

The Homogenization of Man-Made Historical Landscapes and Its Solution: Case Analysis of Tang Dynasty Never Nights City and Chongquan Ancient Town

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Abstract. Shaanxi Province has a long history, and the famous Tang Dynasty in ancient China was once located here. The cultural background is strong, and the man-made historical landscape relies on its development and the success of the Tang Dynasty Never Nights City also benefits from this. With its successful development, many tourism industries are vying to imitate it. The homogenization of man-made landscapes has affected the sustainable development of Shaanxi's cultural tourism industry. This study mainly focuses on analyzing the problem and giving the way to solve it, finding the problem through field investigation and making a questionnaire to investigate and analyze the problem, and finding the essence of the problem and the way to solve it from the comparative analysis of the two scenic spots of Tang Dynasty Never Nights City and Chongquan Ancient Town. This study proposes several strategies to address landscape homogenization, providing a reference for the future development of man-made historic landscapes and emphasizing the importance of differentiated design and diversified development.

Keywords: Homogenization, Man-made Historical Landscapes, tourism industries, field investigation, making a questionnaire, Tang Dynasty Never Nights City, Chongquan Ancient Town.

1. Introduction

According to data from the Shaanxi Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, in recent years, the rich cultural and natural heritage resources of Shaanxi Province have gradually attracted widespread attention. It is recognized that it is necessary to strengthen the holistic and systematic protection of these heritage resources in order to promote the deep integration of culture and tourism so as to promote high-quality economic and social development [1]. Culture, as an important part of national development, is gradually penetrating the lives of the public through tourism, a way of cultural communication. Travelers are exposed to, understood, and passed on to culture through travel. However, the rapid development of tourism, the accompanying commercialization trend, excessive administrative intervention, and the involvement of a large number of social capitals have gradually led to the homogenization of the tourism landscape [2].

At present, most of the research on the tourism landscape focuses on the field of rural tourism [3, 4], while the research on man-made historical landscapes could be stronger. Although there are many studies on the phenomenon of homogenization, there are few case studies involving man-made historical landscapes [5, 6], and there needs to be more in-depth systematic discussion on this phenomenon. In order to fill this research gap, this paper deeply reveals the common homogenization problem in contemporary man-made historical landscapes through a comparative analysis of two typical man-made historical landscapes, Tang Dynasty Never Nights City and Chongquan Ancient Town, combined with field research and questionnaire survey and proposes corresponding solutions.

As an innovative model for the integration of culture and tourism [7], since the remarkable success of the Tang Dynasty Never Nights City, many similar landscapes have followed suit, resulting in the phenomenon of blind borrowing and copying in an endless stream and the historical man-made landscapes in Shaanxi and even across the country have gradually presented a “cookie-cutter” situation [8]. Although the proliferation of homogenization presents the prosperity and diversity of various landscapes on the surface, in essence, the design mode of scenic spots converges and lacks unique cultural connotations and personalities, resulting in only a handful of successful cases [2].

Based on this, this paper will deeply discuss the success factors of Tang Dynasty Never Nights City and the fundamental reasons for the decline of Chongquan Ancient Town and analyze the differences between the two in landscape design, cultural inheritance, and tourist experience so as to provide feasible ideas and references for the development of man-made historical landscapes in the future.

2. Research method

2.1. Field research

Chongquan Ancient Town was completed and put into operation in 2016, when it first opened, it was all over the place, and the level was comparable to many Internet celebrity check-in points. The scene was hot, and packed parking spaces were hard to find, but since the outbreak of the epidemic in 2019, most landscapes have declined, and Chongquan Ancient Town is one of them. However, through the visit, it was found that the epidemic is only one of the important reasons. There are many potential problems in the operation of Chongquan Ancient Town.

After the outbreak, the operator did not carry out repair and reconstruction. No one cleaned it, and there were dead branches and leaves everywhere. It can be seen that the operator has paid little attention to the later maintenance and restoration of Chongquan Ancient Town, and it can no longer support its sustainable development.

Moreover, many phenomena in the architecture of the ancient town need to conform to the background of the times on which the ancient town is based. The background of the ancient capital city on which the ancient town of Chongquan is based lacks many modern elements, and tourists are prone to the phenomenon of “jumping the show”.

The construction method of the ancient town is similar to that of most ancient towns, and it seriously needs its characteristics. Most tourists say that they “forget when they see it”, and lack “memory points”, and in the ancient town, like most ancient town attractions, the catering adopts the method of “food street”, and tourists are prone to “aesthetic fatigue”, “shopping around is the same”, “every time these snacks” ideas.

In fact, these phenomena found in Chongquan Ancient Town have penetrated all aspects of tourism in most ancient towns, and the operators urgently need to find a way to crack them and develop in many aspects.

2.2. Survey

In order to further verify the problem, the questions mainly focused on the comparison between Tang Dynasty Never Nights City and Chongquan Ancient Town. They tried to deduce that tourists’ ignorance of Chongquan Ancient Town was contrasted with their understanding of Tang Dynasty Never Nights City. Through the attraction of tourists to the famous attractions related to Tang Dynasty Never Nights City, the reasons for the successful construction and operation of Tang Dynasty Never Nights City are analyzed. Finally, through the opinions of tourists, some problems in the man-made historical landscape of Shaanxi from the perspective of tourists are summarized.

The questionnaire survey method was used to sample tourists from all over the world, and the results of the questionnaire were analyzed and summarized. The questionnaire uses a combination of mandatory multiple-choice questions and optional fill-in-the-blank questions. The topics mainly involve three aspects: basic information, understanding of the landscape, landscape characteristics, and opinions and suggestions and the questionnaire stars are used to publish data statistics so as to find out the problems of the man-made landscape and find out the way to solve them by soliciting opinions. After its release on 25 August 2024, a total of 353 answered questionnaires were received, of which 353 were validly completed.

3. Result

The questionnaire involved 281 Shaanxi natives and 72 people from other provinces, a total of 353 people. A total of 286 people took Xi'an as one of the target tourist cities, including 63 people from other provinces. It accounts for 87.5% of the total number of people from other provinces, which shows that Xi'an is very popular with tourists as a popular tourist city. Xi'an often attracts tourists from other provinces with traditional culture and cuisine, and the man-made historical landscape has achieved the integration of the two to explore the degree of tourists' love for the man-made historical landscape and the operation mode of the operator.

3.1. Degree of knowledge of the landscape

According to the statistics, 71.95% of tourists know about Tang Dynasty Never Nights City, while 71.95% of them say they have never heard of Chongquan Ancient Town. Among them, 204 locals in Shaanxi Province said that they did not know about Chongquan Ancient Town at all, accounting for 72.59% of the local population. There are only 170 people who know the man-made historical landscape of Tang Dynasty Never Nights City, accounting for 48.16% of the total number. Through the above data, it can be seen that tourists have successfully remembered Tang Dynasty Never Nights City through its own publicity and good operation, and it has become one of the must-haves "check-in places" for tourists. However, other ancient towns lack their characteristics, and their construction and development are similar, resulting in frequent phenomena of "not knowing" and "not caring" among tourists.

With the promotion of the construction of other man-made historical landscapes driven by the successful operation of Tang Dynasty Never Nights City, Shaanxi's tourism industry has also improved significantly. Still, at the same time, it is inevitably affected by standardization and commercialization, and the problem of homogenization has emerged. Since the history of Shaanxi is mainly based on the "Tang culture" as the main historical background, and the Tang Dynasty Never Nights City is also operated in this background, other landscapes are developed and operated with it as a standard, adopting similar commodities and business models, while ignoring their characteristics. This has led to the frequent occurrence of the problem of homogenization of man-made historical landscapes.

3.2. Landscape features

Through the data, 81.3% of tourists chose Tang Dynasty Never Nights City and Chongquan Ancient Town, while only 18.75% of the total number of tourists chose Chongquan Ancient Town. Since its construction, Tang Dynasty Never Nights City has been taking Tang culture as the main propaganda point, and the "Little Sister Tumbler" and "Ancient Costume Boom" have attracted a lot of tourists. In this questionnaire survey, through the statistics of the main attractions that attract tourists in Tang Dynasty Never Nights City, it was found that "Miss Tumbler" and "Voice-activated Fountain" were the top two attractions that mainly attracted tourists, accounting for 29.46% and 27.2% respectively. Tang Dynasty Never Nights City attaches great importance to the development and promotion of characteristic scenic spots. However, the data found that special food only accounted for 5.95%, and Shaanxi, as one of the provinces with more special food, could not give full play to its characteristics in the man-made historical landscape. Most man-made historical landscapes adopt the business model of "food street", which leads to their tendency to "homogenization".

3.3. Suggestion

Through the questionnaire collection, 189 tourists put forward their opinions and suggestions on Xi'an tourism. The high-frequency words were extracted from the opinions and suggestions of tourists in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, using the questionnaire star WeChat applet. 51 words were sorted out in the questionnaire proposed by 189 tourists, and Excel obtained the statistics to obtain Table 1. As can be seen from Table 1, the opinions of tourists are mainly focused on "service" and "culture".

Table 1. Statistical table of tourism opinions and suggestions in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province.

Num .	Word	Frequenc y	Num .	Word	Frequenc y	Num .	Word	Frequenc y
1	No	40	18	Traffic	6	35	Public services.	4
2	Xi'an	28	19	Control	6	36	Another place	4
3	Service	24	20	Ancient Capital	6	37	Nothing	3
4	Travel	21	21	Civilization	6	38	Product	3
5	Cultural	16	22	Place	5	39	Passenger flow	3
6	Tourist	16	23	Hygienism	5	40	Humanized	3
7	Advance	15	24	Environment	5	41	Attraction	3
8	Hope	14	25	Ticket	5	42	Town	3
9	Promote	12	26	Quality	5	43	Experience	3
10	Don't	10	27	Strengthen	5	44	Best	3
11	Feature	9	28	Build	5	45	Free	3
12	Scenic spot	9	29	Should	5	46	Question	3
13	History	9	30	Continue	4	47	Charge	3
14	City	9	31	One time	4	48	phenomenon	3
15	Scenic area	8	32	Program	4	49	Crowd	3
16	Awareness	7	33	more	4	50	Price	3
17	Advice	6	34	More	4			

In terms of service, many tourists mentioned that the price of travel in the hot season will rise, and the service quality will decline because of the large number of people in the scenic spot. And for popular attractions, the jurisdiction of traffic is also a big problem. As a business operator, it is necessary to consider the training of personnel and the measures to be taken when the traffic is high, as well as if the operator is unable to adjust the issue of how to improve efficiency.

Tourist A: "1. Don't go up in the tourist peak hotel and food; it's good to control it at a unified price; 2. Increase tourism service consultation to provide convenience for tourists; 3. Redevelop some scenic spots in the western suburbs and northern suburbs to increase the comprehensiveness of tourism; 4. During the tourist season, the country will recruit more volunteers to add value-added services in scenic spots, such as guidance and cultural export."

In terms of culture, the integration of culture and tourism has been the main research issue in recent years. Xi'an has a strong cultural heritage and the cultural background of the Tang Dynasty, and it has a strong cultural IP, but with its development, the commercialization trend is serious. The combination of modern technology and ancient background, as well as the inheritance and protection of China's traditional culture, is an issue that operators should pay attention to.

Tourist B: "We should pay attention to the ancient tourist culture within the city walls and not transform it into a modern metropolis." If the monuments are destroyed, what is lost is history, and it should be like the renovation of the old city of Luoyang. The Ming city wall should be an antique and historical and cultural tourist resort."

Tourist C: “Renovate the city and restore the imitation Tang Dynasty buildings and tear down the dilapidated houses on Muslim Street. It’s really bad, so rebuild it well.”

4. Ways to solve the problem of homogenization of man-made historical landscapes

Lefebvre once put forward the concept of “space of difference”, pointing out horizontally that “every mode of production has its own unique space, so the transformation from one mode to another must require a new space of production”. Secondly, he emphasized vertically that “the capitalist space of production itself is caused by the pressures of the world market and the capitalist relations of production” [9].

4.1. Create urban IP and increase the “memory points” of scenic spots

Research the revitalization of resources through the excavation of opera culture, singing and dancing culture, food culture, architectural culture, celebrity culture, etc., refine and revitalize, create a unique IP tourism form, achieve “one town, one product”, and build the ancient town into a way of life for different tourists for vacation and leisure. Each scenic spot has its uniqueness, which is reflected in the geographical location, the historical background on which the scenic spot is based, and the crowd of people. Scenic spots should discover their uniqueness, such as Chongquan Ancient Town with the historical story of Emperor Tang Ming and Yang Guifei as the background, and the scenic spot can set up relevant scenic spots, introduce opera, and interpret its story to the public. Promote history and culture and achieve the integration of culture and tourism in the true sense.

4.2. Scientifically build an industrialization chain

The successful development experience of many characteristic towns at home and abroad tells people that integrated development with related industries, effectively combining the industrial planning of the region, good all-around planning, and maintaining the long-term prosperity and development of the town with industrial development and the expansion of the industrial chain are necessary [10]. This form of outsourcing is used to improve the industry’s operational efficiency and enhance the enterprise’s competitiveness. In the face of the competition and development of the same industry, we will discover our potential.

4.3. Talent investment to improve personnel competency

Pay attention to the introduction of talents and ensure that personnel are of high quality. Improve the personnel induction training system to ensure that the personnel have an understanding of the scenic spot and the historical background of the scenic spot and improve the competency of the personnel. There is also a certain relationship between understanding the scenic spot and the quality of personnel service, and only by understanding the background of the scenic spot can we ensure that the personnel are better invested in the work. The level of service quality can be improved.

5. Conclusion

This study compares and analyzes the two man-made historical landscapes of Tang Buye City and Chongquan Ancient Town and finds that there is a problem of homogenization through field research and uses the prosperity of Tang Dynasty Never Nights City to lead to the homogenization of other landscapes. Chongquan Ancient Town is one of the cases for analysis and research, and it summarizes the problems and makes relevant questionnaires. Through the collection and analysis of questionnaires, it is found that people need more understanding of other man-made historical landscapes, and to overcome this dilemma, the author proposes some ways. It provides ideas for the development of man-made landscapes in the future, finds its characteristics, and develops a new trend of man-made landscapes from “one side of a thousand towns” to “a hundred flowers blooming”.

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