

The New Silk Road: an opportunity for tourism development in Pingan Yuanjiacun Village, China

La Nueva Ruta de la Seda: oportunidad para el desarrollo turístico de la Aldea Pingan Yuanjiacun, China

A Nova Rota da Seda: oportunidade para o desenvolvimento turístico na Vila de Pingan Yuanjiacun, China

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Received: 17/09/2021

Accepted: 6/12/2021

ABSTRACT

In the context of the New Silk Road development plan, Pingan District of Haidong City and Haidong Yuanjia Village Cultural Tourism Co., Ltd. are reshaping the development of Pingan Yuanjiacun Village. The combination of such a cultural brand with the traditional cultural elements of the area has resulted in the formation of a new economic and cultural model focused on showcasing local culture, creating a cultural exhibition board that integrates ecology, tourism, leisure, health and vacation and integrates autonomously into the framework of the national development strategy of the New Silk Road and creates a new development mode for rural revitalization and cultural dissemination. The aim of the research is to systematize the impact generated by

tourism in Pingan Yuanjiacun Village, based on the programmatic framework of the New Silk Road. The study is of mixed type and is based on the literature review and fieldwork that led to the application of surveys to visitors and residents, which analysis is based on descriptive statistics. The results allowed to recognize the impacts and weaknesses associated with the established development model, which allow to take them as a reference for the actions to be developed in the medium term.

Keywords: New Silk Road; tourism; rural revitalization; China

RESUMEN

En el contexto del plan de desarrollo de la Nueva Ruta de la Seda, el distrito de Pingan de la ciudad de Haidong y la empresa Haidong Yuanjia Village Cultural Tourism Co., Ltd., redimensionan el desarrollo de la Aldea Pingan Yuanjiacun. La combinación de dicha marca cultural con los elementos culturales tradicionales del área ha dado lugar a la conformación de un nuevo modelo económico y cultural enfocado en mostrar la cultura local, creando un tablero de exhibición cultural que integra la ecología, el turismo, el ocio, la salud y las vacaciones y se integra de manera autónoma en el marco de la estrategia de desarrollo nacional de la Nueva Ruta de la Seda y que crea un nuevo modo de desarrollo para la revitalización rural y la difusión cultural. El objetivo de la investigación es sistematizar el impacto generado por el turismo en la Aldea Pingan Yuanjiacun, a partir del marco programático de la Nueva Ruta de la Seda. El estudio es de tipo mixto y se sustenta en la revisión bibliográfica y el trabajo de campo que condujo a la aplicación de encuestas a visitantes y residentes, cuyos análisis se apoyan en la estadística descriptiva. Los resultados permitieron reconocer los impactos y debilidades asociadas al modelo de desarrollo establecido, los cuales permiten tomarlos como referencia para las acciones a desarrollar en el mediano plazo.

Palabras clave: Nueva Ruta de la Seda; turismo; revitalización rural; China

RESUMO

No contexto do plano de desenvolvimento da New Silk Road, o Distrito de Pingan da cidade de Haidong e a Haidong Yuanjia Village Cultural Tourism Co., Ltd. estão reformulando o desenvolvimento da Vila de Pingan Yuanjiacun. A combinação de tal marca cultural com os elementos culturais tradicionais da área resultou na formação de um novo modelo econômico e cultural focado em mostrar a cultura local, criando um quadro de exposição cultural que integra ecologia, turismo, lazer, saúde e férias e se integra de forma autônoma na estrutura da estratégia de desenvolvimento nacional da Nova Rota da Seda e cria um novo modo de desenvolver a revitalização rural e a disseminação cultural. O objetivo da pesquisa é sistematizar o impacto gerado pelo turismo na Vila Pingan Yuanjiacun, com base na estrutura programática da Nova Rota da Seda. O estudo é de tipo misto e se baseia em uma revisão de literatura e trabalho de campo que levou à aplicação de pesquisas aos visitantes e residentes, cuja análise é baseada em estatísticas descritivas. Os resultados nos permitiram reconhecer os impactos e fraquezas associados ao modelo de desenvolvimento estabelecido, o que nos permite tomá-los como referência para as ações a serem desenvolvidas a médio prazo.

Palavras-chave: Nova Rota da Seda; turismo; revitalização rural; China

INTRODUCTION

In March 2015, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China jointly published the document entitled *Perspectives and Actions to Promote the Joint Construction of the Economic Belt along the Silk Road and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road*. What the three government entities presented to the world was no less than the systematization, conjunction and argumentation of two development initiatives that, since September 2013, President Xi Jinping had launched during his visits to the Republic of Kazakhstan and Indonesia, namely the Economic Belt along the Silk Road and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, respectively.

Experts have referred to the Silk Road as a global brand with great potential for *marketing*. The revival of the Silk Road as part of the Chinese government's long-term, comprehensive opening-up and multi-development strategy provides the scaffolding and background for recent national tourism development strategies, such as in the case of Qinghai Province and Pingan Village.

The current development model for Pingan Yuanjiacun Village, while reproducing a paradigm that has worked in other Chinese rural contexts, is not without significant critical observations, in that it reveals the weaknesses of a tourism management and practice that, while it has created multiple benefits, has deformed the landscape and traditional cultures it claims to rescue, leaving much to be said about the tourism innovation itself. In the midst of the construction process, it has been forgotten that the rural is a regional complex composed of natural ecology, social culture, economic type and residential groups governed by a variety of social norms established over the years (or centuries) that must be properly understood, in order to respect and save the full extent of the expression "Pingan culture".

The aim of this research is to systematize the impact generated by tourism in Pingan Yuanjiacun village, based on the programmatic framework of the New Silk Road.

Prior to the arrival of the New Silk Road to Qinghai province, the ancient Zhangjiazhai, now transformed into Pingan Yuanjiacun Village, has set its sights on tourism as an economic strategy, hence the research is considered important, as it synthesizes the referative elements for tourism development and for the first time recognizes the impacts that this causes from the criteria expressed by visitors and residents.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is descriptive, analytical-exploratory and maintains a qualitative-quantitative approach and is based on two phases: literature review and fieldwork.

The bibliographic analysis allowed the collection of information and the analysis of terms related to rural, culture and tourism and the synergies that occur between them, in line with the dialectical analysis and supported by general research methods such as historical-logical and inductive-deductive, which allowed the formulation of the category

of rural cultural tourism. The theoretical foundation of this prospective study constitutes an approach to the concepts of rural tourism and rural cultural tourism, specifically from a transdisciplinary and dialectical perspective and from the understanding of tourism as a transversal phenomenon, of systemic and multiscale dimension, through which cultural, social, environmental and economic components are integrated. The foundations that support the New Silk Road initiative as a fundamental strategy of Chinese domestic and foreign policy and as the main agent of the dynamization of the country's tourism development and the promotion of a new category of tourism approach: Chinese rural cultural tourism also were presented.

The fieldwork was conducted during the first half of the year 2021, in which non-participant observation and exploratory research were given vital importance. In order to collect reliable information on the status of tourism development in Pingan Yuanjiacun village, visits and tours, as well as interviews and surveys, were necessary. The making and application of instruments was guided by specific objectives and developed as follows:

- a) Visitor surveys: these were carried out with the fundamental objective of measuring the level of satisfaction with regard to their stays in the village. To calculate the sample of visitors, the sampling formula for infinite populations is used

$$n = \frac{z^2 s^2}{e^2}$$

Where:

n: sample size

z: reliability level (1.96)

s: standard deviation

e: sampling error (0.05)

- b) Resident surveys were developed to determine the level of satisfaction with the presence of the Pingan Yuanjiacun complex in the village, as well as the level of participation in the conceptual planning and economic and cultural development of the village. A total of 524 residents were surveyed, representing every household in the village
- c) Semi-structured interviews: these interviews were conducted with managers of Haidong Yuanjia Village Cultural Tourism Co., Ltd. as the planning and construction unit of the Pingan Yuanjia Village project. They were mostly focused on acquiring information about the enterprise organization, how the conceptual planning of the project was developed, as well as the hiring requirements of employees working on the development project. A total of 6 interviews were conducted in correspondence with the 6 main departments that report to the general management of the enterprise
- d) Direct participant observation: tours and visits were carried out with the aim of finding out how the principle of integration as a conceptual basis for the tourism formulation of the New Silk Road and rural cultural tourism was being fulfilled or not. In addition, aspects such as: the state of the service facilities, the planning of structures and security, the qualification of the scenic area, value of the natural and cultural environments, the relationship of the actors involved in the workflow of the development project and the authenticity of tourism products were evaluated

The data and information, which were obtained through the application of the observation guide and the application of interviews and surveys, were subjected to analysis through empirical methods and mathematical statistical methods such as descriptive statistics to process the results obtained through tables and graphs, which facilitated their analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The New Silk Road as a boost to development

This Chinese project is based on advocating an open-type world economic system and the materialization of diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development (Grefi, 2019). In addition, it is aimed at promoting peaceful cooperation and joint development at the international level, under the framework of regional cooperation, consisting of six corridors, six routes, multiple countries and multiple ports, public, transparent and open, bringing positive energy to world peace and development" (Oficina del Grupo Dirigente de Fomento de la Construcción de la Franja y la Ruta, 2017).

This Chinese initiative, however, should not be understood as an isolated phenomenon within the Asian Giant's international policy. Beyond the nation's interest in expanding its influence outside its borders, as part of an "outward" strategy, initiated in 1999 (Djankov, 2016) mainly oriented towards the West or "march to the West", it has been pointed out before. (Grieger, 2016), it has been previously pointed out how this initiative is based on a series of precepts of foreign relations rooted in the country's cultural foundations.

For the national economy, then, the implementation of the New Silk Road represents the backing of one of the major strategic goals of the Chinese state throughout its history: the Revitalization of the nation (Schulz, 2019). This is materialized in the government's priority, by 2020, to double the Gross Domestic Product and the per capita income of the urban and rural population corresponding to 2010 (Jingping, 2014), with the aim of fulfilling the "Chinese dream" of "completing the comprehensive construction of a modestly well-off society (...) and, by the middle of the century, to complete the transformation of our country into a modern, prosperous, powerful, democratic, civilized and harmonious socialist country".

In this context, tourism as part of the Initiative is recognized as an important instrument of connection between Asia and Europe which, from its concept, was to allude to a unified brand, even if its development was to take into account regional differences that would

allow the configuration of two sections (east and west), according to reports on the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt (Anguiano Roch, 2019).

Qinghai Province is one of the provinces that make up the western region of China, historically considered to have the lowest national development indices (Lahtinen, 2010), a latent concern after 1994, when regional gaps had become excessively large and the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report noted that while China was rationally harnessing its national income, large regional disparities still persisted, making Qinghai and Tibet survival zones.

In the current stage of implementation of the strategic program for the province, 36 new measures were announced that aim to ensure that, by 2035, the western region will have achieved standards in terms of basic public services and accessibility to infrastructure and living that are roughly equivalent to those of the eastern region (State Council of the Chinese People Republic, 2019). Added to this is the Strategic Plan for Rural Revitalization (2018-2022), issued in September 2018 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council during the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, which is proposed as an alternative to the insufficient allocation of rural financial resources that has characterized Chinese finances.

Rural cultural tourism

The dichotomy generated by the modern oppositions of the paradigms of development: rural-urban, agriculture-industry, tradition-modernity, led to always place on the left side of the equation the backward, versus the prosperous. This situation led to, according to Muñoz (2000), the devaluation of the rural, which came to occupy a residual role in development. This author considers that the new notion of development, centered on the human, has opened the possibility of reevaluating social relations and produces a reevaluation of the rural, understood not as a return to the rural, but as a change of vision on the rural. This change has to do with several tendencies: in many Eastern countries, the rural is presented as an option of life; in some European countries, the ruralization of urban communities has been taking place, in addition to tendencies towards the ruralization of employment.

A cultural perspective to approach rural tourism could then be implemented to maintain the idiosyncrasy of the rural environment, avoiding contaminations that distort it or force its genuine character. The challenge would be to transcend a certain contradiction between a cultural ideology of tourism as an activity that clearly supports the preservation of identity, memory and the rural landscape and the observed tendency to favor rupture and substitution, thus manifesting a political decision to functionally readapt the rural world, in accordance with economic and commercial interests. (Barrado Timón & Castiñeira Ezquerra, 2001).

In cultural terms, the offer is centered on a nucleus that concentrates the historical and artistic components of heritage, in which periphery secondary elements of cultural tourism are incorporated that include the ethnological manifestations of heritage and incorporate creative industries such as design, the media or major shows, elements that can be inverted when culture is consumed in a rural environment. In the case of rural cultural tourism, both core-periphery are presented as a spatial-historical-functional continuum, which is not demarcated by physical boundaries. Unlike traditional cultural tourism, the limits of the activity for rural cultural tourism are associated with other factors, such as property, which implies an agreement between actors and managers.

The authors of the research presented here understand rural cultural tourism as that tourist activity that takes place in an environment where aspects related to the rural predominate and where the cultural expressions of the host territories and communities are located at the center of the offer.

It is worth mentioning that these cultural expressions include both local identity and intangible heritage related to rural life, i.e. ways of life, ways of cultivating the land and obtaining primary products or their derivatives, local traditions and the material heritage associated with them.

Special attention should be paid to those scenarios characterized by the strong presence of native cultures (or minority ethnic groups), as it is the case of the western region of the People's Republic of China, where the risk of "museumization" or "theatricalization" and staging is greater, not of the landscape, but of the culture itself, and where the authorities in charge of designing the strategy of tourism development and promotion

have not been able to escape the temptation of creating picturesque, exotic and popular products, but lacking in content or empty of cultural meaning.

Pingan Yuanjiacun Village. Impacts of tourism development

According to the Development Program (Shaanxi Sanchuan Urban Planning and Design, 2015) the objectives that direct the actions that are developed are the following:

- Promote the brand: With selenium fortification as the theme, to implement urban service formats to create a place for healthy living
- Inherit the nostalgia: revitalize the memories of the cities and build a "nostalgia" stay for the people of Xining and Haidong
- Define the product Poetic and Picturesque Village: Restore the regional ecology to show the traditional style of Hehuang Valley villages
- Promote employment and common development through tourism to realize the transformation of local urbanization

For the purposes of the research presented here, the analyses concentrated on the latter objective. As the paper mentions, the aim is to implement "tourism" in traditional agriculture to improve the attractiveness of the brand, so that it would result in a *marketing* element and from the "agriculture + tourism" program, a new focus of tourist attraction in the scenic belt of the Huangshui River will be boosted.

Despite the efforts made, tourism has not yet managed to establish itself as a sector that generates development, as evidenced by the following aspects:

- Tourist activity fails to generate local productive chains
- Visitor retention and loyalty is not achieved
- Traditional customized products are not included in the tourist offer
- The development program does not define lines of action that allow the integration of the Village in the system of regional tourism products
- Limited resident participation in tourism development

This situation has as a background, problems related to the enhancement of culture, which have not yet been overcome and which can be summarized as follows:

- Poor cultural image, cultural demonstration
- Poor cultural production
- There is a lack of strong demonstration of Hehuang culture, which should be strengthened outside the region

It should not be lost sight of the fact that the current project may continue to legitimize these problems, as it promotes the creation of a technological-thematic park, which advocates the creation of five functional exhibition areas (Fig. 1), in which cultural aspects will be recreated:

- Nostalgic Folklore: Ancient Cuisine, Ancient Workshops, Ancient Crafts, Ancient Art Forms, Traditional Activities
- Rural e-commerce: Branding, Building integrated network platform, Launching online shopping platform, Internet plus modern agriculture and Offline stage experience (visitors experience farming activities in person, show visitors the production process of folk handicrafts, visitors dressed in minority costumes are directly involved in folk activities)
- Selenium-rich Agricultural Products Science Research Unit: Selenium-enriched Crop Plantation, Rural Agricultural Landscape, Trail, Camping and Commercial Block Picnic. In addition, it includes Selenium Testing Center, Agricultural Research Center, Selenium Enriched Agricultural Science, Selenium Enriched Meals and Experience Experts Apartments
- Motels and Car Resort: Service Area, Boutique Lodging Area and Jungle Camping Area. Here, we aim to maximize a luxury experience in accommodations that mimic traditional architecture
- Rural fields: recreation of traditional agricultural activities. In this area, excursions to visit the locals in their daily tasks are foreseen

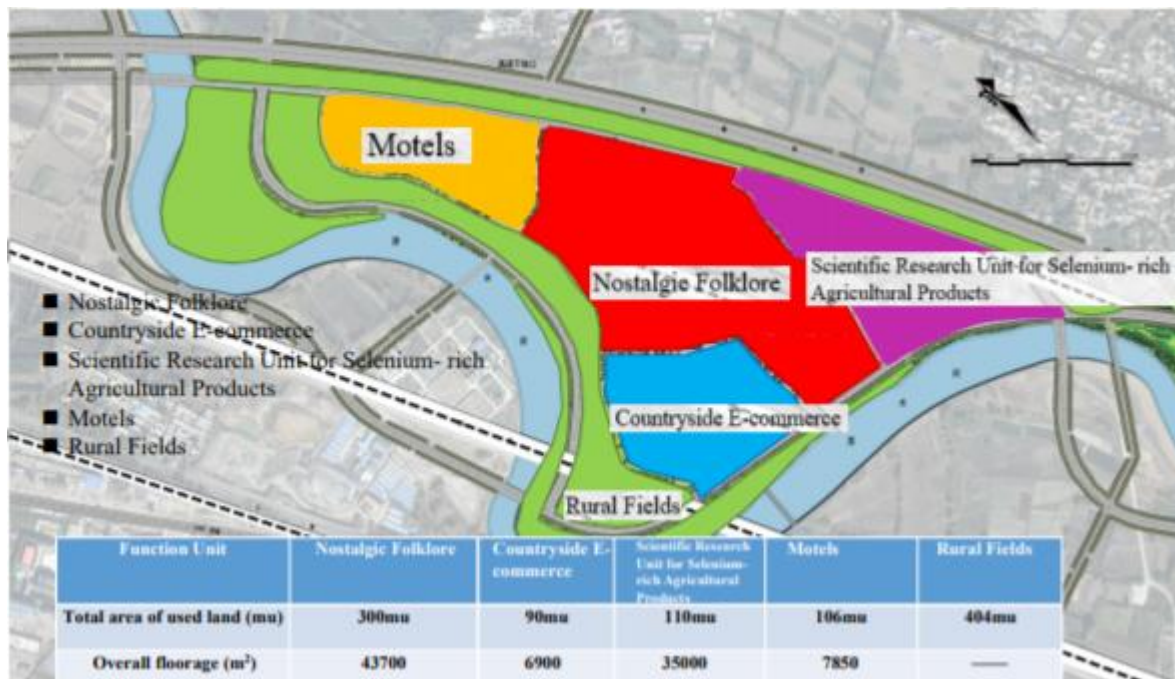


Fig. 1 - Tourist spatial structure of Pingan Yuanjiacun

Source: Taken from Development Plan 2030. (Shaanxi Sanchuan Urban Planning and Design, 2015)

The urbanization of the rural environment and the commodification of culture, which attempts to refine it to make it more attractive to visitors, is one of the most significant risks of the current development project. This leads to insist on rural cultural tourism to enhance local development and avoid the negative impacts that can be caused by the massive and uncontrolled arrival of visitors.

Analysis of visitor surveys

The visitor survey comprised a total of 383 participants. Of the visitors surveyed, 88% are Chinese, 10% are from bordering countries (New Silk Road countries) and the remaining 2% are from other countries. The 80% of the respondents are between 26 and 65 years old, i.e. they are in the working age range, which is positive, as they have a stable income. Sixteen percent are under 25 years old and only four percent are over 65. The visitors maintain a high level of schooling, reflected in the fact that 63% are professionals or technicians, 27% have a secondary education and 10% have a primary

level education. Sixty-four percent of the respondents are married, 16% are single, and the rest (20%) report some other form of union. Of the total number of responses, 60% say that it is the first time in the province and 94% that it is their first time in the Village, stating as main reasons for travel, nature tourism (47%) and cultural tourism (40%); 13% respond that their motivations for travel are other, unspecified. This response indicates that the Village has not clearly defined its differentiating product typology, nor a commercial policy oriented towards its target markets.

The most significant attributes during the visit to the Village are its safety and comfort (98% and 96% respectively), the feeling of warmth and the adequate quality-price ratio (both with 74%), aspects that, undoubtedly, should remain as qualifiers of the destination (Fig. 2).

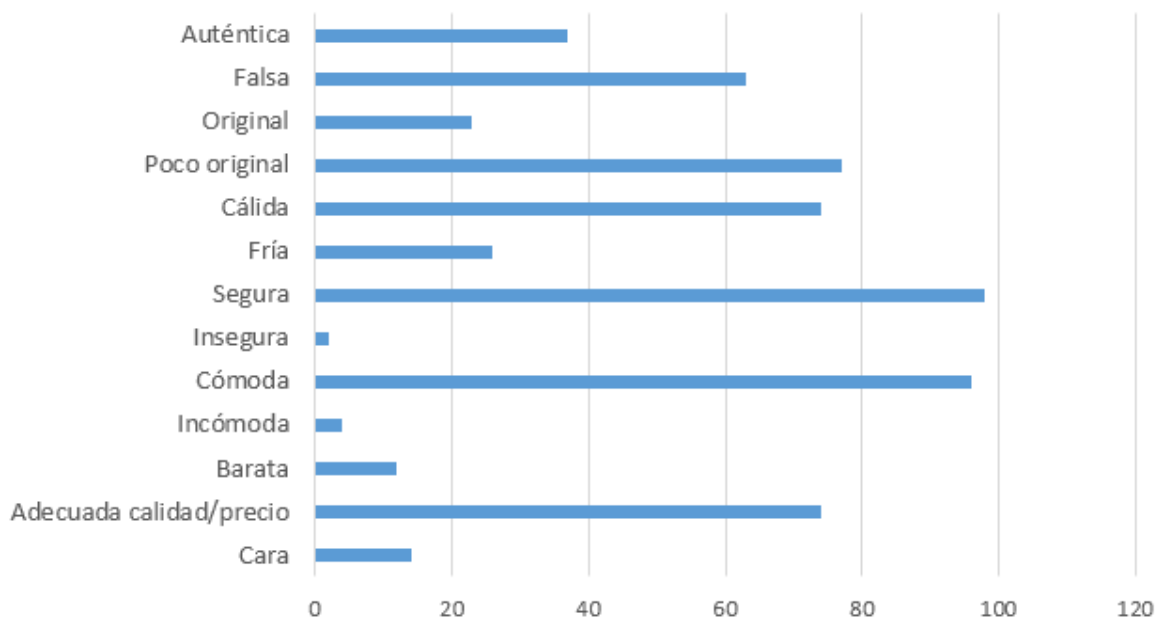


Fig. 2 - Development Project Attribute evaluation

Source: Own elaboration based on applied surveys

However, in comparison with these percentages of approval, the greatest dissatisfactions are the lack of originality (77%) and the falsity of the product (63%), aspects that also condition the responses related to the desire to repeat the visit (78% would not do it) or the 65% that would not recommend the Village to another person. These percentages

also underlie the perception of a low relationship between nature and local culture, evidenced by 64% of respondents. Reasons such as the similarity of the product compared to others of the same type in the region, little or no differentiation in cultural, gastronomic or handicraft aspects, are what the visitors allege.

The aforementioned elements result in 51% of visitors being moderately satisfied with their visit, a figure that is alarming if it is added to it the 21% who say they are dissatisfied or not very satisfied, which accounts for 72% of those surveyed. Only 28% reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the visit. In general, those who evaluated the stay in the lower levels belong to the professional sector and work mostly in the field of research and journalism.

The results of the survey show that beyond the positive aspects mentioned and contrary to the expectations of the project management, the sustainability of the tourism development program in the medium and long term may be in danger.

Analysis of villager surveys

For the population survey, one representative from each of the families in the village was selected, for a total of 572 surveys.

Sixty-six percent of respondents are male, 80 percent are between 26 and 65 years of age (although 60 percent are concentrated between 46-65 years of age), 46 percent have secondary education and 52 percent are married.

Fifty-three percent of the participants in the survey stated that they were the breadwinners of their families, and the empty nest phenomenon could be observed: the families are not made up of young professionals, but are mostly made up of parents and grandparents.

With respect to the professions/occupations, the most repeated are farmer, seamstress and salesperson and it is verified that 99% of the families do not have any stall or business in the Village, highlighting that only 8 (for 1%) participate actively in the project as owners of small stalls selling agricultural or textile products.

It is worth noting the coincidence in the relevance of attributes such as safety and comfort (88% and 84% respectively) pointed out by both residents and visitors, while the Village being unoriginal (89%) and the product being fake (87%) again stand out as the main weaknesses of the tourism development project (Fig. 3).

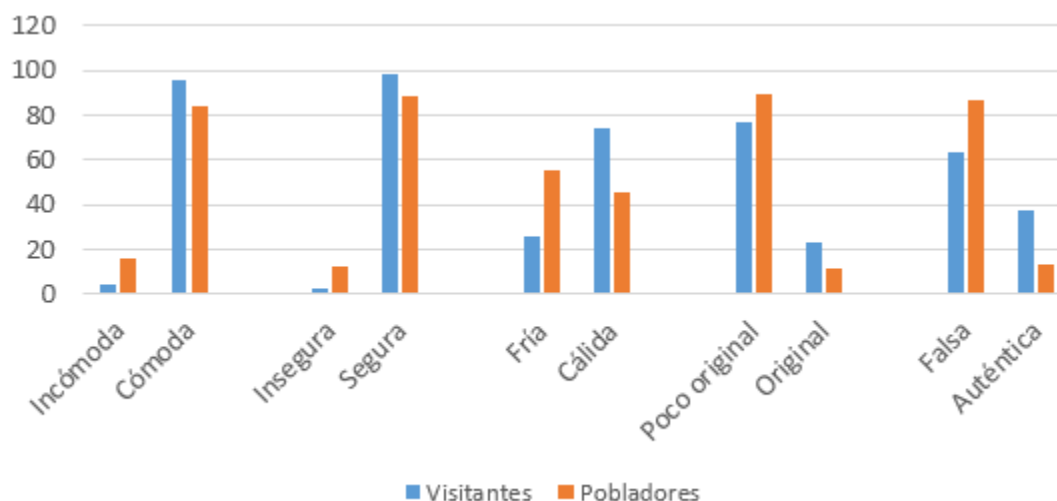


Fig. 3 - Comparison of descriptive criteria of the village by the visitors and the villagers

Source: own elaboration based on applied surveys

These assertions are supported by the fact that 98% of respondents feel that the Village does not retain its historic identity, so that 100% of residents do not feel identified with the new landscape and place. The results also focus on the increase in the cost of living, with 70% of residents stating that it is expensive.

The level of satisfaction with the changes in the Village can be considered low, considering that 82% of the respondents reported a low to medium level of satisfaction, only 13% considered themselves very satisfied. These answers are related to the fact that 100% of them state that their criteria were not listened to for the construction of the project and that even today their level of interaction with the developers is null, so that the scarce local participation is not only visible in the distribution of jobs, but also in the decision making regarding the direction of the project, both conceptually and constructively.

The villagers have expressed that, although they feel comfortable with the benefits that the development has brought to the village, they no longer feel identified with the landscape and the place, as mentioned above. The direct benefits of the presence of the development project in the village are mostly related to the land transfer payments that the families have received from the project's investors.

The 98% of the respondents consider that they do not participate in the economic or cultural activities of the village, although 67% expressed that they consider that their knowledge of the local culture can improve the image and the tourist offer. On the willingness to participate (more) in the economic or cultural activities of the village, the respondents answered affirmatively in 95% of the cases.

Interviews with the managers of Haidong Yuanjia Village Cultural Tourism Co., Ltd.

Haidong Yuanjia Village Cultural Tourism Co., Ltd. is a Chinese enterprise incorporated in September 2016 which is mainly engaged in the operation of cultural tourism business pertaining to Yuanjia Village of Haidong. Its main businesses include scenic area operation, hotel catering business, travel product sales and landscaping business. It is the head of the construction unit of Pingan Station, as well as its main investor, collector and promoter of the Development Plan. Interviews and meetings with the enterprise's general managers (8 in total) were instrumental in learning about the organizational form within the company and the requirements for hiring staff. Although the internal functioning scheme is designed to properly cover the construction, operation and administration of this project, the absence of fundamental elements such as knowledge of the historical, social and cultural conditions of the region selected for its development is noted in the requirements for hiring personnel.

The involvement of local people was also not considered as part of the conceptual planning process for the project. While the implementation to date has created over 2,000 jobs through the introduction of various types of *catering* and service operators and the hiring of staff, most of these jobs are filled by migrant workers from neighboring villages and towns who have come to the village to settle and start their own businesses.

Interviews with the Enterprise's managers showed that the target market of the tourism project was based on criteria such as different types of tourist sources in Qinghai Province, different length of stay and different consumption methods; based on this, the following were distinguished as target markets:

- I. Holiday market segment, with stays between 1 and 2 days in the province and a travel distance of less than 300 kilometers. It is also intended to be the place of choice for domestic tourists who wish to develop cultural tourism with the intention of immersing themselves in the culture of the Hehuang area and the ancient post of Pingan
- II. International tourists visiting the Tangbo Ancient Route, operating as a leisure station
- III. Tourists passing through to Tibet, Nepal, India and other countries from within China, while Qinghai and Pingan are important hubs for domestic and foreign tourists
- IV. Preferred destination for visitors motivated by the purchase of selenium-enriched agricultural and livestock products

Analysis of aspects linked to the cultural tourism offer

As part of the visits and tours, it could be seen that, although the design of tourism service facilities, tourism infrastructure planning, tourism safety planning and scenic area design and qualification are really optimal, on the folklore plaque, traditional cultural resources are basically used as marketing products.

There is no proper integration of elements in shaping the supply side. Ethnic embroidery, sculpture, paper-cutting and weaving representing Qinghai characteristics and even the famous thangka art has not been fully integrated into the whole model of cultural industry development.

Judging by the name of the project, the scenic site is an organic ensemble of the culture of the Hehuang area, however, that goal has not yet been completed, as the cultural elements are shown as decorative, taken out of their natural context and artificially put back into an expensive, sterile, unpolluted and cold complex.

Moreover, the tourist route around the entire scenic spot is relatively short and the tour is basically completed in less than half an hour. Most of the tourists left the scenic spot after the tour was over.

On the other hand, the current construction of Pingan Yuanjia does not allow the charm of the pastoral landscape and the "local flavor" to be appreciated. Tourists visiting the rural area usually consider both attributes among the main attractions of rural tourism. However, visitors to the scenic spot Yuanjia Village in Qinghai can hardly enjoy the natural and cultural scenery of the resort.

After spatial redevelopment work has begun, to date, geographical features have been transformed and large tracts of pastoral landscapes have been devastated. On the other hand, although the local Qinghai culture can be perceived through a building or a bowl of noodles, the lack of authentic local flavor is something markedly referred to. Tourists report that they did not find enough to arouse their particular interest during their visit to the station.

As Pingan Station is a synthesis of the surrounding cultures, it absorbs into its designs the characteristics of the nearby ancient cities and small towns, to the point of repeating the distinctive elements of each and blending them together to generate an amorphous product. The aforementioned is related to the fact that Pingan Yuanjiacun seems to be a condensed version of a museum where one can find or meet many different elements, but none of them preserves life and, moreover, they have been millimetrically fitted into a showcase.

In summary, in practice, the research reports that the Pingan Yuanjiacun development project imitates the scenic area and type of activity of the village, but the landscape and the model have been blindly copied, leading to severe homogenization and lack of indigenous characteristics. Moreover, the elements that make up the social structure and the indigenous ways of relating have not been taken into account. There is no interest in rescuing the norms that make up the spirit or soul of the community, which are, in the end, those that would make visitors feel at home away from their own, where there are visible rules and patterns that motivate treatment as part of a reciprocal exchange and not just as part of a picturesque business. It can be stated that there is

no evidence of compliance with the principle of integration as a conceptual basis for the tourism formulation of the New Silk Road and rural cultural tourism.

If the aspects referred to in the research are not taken into consideration, there is a risk that the sustainability of the tourism development project in Pingan Yuanjiacun will not be achieved.

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Conflict of interest:

Authors declare not to have any conflict of interest.

Authors' contribution:

Kang Min designed the study, was involved in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data and prepared the draft.

Clemente Hugo Ramírez Frías was involved in the analysis and interpretation of the data and drafted the manuscript.

Both authors reviewed the writing of the manuscript and approve the version finally submitted.



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