

# Analysis of the International Development of Zigong Colorful Lantern Culture Enterprises

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## Abstract

Zigong colorful lantern culture industry is formed in Zigong. More than 30 years' continuous "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival" has created a unique regional social and cultural environment in Zigong. Going out of Zigong and going to the world to participate in the festival cultural and artistic activities related to colorful lanterns is the basic form of production and service of colorful lantern enterprises. The profit model formed by holding "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival" is an important prerequisite for the industry to be maintained and popularized. The construction of cultural theme park named "Chinese Colorful Lantern World" can provide support for the enterprises to continue to go to the world. The continuous integration into the festival cultural activities of foreign countries is a problem that must be solved in the process of internationalization. Zigong colorful lantern should hold its own cultural brand when intervening in the local cultural theme park.

## Keywords

Zigong colorful lantern; cultural industry; internationalization.

## 1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, with the gradual formation of the socialist market economy system with Chinese characteristics, various questions and answers about the cultural industry have been spread out on both metaphysical and physical levels. The research on cultural industry projects that select a particular region and analyze the production and dissemination of certain cultural products quietly emerges and is in the ascendant. On the wide road of the spread of the Chinese culture in the world, different cultural products carry different purposes and play different functions. Since 1990 when "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival" went to Singapore, Zigong colorful lantern has maintained its cultural advantage of "being the first colorful lantern show in the world" for nearly 30 years. Marked by entering the first batch of cities with the qualification of "national cultural export base" in May 2018, the achievement of colorful lantern culture industry has been highly recognized by the state authority again. Looking at the whole country, the particularity and importance of Zigong colorful lantern culture industry are becoming more and more remarkable.

Since the reform and opening up, based on "Zigong International Dinosaur Colorful Lantern Trade Fair" held continuously, Zigong colorful lantern cultural enterprises develop from nothing, become large from small, spread from the local to the entire country and from a corner of southwest China to all over the world, forming a unique industrial model and service mode. It is of great theoretical value and practical significance to look back the tortuous road that Zigong colorful lantern industry has walked on, learn past experiences and face the future and continue to explore the internationalization of Zigong colorful lantern culture enterprises under the realistic conditions of deepening reform and opening wider to the outside world.

## 2. The History of Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival

It is an important prerequisite to understand the international development of Zigong colorful lantern culture industry to analyze the historical conditions for its initiation and growth and the internal and external social and historical environments of Zigong colorful lantern enterprises. Without the grand narrative of the development of cultural industry in the country and the sincere love and support of the people of Zigong for the colorful lantern festival and colorful lantern, the colorful lantern enterprises will not get the social soil to nourish their survival and development. "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival" became famous in the middle and late 1980s, and the specific work of undertaking it was carried out by the Zigong Municipal People's Government's specialized organization--Zigong Colorful Lantern Trade Management Committee. In order to meet the need of holding the colorful lantern festival for a long time, "on July 24, 1987, Zigong Municipal Establishment Committee approved the establishment of the Zigong International Dinosaur Colorful Lantern Fair Economic and Trade Fair Office, which is a county-level institution with administrative functions under the leadership of the municipal government, with a provisional staffing establishment of 20 persons and a differential subsidy for funds." [1] "On October 27, 1988, the Zigong Municipal Establishment Committee approved the change of the name of the Zigong International Dinosaur Colorful Lantern Trade Fair Office to the Zigong Municipal Colorful Lantern Trade Management Committee", which is commonly known as "colorful lantern trade committee" in the local. Its duties include "organizing and carrying out exhibition activities of Zigong colorful lantern festival locally or in other areas in accordance with the decision of the CPC Zigong Municipal Party Committee and the Zigong People's Municipal Government and being responsible for the invitation of both foreign and domestic owners to hold colorful lantern festivals and the contact, inspection, negotiation and so on with the domestic and foreign colorful lantern exhibition." [2] The "differential subsidy" means part of the salary income and even the office expenses of the related personnel must be obtained by holding a lantern meeting. Therefore, profit becomes the direct purpose of holding colorful lantern festivals. In Zigong, at that time, the most important purpose of holding a colorful lantern festival was to promote regional economic development. Taking advantage of the opportunity of the colorful lantern festival, organizing and holding trade and economic activities such as industrial exhibits fair, material trade fair, technology fair and so on, and setting up a win-win development platform for the organic combination of personnel, products, funds, technology and resources between Zigong and other areas are the direct reason for the Zigong colorful lantern festival, so it is called "economic and trade fair".

## 3. The Feature Development of Zigong Colorful Lantern Industry

"Outside colorful lantern festival" is charged by Colorful Lantern Festival and Trade Committee, showing the Committee has the power and the ability to represent the government of Zigong City to go out to participate in the cultural and artistic activities. When going out to carry out colorful lantern festival business, the Committee must accept the leadership of the CPC Zigong Municipal Committee and the Zigong Municipal People's Government in an all-round way. Although its business behavior is affected by the market, it undoubtedly has the nature of government directive in the planned economy era. It is obvious that the main body of the cultural and artistic activities of the Zigong colorful lantern festival is the local government. When going out to hold colorful lantern festival, a kind of profitable cultural and artistic activity, its social subject is also the government of Zigong City. At this time, although the "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival" presents as a form of cultural and artistic activities, it carries the economic and political purposes of the Zigong municipal government. During this period, whether it is local annual "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival", or the cultural and artistic activities of the colorful lantern festival in other areas, the all-round plan, coordination, and

other efforts are inevitable for the purpose of profit. "To be responsible for the contact, inspection, negotiation and so on with the domestic and foreign colorful lantern festival owners" makes the relevant officials of the Committee the first athletes to stand on the starting line of the colorful lantern culture industry. In the objective practice of the socialist market economy system, Zigong colorful lantern festival gradually forms its own mode and the cultural industry of Zigong colorful lantern festival is beginning to emerge. At the same time, Zigong local insightful people are also thinking about the future development of the colorful lantern festival. "To hold a colorful lantern festival, we should take the development of a planned socialist commodity economy as the core, obey the market, obey the consumption and follow the law of value. China is still in the primary stage of socialism; commodity production and commodity exchange will exist for a long time. We cannot talk about colorful lantern festival alone, but should put it into the track of socialist commodity economy. The holding of the colorful lantern festival should also read well the socialist 'business classics' and achieve the renewal and transformation of ideas from thought to action." [3] This view was formed in 1987 and its paper was included in the first "Zigong International Dinosaur Colorful Lantern Festival Strategy Seminar". The related exposition clearly pointed out the operating characteristics of the cultural and artistic activities of Zigong colorful lantern Festival at that time, and emphasized that holding the colorful lantern festival should follow the principle of market orientation. In fact, the idea of "not talking about colorful lantern festival alone" and "holding a colorful lantern festival should also read well the socialist business classics" not only represent the idea of individuals, but also the idea of a large number of Zigong colorful lantern organizers at that time.

#### 4. The Attribute of Cultural Industry

The commercialization characteristics of Zigong colorful lantern festival from the beginning of its fame make it a cultural product and service with stable consumer group after entering the stage of rapid development of socialist market economy system. In the 1990s, with the improvement of people's material living conditions, the demand for spiritual products has increased rapidly. At the same time, due to the increasing frequency of cultural and economic exchanges between China and foreign countries, insightful people from all walks of life have realized that China is often at a disadvantage position in the pattern of world cultural and economic exchanges. Under the premise of maintaining national ownership and protecting national sovereignty, it is imperative to promote the industrialization development of culture. In real life, all kind of products or commodities with cultural attributes appear rapidly, and become an important part of the daily consumption of urban and rural people. The concept of "cultural industry" and various practices are gradually accepted by the society. "On 14 November 1993, the Ministry of Culture held a symposium on cultural industries of some provinces and cities. Gao Zhanxiang, then Deputy Minister of Culture, delivered a speech on *Developing the Cultural Industry in the Reform and Opening-up* at the symposium, which systematically discussed some important theoretical issues of cultural industry in terms of concept definition, industrial policy, industrial rules, personnel training and market mechanism." [4] When the continuous progress of Chinese society needs to recognize the commodity attribute of culture at the economic level, a series of problems related to cultural industry have risen from objective and concrete production and life practice to a theoretical system with strict logic and clear concept. At this time, a set of mature and stable commercial models gradually formed in the operation and management of "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival" become the reference frame for colorful lantern enterprises' establishment and operation. The culture-business model that sprout from "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival" is a practical cultural achievement created by the first batch of staff of Zigong Colorful Lantern

Festival and Trade Management Committee and the relevant responsible personnel of Zigong local government.

"Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival", a modern festival folk cultural activity, is formed in Zigong, the city of handicraft because of salt. The purpose of holding the colorful lantern festival is not only to inherit the cultural tradition of the colorful lantern festival, but also to create a cultural and artistic environment for the regional economic and cultural development of Zigong. After the continuous exploration in several colorful lantern festivals in 1980s, the guiding ideology of holding colorful lantern festival with distinctive characteristic is formed, namely, to take the colorful lantern as a medium to make friends and revitalize the economy; to take the colorful lantern as a glory to uplift spirit and build Zigong". Under this condition, the colorful lantern becomes the cultural and artistic medium which drives the economic development of Zigong. The "Zigong Colorful Lantern" and "Zigong Colorful Lanterns Festival", which are different from the traditional colorful lantern fairs and the folk colorful lanterns show, can not only promote regional social and economic development, but also promote the continuous progress of local undertakings. The Zigong colorful lantern festival held continuously retains the cultural custom of the Chinese traditional festival "Lantern Festival", but in essence, it has been reborn in Nirvana, and is a modern festival (or holiday) cultural activity with new historical and cultural attributes. On the whole, the festival culture needs and the content that can be expressed are often reflected as a dynamic generation and survival process. In order to meet the needs of the people's spiritual and cultural life during the Spring Festival, the Zigong colorful lantern festival is a modern city folk culture and art activity created by the organizers via making full use of the local tradition and folk customs of the original colorful lantern festival and constant innovation and creation, which is based on the new historical conditions of reform and opening up.

## 5. The Attribute of Economy

Different from the traditional folk festivals that still exist in rural fields, the economic attribute of the cultural activities of modern urban folk festivals is very obvious. With the development of the times, social progress, life change, festival cultural activities in the city must rely on good business operation to survive. Because of the economic purpose, and being not restricted by the old customs, all kinds of local or even non-local cultural and artistic resources are constantly used and integrated into festival activities, thus forming a new economic growth point. When a festival activity has a social subject that can fully recognize and consciously accept it, when it has enough social and cultural habits to support its continued existence, and when it can support a certain economic entity to survive well, a cultural industry form marked by festival content appears. Objectively speaking, the development of festival culture and its industrialization has also become an important proof that the city society is full of vitality. Usually, those festival cultural activities which appear in the traditional face always have the characteristics of "old bottle containing new wine". "They are shifting their focus to serving cultural consumption in addition to continuing the usual functions of gathering, entertainment, sacrifice, dating, etc. In short, contemporary is experiencing an evolution from festival culture to festival economy, from festival economy to festival industry. On this basis, the festival can play an unprecedented new role in meeting the spiritual and material needs of the broad masses, local cultural construction, cultural brand building and cultural industry development." [5] In other words, all kinds of festival cultural activities that exist in modern cities should be an organic part of contemporary Chinese cultural industry, and should be a comprehensive culture that dominates and carries all kind of old or new cultural phenomena, cultural media, cultural styles, etc.

## 6. The Present Situation of Zigong Colorful Colorful Lantern Industry

The cultural industry of Zigong colorful lantern festival is flourishing because of the modern folk festival activities of Zigong colorful lantern festival, but the social and cultural soil that nourishes its rapid development is not limited to Zigong. After more than 30 years' hard exploration, going out of Zigong to participate in all kind of colorful lantern festivals during the Spring Festival and folk culture activities of Lantern Festival and contracting the colorful lantern fabrication project became the main way of production and operation of hundreds of colorful lantern culture enterprises of Zigong. However, so far, there are not many enterprises with the ability and conditions to undertake the operation management, decision planning, market expansion and other upstream and downstream industrial chain specific work for colorful lantern festival in other areas. Although the number of Zigong colorful lantern enterprises has formed an absolute advantage and the industrial operation mode and management mode have typical characteristics of Zigong, the hosting right (including naming right) and the actual undertaking rights of the local annual Zigong colorful lantern festival are not in the hands of these hundreds of colorful lantern culture enterprises. When going out of Zigong to participate in the cultural activities of the colorful lantern festival, the main purpose of the colorful lantern culture enterprises is to be responsible for the design and production of the colorful lantern, so it is difficult to for them to participate in the planning of the festival activities, regional market operation, product development and promotion and other more "in site" commercial activities. Most of the time, they exist only as a group of craftsmen who can undertake the task of making colorful lanterns. The guerrilla-like team with "three or five people and seven or eight guns" is the living state of Zigong's most colorful lantern cultural enterprises. This relatively free industrial state has a special advantage of low risk and high efficiency. On the one hand, it retains the technical attributes of folk, traditional, and manual production, which makes Zigong colorful lantern production hold a good artistic level, on the other hand, it reduces the industry access standard and restricts the upgrading and development of Zigong colorful lantern culture industry.

## 7. The Concept of Cultural Industry of Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival

As a more and more important part of promoting the sustainable growth of China's social economy, the concept of "cultural industry" and its specific reference are very complex. Relatively speaking, the production and service of cultural products is only a key link in its industrial chain. Without this link, cultural products will not exist and industries will not form. However, this key link cannot exist independently, it must first exist in a complete industrial chain to show its pivotal central position. Under the general conditions, a complete industrial chain cannot exist independently, it must be woven into the huge network of regional social and economic development and cultural industry prosperity, which support each other, to highlight its irreplaceable independent value. Only when many industrial chains extend together, help each other, and make profit together can different cultural industries achieve real common prosperity. According to the general concept of academic circles, "the cultural industry refers to an industrial group, including books, magazines, newspapers, radio, movies, television, music, games, exhibitions, gambling, news and entertainment in the Internet and mobile phones, theme parks, historical and cultural tourism, art performances, advertising, art design, antique art trading, pop star brokerage, entertainment competitive sports, toys, arts and crafts and cultural undertakings and other industries related to culture and art, information and cultural entertainment." [6]

By comparing the actual production and service status of Zigong colorful lantern cultural enterprises with the framework defined above, it can be seen that Zigong colorful lantern cultural industry mainly involves four fields: exhibition industry, theme park, art design and

arts and crafts. Zigong colorful lantern is a modern one made according to the creative design drawing. It still has a common handicraft production mode in arts and crafts industry. As far as the special kind of folk art—colorful lantern is concerned, the cultural industry of Zigong colorful lantern has become the leader of the country in the fields of "art design" and "arts and crafts". However, as far as "theme park" and "exhibition industry" are concerned, the depth and breadth of the integration of Zigong colorful lantern culture enterprises into these two industries are relatively shallow. In addition, the ownership and leading power of the "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival" cultural brand is in the hands of the local government, and the contract relationship between the enterprises and the government is often only for the production of colorful lanterns. Therefore, although the "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival" has the nature of theme park, it is difficult for the Zigong colorful lantern cultural enterprises to intervene in its substantive development. To analyze the successful experience of the past development of the industry, under the existing conditions, the integration of all kinds of exhibition industry all over the country and even all over the world is the first problem that Zigong colorful lantern culture enterprises must solve.

## **8. Integration into Local Culture and Local Life of Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival**

According to the classification principle of cultural industry, all kind of festival cultural and artistic activities held in modern cities can be classified as exhibition industry. In these various festival activities, although many of them have historical tradition and cultural origin, in general, the commercial characteristics of satisfying the demands of local people's holiday life and cultural consumption are obvious. Moreover, all kind of festival activities at all levels objectively provide opportunities for the transaction of various kind of local products, and also become an important link in the circulation and transaction of other kinds and forms of cultural product, which is the artistic space for the free dissemination of local society and culture. In this process, the traditional culture continues to enter the contemporary life and becomes an organic part of the contemporary culture. In order to meet the aesthetic needs of the general public, cultural products are allowed to bring forth new ideas and promote the sustainable development of cultural industry. "Festival culture is closely related to festival industry, on the one hand, festival industry provides a solid material basis for the continuation of festival culture; on the other hand, festival culture also provides a platform for festival industry, so that the two closely combined." [7] Based on the fact that "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival" has become the symbol of Zigong city culture for 40 years, it can be seen that festival cultural activities are of special and important significance to the shaping of regional culture. It is the "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival", a modern festival in the name of colorful lantern, which makes the name of Zigong city famous all over the world, and also makes the city form a colorful lantern culture industry with absolute advantages in China and even in the world. Its cultural resource is the traditional Chinese festivals with a history of more than two thousand years--Lantern Festival. As far as the actual achievements of the overseas projects of Zigong colorful lantern culture enterprises are concerned, the planting of the local existing folk festivals and traditional customs is the main way for Zigong colorful lantern to go overseas. Or Zigong colorful lantern festival integrates into the local festival cultural activities and add the new content of the colorful lantern show for the presentation of them. Or by making use of some major political, economic, or cultural activity, Zigong colorful lantern show adds the new content to it. These are the basic way used by Zigong colorful lantern enterprises to spread the traditional Chinese culture and obtain economic benefits in the world. There have been few cases of success without taking advantage of existing local cultural traditions, without major social activities, or without reason or foundation. Obviously, under this condition, further active integration into

the local festival cultural activities and adding "colorful lantern" to the art media should be the issue that Zigong colorful lantern cultural enterprises must deal with to further develop in the world.

## 9. Theme Park--ideal Space for Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival

Taking the art form of "colorful lantern" as the carrier, looking for and mastering the time node of Chinese characteristic culture to intervene in the local area, and striving to become the art media to tell the local story are the first step for Zigong colorful lantern culture enterprises to go to the world. After experiencing the contact, communication and collision between different cultures, finding suitable time points for festivals or holidays and getting involved smoothly, site selection becomes the key factor for the success of Zigong colorful lantern festival. Currently, "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival", as a "theme park" nature of the local cultural brand, once again shows its unique business attribute. With the experience of holding the "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival" in Zigong "colorful lantern festival park" and finding suitable environment space for the colorful lantern festival, cultural sites that already have the nature of the theme park become the first choice. "The theme park is a kind of man-made tourist resource, also known as 'themed cultural park'. It creates a unique environment and atmosphere with distinctive cultural theme through special conception, and gathers many elements of leisure, entertainment and service with modern scientific and technological means and multi-level activities to create a project with clear theme and rich cultural connotation to attract tourists ".[8] It can be seen, from the analysis of the reasons why Zigong colorful lantern festival has maintained its high reputation for the art of "the first lantern festival in the world" for 30 years, that holding the colorful lantern festival in Zigong "colorful lantern park" has made the organizers of the "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival" and the leaders of the colorful lantern companies develop a sense of innovation to promote their development, thus, the "Zigong colorful lantern" is always novel year after year and time after time. When entering the overseas market, those theme parks that already have great cultural influence and market accumulation are the source of tourists. Entering the theme park to hold a colorful lantern festival and adding new cultural content to the old cultural theme often will not cause tourists' boring but can promote and enrich the old cultural theme. The injection of new culture can not only increase the number of tourists so that local parks and enterprises from foreign countries can obtain economic benefits, but also make the excellent Chinese culture with colorful lantern as the carrier to obtain broad and stable channels of communication. Under this condition, Zigong colorful lantern culture enterprises initially have formed its own mode of going to the world.

At present, the implementation of the "Chinese Colorful Lantern World" project in Zigong has entered a substantive stage. In the near future, it will replace the "colorful lantern park" located in the core of the old urban area, become a new venue for the "Zigong Colorful Lantern Festival", and become the venue for the "never-ending Zigong colorful lantern festival" in the ideal of Zigong colorful lantern people. There is no doubt that "Chinese Colorful Lantern World" is a theme park with "Chinese colorful lantern" as its cultural symbol. The main reference of "the never-ending Zigong colorful lantern festival" is the "Disneyland" in the United States. This is the cultural theme park that Chinese people reflect and create after accepting the western "cultural theme park" industrial model. Although its concrete effect is still to be judged in the coming days, the industrial model and the industrial foundation have appeared. The regret is that the actual operation of the "Chinese Colorful Lantern World" may not be fully in the hands of the government. On the other hand, it is gratifying, on the road of international development, some representative colorful lantern culture enterprises have achieved many successful experiences. Based on the involvement of the local cultural theme park, it has been transformed into a regular or timely holding of the colorful lantern festival in "colorful lantern park". The

theme park of Chinese colorful lantern culture created by Zigong colorful lantern festival has been successfully replicated in different cultural places all over the world. On the road of hard development, the enterprise of colorful lantern culture has gradually formed its own unique cultural brand consciousness. Mastering independent cultural brands with independent legal personality can enable enterprises to form cultural influence while obtaining commercial benefits. With the help of colorful lanterns' warm and gorgeous appearance and auspicious and happy moral, it can effectively promote the artistic dissemination and industrialization expansion of Chinese culture all over the world. Festival or festival culture has always been the most inclusive culture for the public to share the culture. "Whether it is a traditional festival due to sacrifice, ceremony or farming solar term, or a new festival due to politics, business, or tourism, they all have an unavoidable, irreplaceable purpose. People pursue a relaxed, idle, comfortable state of life and pleasant, wild, and happy spirit catharsis through the festival." [9]

## 10. Conclusion

For thousands of years, although the state, ethnic groups and other social belonging are different, the cultural psychological demands of vast number of people's spread of festival are highly similar. Happy spirit catharsis and relaxed living conditions make everyone cannot give up the holiday expectations. The happy and festive implication of the Chinese colorful lantern culture, bearing the good reunion blessing, undoubtedly makes Zigong colorful lantern festival have condition and reason to integrate into the culture of other countries. In this process, the holding of one's own cultural brand is fully in line with the international practice of multi-directional circulation of cultural products and services trade.

In any case, seeking economic benefits must be the first appeal of Zigong colorful lantern culture enterprises. At the time when the country puts forward the "Belt and Road" initiative and comprehensively constructs a new historical relationship of win-win cooperation between China and all countries in the world, it has become an extremely important part to continuously and deeply integrate into the world economic system and effectively promote cultural exchanges among different nationalities in different countries along the Belt and Road. The unique value of Chinese folk art has been demonstrated. In the process of "internationalization", the multi-dimensional communication and cooperation with culture as the medium of Zigong colorful lantern culture enterprises will meet continuous challenge.

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