

The Expression of Regional Culture in Tourism-oriented Traditional Villages - Taking Guanzhong Region as an Example

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the expression of regional culture in tourist-oriented traditional villages in Guanzhong and its impact on village transformation. With the rise of rural tourism, traditional villages are increasingly transitioning into tourism-based communities to foster sustainable economic development and enhance residents' quality of life. Regional culture plays a central role in this transformation, serving not only as a major tourism attraction but also as a vital conduit for the preservation and transmission of traditional culture. Traditional villages in Guanzhong, such as Dangjia Village and Yuanjia Village, exemplify the richness of regional culture through their unique spatial patterns, residential designs, and traditional food. Dangjia Village retains abundant Ming and Qing Dynasty architecture and clan culture, while Yuanjia Village attracts tourists with its diverse folk activities and traditional cuisine. These examples illustrate that the integration of culture and tourism can enhance the appeal of traditional villages, while simultaneously promoting cultural heritage and economic growth. Overall, the effective presentation of regional culture in tourism-based traditional villages offers valuable insights for village transformation, facilitating the synergistic development of culture and tourism.

Keywords:

Regional Culture, Traditional Village, Rural Tourism

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the development of tourism-oriented traditional villages

Rural tourism is currently regarded as a vital means of promoting sustainable rural economic development and serves as a new growth point for rural economies and a major direction for the transformation of traditional villages [1]. Village transformation involves changing a village from one organizational form to another, leading to new developments in the village's economic structure, spatial pattern, social relations, and functional roles, thus creating a "new village" [2]. Since the launch of the tourism-oriented traditional village development strategy in Zhejiang Province in

2014, numerous villages across China have achieved notable success. Many traditional villages have leveraged the construction and development of the tourism industry, relying on ancient villages and towns or capitalizing on attractive regional cultural, industrial, and ecological resources. These villages have transformed into tourist destinations through the integration of culture and tourism, cultural and creative design, and other innovative means [3]. To promote economic development and improve the quality of life for residents, an increasing number of traditional Chinese villages are being transformed into tourism-oriented traditional villages.

Regional culture plays a crucial role in the development of tourist villages. It serves as the foundation for their growth, while tourism provides a vital pathway for the continuation of regional culture. Since 2018, the interplay between distinct cultures and tourism has popularized the concept of the 'integration of culture and tourism', making it a significant research topic [4]. Traditional villages, as custodians of history and culture, are key sites for this integration. Moreover, regional culture is not only a major tourism attraction but also a core element for the sustainable development of tourism-based villages. By showcasing and promoting regional culture, the cultural experience of tourists is enriched, enhancing the quality of tourism and aiding in the preservation and inheritance of traditional culture. Therefore, examining the expression of regional culture in tourism-based villages and understanding its role and impact in the process of village transformation holds substantial theoretical and practical importance.

In conclusion, tourism-oriented traditional village represent the primary direction for the transformation of traditional villages today, with regional culture serving as their foundational and critical element. An in-depth examination of the role and expression of regional culture in these villages can offer valuable insights and inspiration for their development. This approach facilitates the synergistic advancement of both tourism and cultural heritage, ensuring mutual benefits and sustainable growth.

1.2. Introduction of tourism-oriented traditional village in Guanzhong Region

The Guanzhong region, located in the center of Shaanxi Province in northwestern China, is a crucial area for the transmission of Chinese history and culture, boasting many well-preserved traditional villages. These villages serve as witnesses to local history and culture and are integral to the local cultural heritage. In recent years, driven by the booming domestic tourism industry, many traditional villages in this region have begun transforming into tourism-oriented traditional village. This transformation not only stimulates local economic development but also offers a novel approach to the preservation and inheritance of traditional culture.

Numerous traditional villages in the Guanzhong region have been actively transformed into tourism-oriented traditional villages under the guidance of government policies. Notable examples include Yuanjia Village and Dangjia Village. Yuanjia Village is renowned for its rich folk culture and eco-tourism resources, while Dangjia Village attracts numerous tourists with its well-preserved Ming and Qing Dynasty architecture and profound historical and cultural heritage. The robust regional culture of Guanzhong has provided a solid foundation for the development of these villages. Through strategic development and utilization, these traditional villages have not only achieved significant progress but also contributed to the dissemination and promotion of local culture.

2. The Expression of Guanzhong Regional Culture in Tourism-oriented Traditional Villages

2.1. Expression of regional culture in spatial patterns

Tourism-oriented traditional villages in Guanzhong fully reflect the unique charm of regional culture in their spatial patterns, primarily through the spatial structure centered around ancestral halls and the intricate layout of streets and lanes. These villages are typically developed based on clan blood relations, forming agglomerative settlements—a characteristic feature of Guanzhong. The pervasive influence of ritualistic ideas and clan culture has made ancestral halls essential public buildings in these settlements. Ancestral halls, the most symbolic structures of the clan in traditional villages, are indispensable in villages of the same surname. Typically situated at the village core or gateway, these halls serve as the village's center and soul. They are not only places for ancestor worship but also venues for major ceremonies and gatherings, symbolizing the cohesion of the clan and the importance of cultural transmission.

In the Guanzhong region, the layout of village streets and lanes is both distinctive and of practical value. The village streets are typically composed of main and secondary lanes, with many lanes designed to be dead ends. This design consideration enhances defense and security while increasing privacy and the sense of hierarchy within the villages. The zigzagging pathways enrich the spatial complexity of the village and provide villagers with greater convenience and enjoyment in their daily lives. The main and secondary lanes often form a “T” shape, with the ends featuring village landmarks such as ancestral halls, temples, or ancient trees [5]. These landmarks serve not only as visual focal points but also as carriers of rich historical and cultural memories, forming the common spiritual home for village residents.

Through this unique spatial pattern design, traditional villages in Guanzhong effectively showcase their deep cultural heritage and regional characteristics during their transformation into tourism-oriented traditional villages. This design attracts tourists, allowing them to experience and appreciate the traditional cultural charm of Guanzhong. Ancestral halls, along with the streets and lanes, serve as significant cultural symbols, infusing the villages with a strong historical and cultural ambiance. They also offer an immersive cultural experience, enabling visitors to personally engage with the distinctive traditional culture and lifestyle of the Guanzhong region. This integration of culture and tourism not only enhances the villages' appeal to tourists but also supports the preservation and continuation of regional culture, providing a solid foundation for the development of tourism-oriented traditional villages.

2.2. The expression of regional culture in residential design

Traditional villages in Guanzhong predominantly feature narrow courtyard houses, characteristic of traditional Northwest Chinese architecture, which often exhibit a strong sense of closure and robustness. Influenced by Confucian culture, these houses and courtyards emphasize hierarchical spatial organization, with layouts that are symmetrical, orderly, and strict. Houses are typically arranged along a north-south axis with courtyards in between, reflecting ancient societal hierarchies and the Confucian emphasis on family structure and order. Additionally, some traditional villages make innovative use of the terrain by constructing kilns built into cliffs,

integrating these kilns with residential compartments and surrounding them with entrance gatehouses and courtyards. This unique architectural combination not only adapts to the local natural environment but also highlights the ingenuity and adaptability of the Guanzhong people.



Figure 1. *Courtyard forms of Guanzhong residential houses.*

Guanzhong, situated on the Loess Plateau, features deep soil layers and readily available building materials, predominantly using rammed earth, with some wood and bricks. The architectural design of the region is characterized by compartments with single-slope roofs that tilt toward the courtyard, a distinctive feature of Guanzhong residential architecture. This design enhances drainage and contributes to the stability and practicality of the buildings. Additionally, Guanzhong folk culture significantly influences architectural art. Traditional dwellings reflect local customs with simple, rustic decorations and a rough overall style, emphasizing regional characteristics [6]. The main door often serves as the focal point for decoration, showcasing a variety of artistic techniques. These decorations not only embody aesthetic values but also symbolize identity and status. Common elements include carvings, colorful paintings, and couplets, which typically express aspirations for a better life [7].



Figure 2. *Decorations in front of the doors of residential houses in Guanzhong region.*

Through their unique architectural forms and decorative styles, traditional villages in the Guanzhong region not only exhibit rich historical and cultural significance but also offer valuable cultural resources for modern tourism. As these villages transition into tourism-based destinations, their traditional dwellings and architectural arts become key attractions, allowing tourists to personally experience the charm of Guanzhong's traditional culture. The deep regional heritage is preserved and disseminated through these distinct architectural forms and spatial layouts, enhancing the attractiveness and cultural value of the tourist villages. This provides a solid foundation and rich resources for the development of rural tourism in Guanzhong region.

2.3. Expressions of regional culture in food

Influenced by climatic conditions and geographic location, Guanzhong cuisine is typical of northern Chinese food, featuring dishes such as oil-splattered noodles, meat sandwiches, and biangbiang noodles. These traditional foods reflect the local living habits and dietary preferences and have become key attractions for tourists. Traditional villages in the Guanzhong region showcase their culinary heritage through events like the handmade noodle flower exhibition. This exhibition highlights the cultural significance of noodle flowers, which emphasize interpersonal relationships and etiquette, preserving strong elements of traditional culture. Tourists can participate in the noodle flower production process while enjoying the local gourmet snacks, thereby fostering the preservation of these culinary crafts [4].

These activities not only enhance the tourism experience but also support the continuation of traditional food craftsmanship. By engaging in the production process and tasting the food, tourists gain a deeper understanding of Guanzhong's culinary culture and contribute to the preservation and evolution of these traditional skills. This integration of food culture and tourism provides a unique and enriching experience for visitors while infusing new vitality into local economic and cultural development.

3. Cases Study of Tourism-oriented Traditional Villages

3.1. A case of Dangjia Village

Dangjia Village, located in Xizhuang Town, Hancheng City, Weinan City, Shaanxi Province, is a renowned traditional village in Guanzhong, celebrated for its well-preserved Ming and Qing Dynasty architecture and rich cultural heritage. In recent years, Dangjia Village has actively transitioned into a tourist-oriented destination, serving as a prominent showcase for Guanzhong's regional culture. The village's architectural layout reflects the traditional clan culture and ritualistic values of the Guanzhong region, featuring numerous ancient mansions, ancestral halls, and temples. These structures not only possess historical and artistic significance but also exemplify the unique architectural style of the region. By integrating culture with tourism, Dangjia Village has achieved a dual success in economic and social benefits while revitalizing both cultural heritage and tourism in Guanzhong.

3.2. A case of Yuanjia Village

Yuanjia Village, located in Yanxia Town, Liquan County, Shaanxi Province, is a quintessential traditional village in Guanzhong that has recently become a model for regional tourism development through its transformation into a tourist-oriented destination. The village attracts numerous visitors with its rich historical and cultural heritage, including well-preserved Ming and Qing Dynasty architecture, vibrant folk activities, and authentic Guanzhong cuisine. Regular events such as folklore and cultural festivals, traditional skills demonstrations, and noodle flower making highlight the local lifestyle and cultural heritage. By enhancing infrastructure, fostering community involvement, and preserving traditional culture, Yuanjia Village has not only improved the villagers' incomes and quality of life but also boosted its tourism appeal and cultural confidence. The successful transformation of Yuanjia Village offers valuable insights for other traditional villages, illustrating an effective approach to integrating cultural preservation with tourism development.

4. Conclusions

Traditional villages in Guanzhong have achieved notable economic and social development by effectively showcasing the unique aspects of regional culture during their transformation into tourist-oriented destinations. The study reveals that the spatial layout of Guanzhong traditional villages, centered on ancestral halls and the intricate design of streets and lanes, not only reflects the deep-rooted heritage of traditional clan culture but also offers tourists a culturally immersive experience. The narrow courtyard-style houses in Guanzhong, influenced by Confucian principles, exemplify regional architectural uniqueness through a combination of central axis symmetry and topographical integration. Additionally, traditional delicacies such as oil-splattered noodles, meat buns, and noodle flowers highlight local eating habits and serve as key attractions for tourists. Successful examples like Dangjia Village and Yuanjia Village demonstrate that by leveraging regional cultural resources and integrating culture with tourism, traditional villages can enhance their appeal to visitors while also preserving and promoting their cultural heritage. Overall, the effective display of regional culture in tourism-based villages is crucial for enriching the tourism experience and fostering local economic development, offering valuable insights and inspiration for the transformation of traditional villages.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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