The Path Analysis of the Local Development of Culture & Tourism Industry Based on Old & New Citizens’ Integration:

——Taking Qingshan Village as An Example

Zhongqi Ren

Shenzhen Vanke Meisha Academy, Shenzhen, 51800, China

Keywords: Cultural tourism, Native villagers & newcomers’ integration, Path analysis

Abstract: The paper is built around the theme of community and culture revitalization, and our object of study is Qingshan Village-the site which the government has put both enormous investments and expectations in. However, wishes still haven’t transformed into realities as we discover several questions during our visit to the village: lack of connection between two generations of villagers, ineffective advertisement, and villagers’ indifference in terms of spreading their franchises, all of which have directly led to the village’s failures to perform its duty given by the government. To comprehend the phenomenon from more in-depth perspectives, the paper will first analyze the causes of these problems through existing theories. Then, combining the findings with the actual condition of the village, and eventually raise a proposal that is both applicable to Qingshan Village and other similar cases.

1. Introduction

From cash to QR code, taxi to Uber, and newspaper to Instagram, all of which were only the tip of the giant iceberg of technological development (UNCTAD 2021). However, in 21st century, no longer any iceberg would either build up or collapse entirely on its own. Instead, their development will influence, or even determine other icebergs’ destiny as well.

Benefitted by the rapid development of technology, the process of urbanization has been proceeding drastically as well (Atkinson, 1998). For example, in the contemporary Chinese society, many modern suburban communities were rewarded by the rapid development of urbanization (Wang 2012). They were always located near city downtown, and different from traditional suburban villages which often develop on their own, with harvest of agricultural products, manufacture, and foodservice consisting most of their yearly income.

One of the most representative modern suburban communities in China is Qingshan Village. Due to its overwhelming natural environment as a perfect factor to advertise, the local government invested millions of cash on the soil. Initially, the government’s tremendous efforts were used to renovate all the houses, attract domestic and foreign investors, and cooperate with large corporations to build signature constructions, all of which were achieved in a relatively short amount of time.

What’s more, due to the prestige environment both with regards to nature and art, large number of artists and designers settled permanently in the village which to a certain extent fit into Qingshan Village’s theme of developing cultural tourism. Attempting put more bricks on the building, the government sent messages to organizations to search for further assistance.

However, the assistances didn’t end up performing the deeds they originally planned to do, in fact, they have caused a series of problems as well. The first issue of these organizations was that although traditional objects were shown in Rong Library and seasonal activities were designed by the Qingshan Natural School for the public, yet none of them integrated with the local culture of Qingshan Village. In other words, all the products exhibited and the activities that have been launched were not related to the local culture tourism. In fact, the items and the ideas tended to come from all around the world. In this case, was such modern suburban communities still developing cultural tourism? To gain more insights into the question, we have to know the...
definition of cultural tourism.

Cultural tourism, according to the official website of World Tourism Organization (UN-WTO), “A type of tourism activity in which the visitors’ essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible/intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism definition (UN-WTO, 2017)”\(^2\). While definition from other authorities or journals may share some minor differences, they generally convey the same message as the definition provided above, and they all claimed that developing cultural tourism industry was beneficial for revitalizing culture and art.

Through the quote from UNWTO, it’s not hard for us to interpret that the cultural products or experiences in terms of cultural tourism originated from the site which provided corresponding services, otherwise every city which has a museum are effectively developing cultural tourism-since museums do not necessarily exhibit local products. Under such circumstances, Qingshan Village obviously wasn’t developing cultural tourism, and how to put the acts on the correct track again would not only the questions, but also the crucial challenge.

Putting everything on the proper routine was undoubtedly one of our major goals, and we have put massive amount of effort in pursuit of the solution. Yet while we were studying for our ultimate goal, to our surprise, we discovered another serious problem in the village which remained unsolved. As mentioned earlier in the passage, the villagers of Qingshan Village not only consisted of native people, but also the newcomers.

Moreover, since the governments renovated the residence of the villagers, and introduced large number of newcomers to establish new constructions as well as adding cultural diversity to the village. Barely any trace of native villagers’ cultures was left, which caused the tension between the newcomers and the native villagers to gradually grow more intense. Therefore, the other task is involving the native citizens in the process of “renovating” the village designed by the new villagers, and this act was closely related to a terms called “community integration”. As described in UPenn Collaborative On Community Integration, “Community Integration is the opportunity to live in the community and be valued for one's uniqueness and abilities, like everyone else (Slazer, 2006)”\(^3\).

On the other hand, however, different from the interpretation of cultural tourism which all definition tended to convey similar messages. Community integration was more varied and could be defined as “assimilating-and welcoming-people with disabilities into the larger community (Udsservices, 2021)”\(^4\). While both of which were correct, the former obviously were more suitable for the situation of those communities-which the routine of development tended to be decided more by the newcomers rather than the native villagers. Therefore, under such settings, the native villagers were a group of villagers who was attempting to fit into the mainstream, and let their culture being valued again.

The second theory which involved in our process of designing the eventual proposal was the grounded theory, yet being a common theory, it was more resemble to a research method. As suggested in a deep analysis about the grounded theory, “Grounded theory sets out to discover or construct theory from data, systematically obtained and analyzed using comparative analysis. While grounded theory is inherently flexible, it is a complex methodology.” (Tie, Birks & Francis 2019) In addition, other studies have also mentioned the functions and the benefits of applying grounded theory as the methodology, and all of which have reached our requirements for the proposal. “I think the strongest case for the use of grounded theory is in investigations of relatively uncharted waters, or to gain a fresh perspective in a familiar situation.” (Stern 1980)

The crucial terms mentioned above--cultural tourism and community integration-consisted of two of the most crucial issues in that we discovered during our visit to Qinshan Village, and this paper offers a detailed insight into the actual status of the village and its resemblance to cases of other cities or even countries. What’s more, it will also elaborate how we come up with our solutions, the content of the solution, and the limitations of it with regards to various factors.

2. Theoretical Framework

The first theory-resource dependent theory-mainly discussed the connection between interhuman, or interregional relationship and the preservation over natural resource. According to ScienceDirect,
“Resource dependence theory views interorganizational relations as a means for securing needed resources and of enhancing control over resource supply. Power relations and the effective management of resource dependencies are at the center of researchers’ interest” (Ebers 2001). On the other hand, resource dependent theory could also be interpreted as “RDT recognizes the influence of external factors on organizational behavior and, although constrained by their context, managers can act to reduce environmental uncertainty and dependence” (Hillman, Withers & Collins 2008).

All the theories mentioned above served as the basis for our methodologies, and they were all proved to be suitable for the situation of Qingshan Village. In fact, the content as well as the logics of the theories, if not completely took into the consideration of all factors, the elements it covered could at least mostly be applied as the perfect reference for the design of our eventual proposal. And after gaining sufficient insights into the direction of developing our methodology, we combined the information we obtained during the first few days in the village with the theoretical knowledge to conduct the solution to the issues of Qingshan Village.

3. Methodology

The most significant methods that we applied to produce our final solution was interviews to people of different identities, and as the paper was mainly divided into two sections, we interviewed two different groups of people as well. Our paper mainly concentrated on improving cultural tourism and encourage the integration between native villagers and newcomers in Qingshan Village.

On February 7th and 8th of 2021, we interviewed a total number of 11 people, among which the information we gained from seven people effectively contributed to our eventual proposal. All the interviews took place in Qingshan Village—a village with rainy weather and a population of in acres of land. In addition, bamboo shoots were massively produced in here as well.

Consequently, after thorough contemplation of the types of information that we interviewed, we categorized our intended interviewees into three categories: newcomers, native villagers and their descendants.

Our first interviewee was a native villager Mr. Moli who we met on the road who we didn’t originally plan to visit. Yet while we were chatting with him, we discovered that he was the owner a local homestay. Through our one-hour conversation, we learnt that, to begin with, the village barely had any regular visitors, almost all of them were attracted by the activities posted on the official accounts of Rong Library and Qingshan Nature School. Second, although the headquarters of Qingshan village set up a special branch for the development of tourism, since a lot of the homestays and restaurants were run by native citizens—who were generally aged and hardly had enough knowledge for technology-most of their efforts to advertise for local homestays or restaurants received no effective results.

Leaving from the homestay, the destination we approached was another native villager in the Village, Mr. Yu. Different from the carpentry architect who we met before, Mr. Yu has finished several huge artworks in the village collaborating with the newcomers. In fact, he has shown up in several posts of newcomers’ organizations, yet he still had his own concerns and complaints, which was the reason why we decided to list him as one of our interviewees. His “office” was at the boundary of the village, and since we couldn’t drive, it took us nearly forty minutes to arrive there.

When we finally arrived, what stood in front of eyes were a huge door and several cabins made of bamboo and the creator of them. With a sufficient amount of knowledge about him, we still had surprising takeaways from our conversation. Even though superficially he and the newcomers maintained a decent relationship, it was more like an employment relationship rather than friendship, and those fancy artworks in the village virtually didn’t represent anything about Qingshan Village, they were purely items used to create the so-called artistic atmosphere in the village, without any other purposes.

Finishing our interviews with Mr Yu, we set off and went back to the homestay where we lived in. Just as we were about to arrive at the front, I noticed a wrecked ancient building at the side of the road. Yet we proceeded and didn’t give it further attention for our net interview with the
descendants of native villagers and leader of the newcomers were coming soon. The first interviewee that we invited was a descendent of native villager named Lucas, whose father has been living in Qingshan Village since his childhood. During our conversation, we found out some facts about them which were different from those we have searched either on the internet or in previous interviews.

First, most of the younger generation of the native villagers have close relationship with the newcomers, in fact, a large section of the paper couldn’t be finished without their assistance. Which somewhat contradicted with what we heard from other villagers. On the other hand, even though most of them own a restaurant or a homestay in the village, their parents were mainly in charge since they went to Hangzhou or adjacent towns to work. As for the conflicts between their parents and the newcomers, Lucas said that he could relate to their emotions, since to them all things that the newcomers and the government did to the village was like taking their own children away as the village was originally designed by them. Yet he also mentioned that he and other younger-generation villagers could do nothing about it because they also had their own business to take care of.

Next up was the leaders of the newcomer-Ms. Jill and Mr. Nick. Although we were well-prepared in terms of interview questions, their answers to which were usually “official”, just like those lines we would expect to hear on government advertisements and formal meetings.

Summarizing the interviews we conducted, the situation was more complicated than we expected it be. The three different groups of people that we interviewed all tended have diverse interpretations in certain issues, in short, they were pointing fingers at each other. While it undoubtedly created unexpected controversy to our knowledge to the state of Qingshan Village, it has also drawn a blueprint of the plans that we were about to decide. That is, to ensure that the native villagers if not enjoy the equal amount of economic and cultural benefits that newcomers gained, at least a part of it.

4. Findings

1) Current situation of the integration between native villagers and newcomer

According to our interview with Mr. Moli, all the products or activities presented by the administrators of the new constructions, in his opinion, didn’t manifest any features related to Qingshan Village. When speaking of this topic, he told us about how phenomenal the old auditorium and temples of the village were with great passion, and it was those few minutes that we knew he was the chief architect of all the village’s public buildings—the one that were taken down to pave ways for the new constructions. After the conversation, he took us to his backyard, where all of his spare-time carpentry were located, a workshop, kitchen, and the restaurants. Being shocked by his creativity and ability, we continuously expressed our maximum appreciation to him while we were walking, and before we left, he said to us that he wished we could send their messages to the headquarters and the newcomers of the village if we had an opportunity to.

On the other hand, our interview with Mr. Yu also gave us some insights into the controversial relationship. He claimed that tourism in the development was actually way off the track in his opinion, because there were effectively only two sites for the tourists to visit, and the delicate bamboo work courses which he designed were nowhere to be known. Third, the mechanic of bamboo work was on the edge of vanishing since barely any youngsters knew the existence of it, which makes him the last generation of apprentice who had the knowledge of bamboo art and frequently applied it. At present, although being bamboo work master was no longer Mr. Yu’s job, instead, he run company that exported bamboo wind chimes to Japan, Korea, and countries of Europe—because as he suggested, Chinese appeared to have much less interest in bamboo handicrafts compared to foreigners—he still has fire in his heart to teach the mechanics of making bamboo works to the public and let the mechanic inherited.

Finally, starting from perspective of the younger generation villagers and newcomers, we again gained different interpretation in term of the issue. First, through the interview to Lucas, a young native villager, we learned that most of the younger generation of the native villagers have close
relationship with the newcomers, in fact, a lot of the papers couldn’t be finished without their assistance. Which somewhat contradicted with what we heard from other villagers. On the other hand, even though most of them own a restaurant or a homestay in the village, their parents were mainly in charge since they went to Hangzhou or adjacent towns to work. As for the conflicts between their parents and the newcomers, Lucas said that he could relate to their emotions, since to them all things that the newcomers and the government did to the village was like taking their own children away as the village was originally designed by them. Yet he also mentioned that he and other younger-generation villagers could do nothing about it because they also had their own business to take care of.

As for the representatives of the newcomers-- Mrs. Jill and Mr. Nick, even though they both had “official” answers for our questions, we still learnt some crucial truths about the relationship between the newcomers and native villagers. That is, the newcomers were and would always spread open arms towards any opinions or ideas of native villagers, but ideas ought to be expressed through conversations, meetings, not through spreading rumors, complaining without the slightest understanding of the works they have done, or starting physical conflicts with the new villagers.

2) Problems and Challenges

Now that we have set the plans for our eventual proposals, but before we actually put our attentions onto the contents of the plan, we ought to clarify the actual situation of the village. Firstly, the superficial tourism which Qingshan Village has developed wasn’t enough to support the tourists’ attempts to have a deep trip into the village. Seeing the library’s doors shut and thinking that the library was closed, lots of tourists would walk away. In fact, most of the times it wasn’t closed. Tourists wouldn’t be able to experience special activities designed by the Qingshan Nature School without reservations. And the people who visited the village for the first time neither have enough information about the services in the village, nor had any idea how to access these information.

On the other hand, the connections which tourists might be able to build were rare: the cuisines of different restaurants in the village were approximately identical; hardly any differences could be told through the descriptions and pictures of the homestays.

Summarizing the takeaways we got through our studies, this paper eventually concluded two main questions to resolve. The first of which was how to integrate the tourism resources of Qingshan Village, and created a brand which allowed tourists to build up emotional connection and have better experiences in the village. As for the other question, taking advantage of the integration of resources and the creation of the brand, how to alleviate the tension between the newcomers and the older generation of the native villagers---so that both sides would enjoy the benefits of developing the new Qingshan Village---was the most significant challenge.

3) Solution and improvement

With the enormous amount of information that we have got, this paper firstly sorted out and place them into the proper spot of our final proposal. Initially, we identified the three types of tourists that would visit Qingshan Village in the last two years. The first of which was the tourists with a purpose. For example, team activities and visiting Rong Library and Qingshan Nature School. This group of people usually had sufficient knowledge to Qingshan Village even before they visited the site either through official accounts or advertisements. They usually would do reservations ahead of their trip to ensure everything go smoothly, yet there were usually a few of them and they often wouldn’t stay overnight.

The second group was those people who came from places that were far away from Qingshan Village, which only consisted of a small amount of visitor to the village, and they would usually come here with their children because of the enjoyable natural environment. The last group was those who came to the village regularly: they have been always regarding the place as their second home. And without any surprise, they consisted the least percentages in the tourists of Qingshan Village.

Additionally, according to the data from WeChat, the average page views of each passage from Rong Library, Nature Hub (the official account of Qingshan Nature School), and Future Qingshan (the official account of Qingshan Village, mainly advertised for the village and provided
information of services for living and eating) were respectively 3000~6000, 300~600, and 50~200. Therefore, through the statistics, we concluded that shifting the targeted tourists to those who went from distant locations and capable of visiting the village frequently would bring Qinshan Village benign influences in terms of economy and community.

After identifying our intended audience, what was next for us to investigate was the type of service that the villagers could provide. To accomplish the goal, we ought to find the similarities between the newcomers and the native villagers. As the information we collected through interviews suggested, the newcomers mainly consisted of people who were white collars, artists, designers, or architects. As for the older generation villagers, most of them have retired, and not many of them have been formally employed throughout their lifetime. Therefore, building the dam, farming, cultivating herds, and cooking were their activities during most of their times. However, even if it was the two groups of people that seemed so different, certain similarities could still be discovered. For example, both of them prefer natural life styles, love the lives of plants and animals, and can cook delicate cuisines. Combining all the information, we eventually initiated a proposal named “Qingshanian” (青山人).

To begin with, taking advantage of the popularity of Rong Library and Qingshan Nature School, the two most well-known sites could post journals articles—mainly intriguing stories and values about “Qingshanians”—on their official accounts of social media. Through the process of contemplating the actual values of “Qingshanians”, we had a serious interpretation and reflection on their traits and the jobs they worked on. After hours’ of brainstorm and discussion, we concluded that the true values of this concept was the objects (各种手工艺品) they touched, and it could be evidently observed in the photos we took.

For example, Mr. Moli was holding a wooden chair built by himself in the image; Mr. Yu was working on his bamboo rooftop in the image; and Mr. Tan who was the first family came to Qingshan Village was holding a plate with his family discipline on it. All of them not only conveyed the stories of their own, but also revealed the unique culture of Qingshan Village. After advertising the concept online, we would transfer our efforts to improve the tourists’ experiences when they are at Qingshan Village. Posters about “Qingshanians”, tourists’ brochure, and “Qingshan Map” will be placed at the entrances of Rong Library and Qingshan Nature School to ensure visitors’ access to the information.

What’s more, different “Qingshanians” will be selected to present on maps on each edition to further attract the attentions of tourists. Other than the brochures and the maps, signs and calendars were also two indispensable sections of our efforts to improve tourists’ experiences at Qingshan Village. Among them, signs with Qingshan Logos mainly function to point out the directions of different tourism sites. As for the calendar, it is closely connected to the activities we specially designed according to the seasons and the traditions of native villagers.

In spring when everything sprouted, picking and having dinner at the wild will be the most valuable experience to have. In summer, when animals and insects bring vividness to the nature, “Qingshanians” will lead the tourists to the wild to observe fire flies, and have a night walk through unsung beauty of Qingshan Village. In autumn, the season of harvesting, “Qingshanians” will invite the tourists to party with them, digging sweet potatoes, picking persimmons, frying chestnuts, joining the autumn feast and so on: all of which were ultimate events of celebration at Qingshan Village. While in winter when objects all turned into white, there were no better options than picking bamboo shoots (the specialty of Qingshan Village) and making bacons and Chinese rice cakes. Whenever the tourists choose to visit, Qingshan Village, a yearly calendar with all the events throughout the year listed will be given to them after their activities end. Hence, they may choose to spend another time of pleasure in here again.

5. Conclusion and Policy Suggestion

Above were essentially all the crucial parts of the paper. To conclude, firstly, we used Rong Library and Qingshan Nature School as a medium to attract people’s attention and create topics for
the articles on social media like Wechat. Benefitting from the online articles and posts, greater number of tourists would be introduced and attracted to the village. Through the maps, brochures, calendars, and related souvenirs, we attempted to increase the tourists’ time spent on playing in the village and created more intimate ties between tourists and the village itself. However, all of which couldn’t be done solely in the hands of native villagers and newcomers. The assistance of local tourism company-Green Water Tourism Company—was also crucial. They had to in charge of the duties of perfecting the “Qingshanian” franchise, improving travelling experiences and advertisement for the village.

5.1 Future Development

After the paper was handed to the headquarters of Qingshan Village, to our surprise, it was accepted and was listed into the future development plans of the village. Hearing that our product was recognized by other people, we participated the composition of the second phase of the paper again, hoping to attain further achievements.

In this time, the development of the concept “Qingshanian” was divided into four sections: homestay, food, handicraft, and history. Among which we were in charge of the homestays, and similarly, we designed a mechanism to be carried out also by the combining efforts of homestay owners (mostly native villagers) and the tourism company. At the end, we also managed to integrate the papers of the four different groups together, making the general scheme of “Qingshanian” more complete.

5.2 Limitations and Potential Challenges

Although our efforts were able to be put together at the end of both the first phase and the second phase, there were still certain limitations and obstacles which we found difficult to overcome. To begin with, how to transform online platforms and social media into the entrances for tourists remain unsolvable. Second, even though Rong Library and Qingshan Nature School were both applied as the medium to attract tourists, increasing connections between the two most popular sites would be a promising achievement: since once accomplished, huge number of profits would be gained through it. Third, Qingshan Village still has to search for a way to directly and positively contact with tourism resources instead of negatively waiting for the tourists to come. Finally, and most importantly, the native villagers need to learn to shape the value of their own brand and character by creating unique contents, and therefore let themselves be the backbone of experiencing Qingshan Village’s cultural diversity.

References


