in Song culture, thus promoting the cause of cultural preservation in local communities. This model of volunteer participation in cultural heritage helps to promote cultural preservation at the NGO level and promotes social concern for cultural heritage. Encouraging community involvement not only helps expand the organization's impact, but also provides audiences with a high-quality cultural experience, as shown in Figure5.



Figure 5: Volunteer-Led Cultural Exchange Programs Supporting Song Dynasty Heritage

Resident1:

*The water system project in Kaifeng is very well transformed, beautifying our living environment and connecting the surrounding scenic spots, parks and night markets into a whole through water features and traditional architectural complexes. Tourists can reach their destinations more conveniently, and at the same time, it provides a good place for our locals to relax and unwind.*

Resident1, as a resident, witnessed the changes in the Kaifeng River. He believed that the enhancement of the urban cultural landscape has led to a more rational planning of the city's tourism area and, at the same time, helps to optimize the quality of the living environment for locals. The community serves as the primary entity shaping the cultural landscape of the region (Samsudin & Maliki, 2015). The interrelationship between communities and their cultural landscapes is dynamic and evolving (Pătru-Stupariu et al., 2020). As societies change over time, so do their cultural landscapes. New ideas, technologies, and social movements can transform the physical and social characteristics of a community's environment, natural resources, and social practices. The comprehensive management project of connecting the moat of the ancient Song Dynasty city in Kaifeng started in 2017. The goal is to control the stinky water channel where citizens once dumped garbage and discharged sewage, add bank protection facilities and bridge facilities, and connect it with other water sources in the city center. At the same time, it carries out landscape greening renovation along the river while integrating cultural, leisure and tourism resources. Urban river quality influences people's perceptions and movement. (Salcedo, 2021).

Resident 2:

The revitalization of historical streets like Double Dragon Lane has significantly increased foot traffic and improved local business opportunities. At the same time, restoring traditional architectural styles has created a stronger sense of cultural pride among residents, as we feel more connected to our city's history. Still, the rising costs of maintaining shops in heritage zones put us under pressure.

Explanation: Resident 2's perspective highlights the dual role of community engagement in cultural preservation and economic sustainability. The increased foot traffic and business opportunities align with the Kaifeng government's goal to promote sustainable tourism through cultural revitalization. However, the rising operational costs underscore the importance of policies that support local businesses, ensuring that community participation remains viable in heritage zones. This suggests that while community engagement fosters cultural pride and strengthens tourism, long-term success requires addressing socio-economic challenges to maintain a balanced and inclusive approach to heritage preservation.

### *Tourism Experience and Perception*

Tourist 1:

Kaifeng, as the ancient capital of the eight dynasties, has some historical sites that are well preserved and ancient streets, with detailed explanations at the site that are very educational for us. Double Dragon Lane is dedicated to Song culture-related pavilions and book bars. There are also some old workshops; I saw a wood carving, wood panel painting kind, which make the children try to understand the cultural traditions.

Tourist 1 as a parent, believes that the uniqueness of culture is an effective way to enhance visitors' cultural experience by strengthening cultural education and allowing family members to understand and appreciate local culture. In the early days of Double Dragon Lane, residents had an impression of potholed streets and dilapidated old houses. In 2021, the Kaifeng Municipal government advocated the integration of historical and cultural elements into the whole process of urban planning and construction. Even though Adhika and Putra (2021) believe that cultural practices and tourism activities share space and may conflict. Double Dragon Lane, which was developed with the orientation of cultural landscape, retains the traditional architectural landscape form and changes the former residence of celebrities into a comprehensive cultural exhibition hall. The revitalization of Double Dragon Lane has preserved its historical architectural style while transforming it into a cultural hub for tourism and community engagement, shown in Figure 6.



Fig. 6: Double Dragon Lane: A Case of Historical Preservation and Urban Renewal

Tourist 2:

Antique buildings are very artistic, and the downtown center is full of ancient and historical streets. There are many activities in the theme park and evening performances. The public areas along the river in the city are also arranged with traditional landscaping, which seems to be more beautiful at night. I really like the night market in Kaifeng; there are a lot of food and many special events.

Tourist 2 noted that Kaifeng's historic districts, museums, and night tour activities attract travel bloggers by showcasing the city's rich culture and history. Antique stores, bookstores, themed hotels, and homestays enhance the experience, blending heritage with modern tourism. Urban renewal efforts prioritize sustainability through the preservation of wooden architecture and traditional gardens, balancing heritage conservation with tourism development and strengthening Kaifeng's image as a culturally vibrant destination.

Tourist 3:

*I enjoy taking my family to Kaifeng on weekends for leisure, as the city offers a variety of accommodation options. While we usually drive for about an hour to get there, during long holidays, the traffic can be challenging, so high-speed rail or light rail becomes a more convenient choice.*

Tourist 3's experience underscores the significance of well-planned transportation systems and diverse accommodation options in supporting Kaifeng's tourism development. The availability of high-speed rail and light rail aligns with environmentally sustainable tourism practices, reducing the reliance on private vehicles during peak travel periods (Ginting & Sasmita, 2018). Furthermore, the variety of accommodation options reflects Kaifeng's effort to cater to a broad spectrum of tourists, enhancing the overall visitor experience (Mandic et al., 2018; Franzoni, 2015). These infrastructural improvements demonstrate the city's commitment to balancing modern convenience with the promotion of its cultural heritage.

### *Role of Cultural Landscapes in Urban Tourism Development*

Manager:

Kaifeng has made significant efforts to revitalize its historical districts, particularly through projects such as the restoration of its river systems and the development of Millennium City Park. These initiatives aim to seamlessly connect scenic spots while enhancing the city's overall cultural identity. Our focus is to ensure that these developments are not just tourist attractions but vibrant, dynamic parts of the city".



Fig. 7 Kaifeng River Before Restoration: Historical Documentation



Fig. 8 Restored Traditional Architecture Along Kaifeng River

Explanation: Kaifeng's urban renewal initiatives, including the restoration of river systems and redevelopment of historical districts, exemplify the interplay between cultural landscape preservation and sustainable urban growth. Figure 7 shows the state of Kaifeng River before its restoration highlights the challenges of urban pollution and the need for sustainable landscape management. Urban renewal is inherently multifaceted, involving not only physical restoration but also the remaking of places to resonate with contemporary cultural and economic needs (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). By integrating cultural landscapes into its renewal process, Kaifeng aligns with a culture-led urban renaissance approach (Hwang, 2014), where heritage preservation becomes a catalyst for urban regeneration. For example, the revitalization of the Old Town and its connection to surrounding areas through cohesive river system projects fosters a cultural bond between visitors and local communities, enhancing both the tourism experience and the city's livability.

From the perspective of sustainable tourism, these initiatives play a dual role: preserving the city's cultural identity while meeting modern development needs. As Taylor (2018) highlights, heritage preservation and urban regeneration can complement each other when thoughtfully planned. The restoration of the Kaifeng River area exemplifies this synergy by blending traditional architectural elements with modern urban functions, thereby enhancing both cultural and environmental value. Figures 7 and 8 vividly depict this transformation, showcasing the evolution from neglected spaces into vibrant cultural hubs that align with sustainable development objectives. This approach emphasizes the importance of recognizing the meanings people associate with places, as this understanding is crucial for fostering an authentic sense of place (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015).

#### Expert:

While the physical restoration of historical landmarks is crucial, there is significant potential to enhance visitor engagement by incorporating Song Dynasty themes, such as artistic traditions and daily life, into the city's cultural offerings. Innovative technologies like augmented reality (AR) and interactive exhibitions can modernize the presentation of historical content, ensuring its relevance and appeal to diverse audiences.

The expert's insights highlight the necessity of enriching cultural narratives and adopting technological innovations to elevate the visitor experience. Together, these viewpoints emphasize a dual approach: preserving historical authenticity while embracing modern tools to enhance the city's competitiveness in sustainable tourism.

## Conclusion

The study highlights the multifaceted role of cultural landscapes in balancing heritage preservation with urban and tourism development. Findings reveal Kaifeng's strategic alignment with sustainable tourism principles, leveraging cultural heritage like the Iron Pagoda and Millennium City Park to enhance its cultural identity and attract economic investment. Community engagement, particularly through NGO and residents, has been pivotal in maintaining the authenticity and vibrancy of cultural sites. However, challenges such as the rising costs for local businesses and the need for deeper exploration of Song Dynasty heritage remain. This research contributes to understanding the integration of cultural landscapes in mid-sized historical cities, offering insights into effective strategies for harmonizing conservation and urban renewal. Future research could explore the application of digital technologies and cross-regional comparisons to further optimize cultural landscape management.

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