

Leveraging Design Discipline to Empower Innovative Cultural Tourism in Dalian: A Study on Teaching Strategies in the *Fundamentals of Image Production* Course

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Abstract: *Against the backdrop of the integration of culture and tourism, the high-quality development of the cultural tourism industry demands a new caliber of creative talent. As a critical field connecting cultural expression with communication media, the design discipline holds significant potential for boosting local cultural tourism. Taking the core Visual Communication Design course, Fundamentals of Image Production, as a case study, this paper explores innovative teaching strategies that deeply combine academic instruction with local cultural tourism practices, specifically tailored to Dalian's regional culture and industrial needs. Employing a mixed-method approach comprising literature review, case studies, action research, and surveys and interviews, etc, the study constructs an integrated "Curriculum Content-Cultural Tourism Theme-Image Practice" teaching model, which was subsequently validated through practical implementation. The findings indicate that this model not only enhances students' capabilities in image creation, fostering their innovative consciousness, but also deepens their understanding of indigenous culture. But it also provides effective support for content production and promotion in local cultural tourism. Consequently, this research offers valuable implications for how design disciplines can better serve regional economic and cultural development.*

Keywords: Design Discipline, Integration of Culture and Tourism, Fundamentals of Image Production, Innovative Teaching Strategies.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the widespread adoption of digital media technologies and the rise of short-video platforms, "visual expression" has become a key method of communication in cultural tourism. The combination of "short videos and cultural tourism" has continuously generated viral communication campaigns, bringing urban images and regional cultures into the public eye more intuitively and vividly. As the cultural tourism industry flourishes and higher education reforms deepen, the role of design disciplines in empowering the cultural tourism sector has become increasingly prominent. As key institutions for talent cultivation, how higher education institutions can respond to the practical needs of local cultural and tourism development through curriculum reform has become a major issue in current higher education reform. Design disciplines, particularly visual communication design, possess inherent strengths in cultural content translation, visual storytelling, and media communication, and there is a high degree of alignment between their teaching practices and the needs of the cultural and tourism industry. Against this backdrop, the cultural and tourism industry has an increasingly urgent need for multidisciplinary professionals equipped with visual creation skills, visual expression abilities, and cultural understanding.

2. Overview of the "Fundamentals of Video Production" Course and the Need for Curriculum Reform

The "Fundamentals of Video Production" course is a required foundational course for the Visual Communication Design major. Its content covers the characteristics of digital film and television in the new media era, planning methodologies,

screenplay and storyboard creation, cinematography and lighting techniques, as well as post-production video, audio editing, and packaging. Through the lenses of digital technology, new media communication, and web interaction, the course provides a systematic and in-depth exploration of contemporary concepts and methods in digital film and television production, serving as a reference for the learning and practical training of visual communication design students.

As a foundational course for the Visual Communication Design major, the curriculum primarily focuses on teaching visual language, filming techniques, and basic editing skills. Traditional teaching models for this course have predominantly emphasized technical training, resulting in relatively closed-off course content and a lack of connection between practical projects and real-world social contexts. Consequently, students often face the challenge of "being technically proficient but lacking substantive expression" during their studies. Against the backdrop of the integration of culture and tourism, incorporating local cultural resources and urban cultural and tourism needs into course practice can not only expand the course's scope of application but also help guide students in understanding the social value of visual design within real-world contexts. Therefore, exploring innovative teaching strategies for "Fundamentals of Video Production" oriented toward local culture and tourism holds both practical significance and value.

3. Overview of Teaching Methods for the "Fundamentals of Video Production" Course in China and Abroad

Most international research has largely focused on the application of digital media technologies in cultural and

tourism promotion. In courses related to “*Fundamentals of Video Production*,” foreign universities generally emphasize cultivating students' innovative thinking and practical skills. Through the incorporation of teaching methods such as project-based learning, workshop-style instruction, interdisciplinary teaching, or enhanced practical training components, these courses enhance students' video production skills and innovative design thinking. Among the many teaching methods, project-based learning is considered an effective method for fostering creativity and practical skills in design education (Thomas, 2000; Bell, 2010). Scholars emphasize that authentic projects rooted in real-world social contexts can significantly improve student engagement and learning outcomes. Furthermore, research in visual communication and tourism promotion highlights the importance of storytelling, local branding, and emotional resonance in video-based tourism media (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). Video content enables destinations to construct immersive narratives that shape visitors' perceptions and experiences. Studies on visual and experiential learning further suggest that reflective practice plays a crucial role in deepening students' understanding and creative development (Kolb, 1984; Pink, 2013). While existing literature provides valuable insights into design pedagogy and cultural communication, there remains a lack of empirical studies examining how foundational video production courses can be systematically integrated with local cultural tourism practices. At the same time, some universities collaborate with businesses and cultural institutions to jointly develop practical course projects, providing students with more hands-on opportunities and career pathways. This type of teaching model emphasizes students completing creative tasks in real-world contexts, helping to foster their professional awareness and sense of social responsibility. Furthermore, scholars abroad also focus on integrating new technologies and concepts into course instruction, such as the application of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR), to provide students with richer, more diverse learning experiences and practical opportunities. These innovative teaching strategies and practical approaches offer valuable references and insights for relevant research in China.

In China, many universities have recognized the importance of this curriculum in fostering students' innovative thinking and practical skills, and have consequently launched related educational reforms. For example, by introducing new teaching methods such as project-based learning and case-based instruction, aiming to stimulate students' interest and initiative, and also enhancing their video production capabilities and innovative design thinking. At the same time, some universities are actively exploring collaborations with enterprises, aligning course projects with the practical needs of the cultural and tourism industry to provide students with more practical opportunities and employment pathways (Chen Rong, 2021; Yang Haibo, 2020). However, research on how design disciplines can empower the cultural and tourism industry is still in its infancy in China, with significant gaps remaining—particularly regarding innovative teaching strategies and pedagogical practices, especially at the practical level of how teaching innovation can directly serve local economic and cultural development. Furthermore, there is a lack of systematic theoretical guidance and practical exploration regarding how to effectively integrate the

specialized knowledge, skills, and innovative thinking of design disciplines into the teaching of the “*Fundamentals of Video Production*” course to serve the development of Dalian's local culture and tourism.

Therefore, this study takes the “*Fundamentals of Video Production*” course as a case study to explore how to leverage the strengths of design disciplines fully and, through innovative teaching strategies and practical methods, empower the high-quality development of Dalian's cultural and tourism sector.

4. Research Methods and Approaches for Teaching Reform

This curriculum reform is centered on the core concept of “empowering local cultural and tourism industries through design disciplines.” Using the “*Fundamentals of Video Production*” course in the Visual Communication Design major as a vehicle, the course aims to establish a practical curriculum system themed around Dalian's cultural and tourism sector. This study emphasizes achieving mutual empowerment between course instruction and local cultural and tourism needs through the reconstruction of teaching content and the innovation of teaching methods. Specifically, the following research methods were employed: 1) Literature Review: This method involves reviewing relevant research findings on design education, the integration of culture and tourism, and video instruction to clarify the research context and direction; 2) Case Study Analysis: By analyzing successful domestic and international cases of design education and culture-tourism integration, we extract insights and strategies; 3) Action Research: Our teaching team implements innovative teaching strategies in actual classroom settings, observing and documenting the implementation process and outcomes so that teaching methods can be dynamically adjusted as needed. 4) Questionnaire and Interview Method: Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect feedback on students' learning experiences and teaching outcomes, in order to evaluate teaching effectiveness more effectively. This research was conducted during one academic semester in the *Fundamentals of Video Production* course for undergraduate Visual Communication Design students. Participants included 23 second-year undergraduate students enrolled in the course. All participants had basic prior exposure to visual design, but limited experience in video production related to real-world cultural themes.

5. Innovative Teaching Strategies for Integrating the “*Fundamentals of Video Production*” Course with Dalian's Cultural and Tourism Sector

5.1 Deep Integration of Course Content with Local Cultural Tourism Themes

In the past, practical assignments for the “*Fundamentals of Video Production*” course often relied on abstract topics or fictional scenarios. While students were able to complete the technical training, they struggled to grasp the social value and cultural significance of video creation. Our educational reform has brought about a fundamental shift in the curriculum design,

incorporating Dalian's unique urban culture and tourism resources into the curriculum to establish a course content system with distinct regional characteristics.

Firstly, the teaching team established the course content around Dalian's four major cultural themes. Based on a systematic review of Dalian's urban cultural resources, the team focused the practical themes on four representative areas: First, marine culture, covering coastal landscapes, fishing port life, and marine festivals, guiding students to explore Dalian's deep connection with the ocean; Second, urban landscapes, including historic architectural clusters, modern urban planning heritage, and contemporary urban landmarks, to help students explore the narrative potential of spatial imagery; Third, industrial heritage, focusing on the traces of Dalian's transformation as a former industrial city—such as shipyards, streetcars, and the renovation of old industrial zones, to guide students in uncovering the visual memories of industrial civilization; Fourth, urban lifestyle, primarily centered on Dalian's everyday life, folk festivals, and youth culture, presenting the city's human warmth from a micro perspective. The establishment of these four major directions not only covers the core sectors of Dalian's cultural and tourism resources but also provides students with diverse creative entry points.

Secondly, the course emphasizes a “real-world context” approach to creation, with the explicit goal of “creating visual content for Dalian's cultural and tourism sector” running throughout. This orientation holds multiple pedagogical implications: on the one hand, students realize that their work may be viewed by a real social audience, shifting their mindset from “completing an assignment” to “creating value,” thereby significantly enhancing their intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, creating within a real-world context requires students to deeply understand the cultural essence of the region, consider the audience's reception psychology, and reflect on how visual content can serve the dissemination of the city's image. This process in itself serves as an effective way to develop students' comprehensive abilities.

Thirdly, we established a dual-track teaching mechanism of “cultural research—visual translation.” In implementing the course, we require students to conduct cultural research before beginning their creative work. Through methods such as literature review, field visits, and interviews, students gain a deep understanding of the cultural significance of their chosen subjects. Only after completing the cultural research and passing the presentation may students proceed to the visual production phase. The establishment of this mechanism ensures that students' understanding of local culture is not merely a superficial appropriation of symbols, but rather a visual translation grounded in deep cognitive understanding.

5.2 Implementation of Project-Based Learning: An Innovation from Linear Instruction to Holistic Empowerment

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is the core teaching model adopted in this course. However, the course team has innovatively adapted it to better align with the professional characteristics of the design discipline and the practical demands of cultural and tourism creation.

Firstly, we established a “four-stage progressive” project implementation framework. The complete creative process is divided into four closely interconnected phases: The first phase involves topic research and concept generation, where students select a starting point from Dalian's four major cultural and tourism themes, develop preliminary creative concepts through cultural research, and present their ideas in the form of creative proposals; Stage Two involves script planning and storyboarding, where the creative concept is refined into an executable shooting script, and preliminary preparations such as storyboarding and shooting schedule planning are completed; Stage Three focuses on shooting execution and footage management, during which students conduct on-site filming according to the script and make flexible adjustments based on actual conditions; Phase Four: Post-production and Work Optimization. Students complete editing, color grading, sound design, and other tasks to produce a finished video work. This framework allows students to experience the entire creative process within a comprehensive project workflow, fostering systematic thinking and project management skills.

Secondly, a teaching support mechanism of “phased guidance + feedback at key milestones” has been established. Instructors set guidance checkpoints at each of the four project phases, providing targeted professional guidance at every milestone. For example, during the topic research phase, the focus is on guiding students in cultural exploration and creative adaptation; during the script planning phase, emphasis is placed on optimizing narrative structure and visual language; during the shooting phase, attention is directed toward filming techniques and on-site adaptability; and during the post-production phase, the focus is on enhancing the rhythm and expressiveness of the footage. This “end-to-end empowerment” guidance model not only safeguards students' creative autonomy but also ensures the timeliness and effectiveness of professional guidance.

5.3 Case Analysis and Reflection Mechanism: From Technical Imitation to the In-Depth Development of Creative Thinking

To help students develop a comprehensive understanding of video production, this course has designed a three-pronged in-depth learning mechanism comprising “case analysis — practical application—reflection, and iteration.” The core innovation of this mechanism lies in the organic integration of case analysis and creative practice, forming a continuous, self-optimizing learning cycle.

Firstly, students are guided to build a diverse collection of video case studies. We systematically collected outstanding domestic and international cultural and tourism short video case studies, covering a wide range of genres such as city image films, cultural documentaries, travel vlogs, and intangible cultural heritage videos. In case-based instruction, we not only guide students to analyze the superficial formal characteristics of these works but also lead them to deeply dissect their narrative structures, visual language, and communication strategies. Through this “in-depth dissection,” students gradually internalize the creative logic behind outstanding works, laying a cognitive foundation for subsequent independent creation.

Secondly, a practical application pathway of “benchmark analysis—transfer and application” was established. It involves students transferring the creative concepts and techniques learned from case studies to their own projects. Specifically, at different stages of their projects, students select benchmark cases for analysis based on their own creative progress, reflecting on questions such as “How does this case’s narrative approach inspire my work?” and “How can I adapt and transform its visual language?” The establishment of this mechanism transforms case analysis from an isolated cognitive activity into a thinking tool that interacts closely with creative practice.

5.4 A Multi-dimensional Collaborative Support Mechanism: Innovative Explorations from a Closed Classroom to an Open Educational Ecosystem

In addition to the core teaching strategies mentioned above, our course has also explored the establishment of a multi-dimensional collaborative support mechanism, which breaks down the closed boundaries of traditional classrooms to build an open and diverse educational ecosystem. It is specifically reflected in the following aspects:

Firstly, a platform for showcasing and disseminating course outcomes has been established. Specifically, after the course concluded, instructors selected outstanding student works and shared them on various new media platforms for display and dissemination. This initiative not only stimulated students’ creative enthusiasm but also enabled course outcomes to extend beyond the classroom and serve society, thereby achieving an initial integration of educational and social value.

Secondly, a cross-year creative community culture was established. The teaching team encouraged creators of outstanding works to serve as student teaching assistants in subsequent semesters, participating in the creative guidance of lower-year students. Through this “mentoring and support” mechanism, a cross-year creative community was formed, ensuring the continuous transmission and optimization of the course’s pedagogical philosophy and creative experience.

6. Teaching Implementation Results and Analysis

To comprehensively verify the practical effectiveness of the aforementioned teaching strategies, our course team conducted a multidimensional follow-up evaluation of teaching outcomes using a variety of methods, including classroom observations, questionnaire surveys, portfolio analysis, student interviews, and feedback from new media platforms. The specific implementation results and analysis are outlined below:

6.1 Significant Improvement in Student Learning Outcomes: A Shift from Passive Reception to Active Inquiry

Teaching practice has shown that introducing cultural and tourism themes into the “*Fundamentals of Video Production*” course has led to significant changes in students’ learning attitudes, specifically manifested in the following three aspects:

First, students’ initiative and spirit of inquiry have markedly increased. Under traditional teaching models, students’ creative topics were relatively limited, often focusing on campus life, resulting in widespread homogenization. However, after introducing Dalian’s cultural and tourism themes, the close integration of course content with local culture has stimulated students’ intrinsic motivation. According to classroom observations by the teaching team, over 85% of students proactively conducted on-site research before production, delving into city streets, historic buildings, and sites of intangible cultural heritage to collect firsthand materials, and unearthing vivid cultural stories through interviews with local residents.

Second, students’ commitment to their work and their dedication to perfection have significantly improved. As one student noted in an interview: “Because our work might be seen by more people, we put more care into every shot.” This expectation of ‘being seen’ translated into meticulous refinement during the creative process, with the number of post-production revisions increasing significantly compared to previous years, fostering a positive creative atmosphere.

Third, students’ visual expression skills have improved overall. According to course assignment grading data, the proportion of works meeting the criteria of “clear theme, complete narrative, and appropriate use of visual language” rose from 62% before the reform to 84%. Students are now able to consciously employ cinematic language to serve thematic expression. Their films are no longer mere collections of disjointed scenes, but works with clear narrative logic. For example, one student team used “Dalian’s tram” as a narrative thread, capturing different times and passengers’ perspectives to organically link the city’s historical memory with contemporary life, resulting in a work with a strong sense of human warmth.

6.2 Enhanced Students’ Innovation Capabilities and Cultural Identity: A Shift from Surface-Level Landscape Representation to In-Depth Exploration of Cultural Meaning

Through project-based practice centered on cultural tourism themes, students have improved in both innovation capabilities and local cultural identity. These two aspects reinforce each other, creating a virtuous cycle.

In terms of cultivating innovative capabilities, students are no longer content with merely documenting superficial landscapes such as coastal scenery and landmark buildings; instead, they have begun to deeply contemplate how to interpret the spirit of the city through the language of imagery. Furthermore, the curriculum encourages students to create from the perspective of “cultural interpreters” rather than “landscape replicators,” a shift that has stimulated their innovative thinking. This is manifested in two ways: First, the perspectives are diverse, with topics spanning the transformation of old neighborhoods, the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, and the integration of marine culture with daily life. Second, the techniques are experimental; some students have experimented with forms such as documentaries, experimental films, and short narrative films, incorporating cross-media expressions like animation

and sound design to achieve a balance between formal innovation and content expression.

In the cultivation of cultural identity, this course practice has played a significant educational role. According to survey results, 92% of students agreed that “this course deepened their understanding of Dalian’s urban culture,” and 87% stated that “they developed a stronger sense of identity and belonging to local culture during the creative process.” In interviews, students further remarked: “Before, I used to walk through those old streets and alleys and just thought they were ordinary, but after researching the stories behind them for filming, I realized that every street and alley carries the city’s memories.” This shift from “seeing without noticing” to “deep contemplation” vividly illustrates the establishment of cultural identity and reflects that students have begun to focus on the social significance and cultural value of their work.

6.3 The Social Value of the Course is Beginning to Emerge: The Transition from Classroom Assignments to Cultural Dissemination

As a highly applied specialized course, the social impact of its educational outcomes serves as a key measure of the reform’s effectiveness. The practical exploration in this course has begun to bridge the gap between educational outcomes and societal value.

First, the dissemination of student works on new media platforms has garnered positive feedback. The course team selected and promoted a number of outstanding student works on platforms such as Douyin and Bilibili, with many pieces achieving substantial view counts. Comments such as “I didn’t know Dalian had places like this” and “I want to visit Dalian after watching this” were frequently seen in viewer comments. This not only validates the creative quality of the student works but also demonstrates a viable pathway for university teaching outcomes to serve local cultural and tourism promotion.

Second, the potential to serve local cultural and tourism promotion has begun to emerge. The innovation in thematic exploration and expressive techniques demonstrated by some outstanding works has attracted the attention of relevant research teams and local cultural and tourism institutions. The project-based teaching model and video repository established through this round of educational reform have laid the foundation for the course’s continued optimization. Moving forward, we can further deepen cooperation with cultural and tourism departments and cultural and creative enterprises to explore pathways for transforming classroom assignments into cultural products, thereby achieving the organic integration of teaching, research, and social service.

In summary, the teaching reform that incorporated cultural and tourism themes into the “*Fundamentals of Video Production*” course has yielded positive results in enhancing student learning outcomes, strengthening innovative capabilities and cultural identity, and achieving preliminary social value. These achievements preliminarily validate the effectiveness of the teaching strategy of “leveraging the professional strengths of the design discipline to empower Dalian’s cultural and tourism sector,” providing valuable

experience for similar course reforms.

7. Conclusions and Future Research

Using the “*Fundamentals of Video Production*” course as a practical platform, this study explored innovative teaching strategies that leverage the disciplinary strengths of design to empower local cultural and tourism development, and preliminarily established an innovative teaching model characterized by a practice-oriented approach and regional distinctiveness. By deeply integrating course instruction with the cultural and tourism needs of Dalian, the study achieved an organic integration of three dimensions: the transmission of professional knowledge, the cultivation of innovative capabilities, and service to local culture. The findings indicate that incorporating local cultural and tourism themes into foundational design courses yields multiple benefits. First, creating within a real-world context effectively stimulates students’ intrinsic motivation, enhancing their visual expression and project execution capabilities. Second, the combination of local cultural research and project-based learning cultivates students’ innovative thinking and cultural interpretation skills, facilitating a role transition from “technical executors” to “cultural creators.” Third, the dissemination of course outcomes through new media platforms has preliminarily demonstrated the practical feasibility of design education in serving local cultural and tourism development, providing a practical reference for the transformation of university teaching outcomes. This study offers a practical paradigm for reforming foundational courses in design disciplines, namely, transforming regional cultural resources into teaching resources and translating real-world social needs into learning tasks. This model enables students to develop an understanding of and identification with local culture while mastering professional skills, thereby achieving the synergistic advancement of knowledge transfer, competency development, and value formation.

Future research could be deepened in the following three areas: First, establishing interdisciplinary collaboration mechanisms to explore the convergence of disciplines such as design, tourism management, and cultural studies, and strengthening in-depth cooperation with local cultural and tourism institutions. Second, refining the quantitative evaluation system by developing measurement tools for dimensions such as innovative capacity, cultural identity, and social impact, thereby providing data support for teaching optimization. Third, expanding pathways for the transformation of outcomes by promoting the conversion of student works into cultural and tourism communication content and cultural and creative products, thereby forming a virtuous cycle between teaching and industry.

In summary, this study has preliminarily validated the effectiveness of the strategy of leveraging design disciplines to empower local cultural and tourism education, providing valuable insights for similar curriculum reforms. Future research will continue to deepen this approach to facilitate the broader application of this model.

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