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Historic Conservation and Tourism Economy: Challenges Facing Adaptive Reuse of Historic Conservation Areas in Chengdu, China

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Abstract: With continuous developments in the integration of culture and tourism, adaptive reuse has highlighted the vitality of historic conservation areas while simultaneously causing great challenges to urban life, local economy, and cultural sustainability. Current studies focus on the adaptive reuse of historic buildings, with little focus on historic conservation areas. To expand this understanding further, this study investigated and analyzed the challenges faced by Chengdu historic conservation areas in the context of adapting to the tourism environment, from multiple perspectives, and proposed corresponding protection and development strategies. The results of the study obtained using field investigation and semi-structured interviews contribute to the literature on the adaptive reuse of historic conservation areas; they deepen our understanding of the identified factors and provide in-depth knowledge. These findings provide a reference for future practices and promote the sustainable development of historic conservation areas for improved conservation and economic returns.

Keywords: historic conservation; adaptive reuse; cultural sustainability; cultural heritage; Chengdu; tourism; historic urban landscape



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1. Introduction

There have been numerous instances of wars, social unrest, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tsunamis in cities [1]. In addition to threatening people's lives, health, and properties, these crises have also extensively hindered the historical and cultural continuation [2,3]. In the current era of cultural and tourism integration, another form of crisis entails overemphasizing the adaptation of historic conservation areas (HCAs) to the tourism environment.

In 2011, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) issued a Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, stating, "The historic urban landscape is the urban area understood to result from a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of 'historic center' or 'ensemble' to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting. Notably, this wider context includes the site's topography, geomorphology, hydrology, and natural features; its built environment, both historic and temporary; its infrastructures above and below ground; its open spaces and gardens; its land use patterns and spatial organization, perceptions, and visual relationships; and all other elements of the urban structure. It also includes social and cultural practices and values, economic processes, and the intangible dimensions of heritage as related to diversity and identity" [4]. HCAs, which hold people's life memories and inherit the urban context, are also protected under this category. Currently, the integration of culture and tourism has become necessary as the cultural and tourism service industry is developing in various places. Relying on culture to attract tourists and revitalizing culture through tourism have become important development directions for the rejuvenation of HCA. Interestingly, adaptive reuse preserves historical and cultural significance by giving new physical and social functions to historic urban landscapes [5].

Simultaneously, many studies show that adaptive reuse can help historic urban landscapes in integrating the advantages of multiple domains and create new local values [6–8]. For instance, the multiple possibilities of adaptive reuse, in addition to establishment of the cultural heritage, employ various contemporary economic activities, and the unique artistic value can also be used for new cultural purposes [9–11]. As Amato (2021) stated “adaptive reuse allows both conservation of heritage and their promotion as resources” [12]. Therefore, in recent years, adaptive reuse has received substantial attention in the historical preservation field.

In Bologna and Lisbon, urban regeneration for creative and sustainable cultural development was achieved through adaptive reuse [13]. In southern Italy, adaptive reuse reactivated the synergy between community and place, promoting the inheritance of cultural heritage [14]. In Guangzhou, China, research by Lisaia and Zhang (2022) also demonstrates that adaptive reuse has a core value in the conservation and development of HCA, contributing to the revival of cultural traditions and local identities [15]. However, in the background of booming tourism, adaptive reuse also has some negative effects [16]. In general, the mainstream management method involves taking interest in the historic urban landscape represented by HCA and adapting to tourism as much as possible, in terms of development and utilization. Simultaneously, Merciu et al. (2021) explored the important value of using cultural heritage in the context of tourism by employing the travel cost method and found that more than half of the respondents’ were motivated to visit a tourist location to observe its cultural heritage, and they emphasized the necessity to conserve the cultural heritage [17]. Misirlisoy and Günger (2016) also claimed that the adaptation of the cultural heritage to the tourism environment is often identified as an appropriate protection [9]. However, although financial support is provided for the maintenance of cultural heritage [18,19], it may deprive local people of the right to use the land, to a certain extent, reduce the livability in the city [6], and cause a substantial reduction in the permanent population. This perspective is undoubtedly very different from the concept advocated by the historic urban landscape, which is “to achieve a balance between urban growth and quality of life on a sustainable basis” [4]. In a sense, the negative effects of such “protective” development may also reduce the authenticity of the historic urban landscape. In this regard, Fantazi et al. (2019) explained that this is mainly due to a lack of scientific and multidisciplinary methods and also strict compliance with national and international regulations along with the related standards [20].

To reduce the negative impacts of adaptive reuse, Pinntossi pointed out the need to incorporate a systematic approach, from a multi-dimensional perspective, as well as to further identify a wider range of stakeholders [21,22]. Pereira and Caballero (2016) showed that HCA’s local uniqueness and cultural diversity could inspire people to promote urban positivity, thereby improving the quality of urban life [23]. Wang (2021) also supported these findings and emphasized the function of enhancing HCA [24]. Hama and Petrişor (2017) believed that strengthening communication with various stakeholders at different stages is the key to ensuring the development and protection of cultural heritage [25]. In addition, other studies have addressed this concept and applied cognitive limitations concerning adaptive reuse by increasing their investment in time and money [26,27]. However, these specific reasons of negative effects have not been explained further, and this challenge is yet to be solved or understood further. Meanwhile, most of the current studies on adaptive reuse focus on the built environment and remain very limited in terms of HCA.

In summary, whether protecting culture or boosting the tourism economy, the adaptive reuse of HCA is accompanied by both opportunities and challenges. Therefore, this study aims to identify the challenges, causes, and solutions of adaptive reuse in the context of cultural and tourism integration using field surveys in Chengdu’s HCA and in-depth interviews with specific groups. The understanding gained will have important implications for the conservation and management of current and future HCA and local economies.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Location Context

The study area is located in the Southwestern region of China ($102^{\circ}54'–104^{\circ}53'$ E, $30^{\circ}05'–31^{\circ}26'$ N) in the historic urban area of Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China, with eight sites. According to the statistics of government reports and relevant news, the population of the residents' is approximately 200,000 in these areas, and the total population of the city is 21,192,000. [28] The historic urban area generally refers to “large and small areas, including cities, towns, and historic centers or quarters, together with their natural and man-made environments. Beyond their roles in historical documents, these areas embody the values of traditional urban cultures” [29]. The historic urban area of Chengdu starts from Luo City, formed in the Tang Dynasty, to Dacheng, formed in the Qing Dynasty [30]. The specific range extends from the Yinma River to the Fu River in the North, First Ring Road and Kehua Street in the South, Second Ring Road and First Ring Road in the West, and the Jinjiang River in the East, comprising a total area of 24.66 square kilometers (Figure 1).

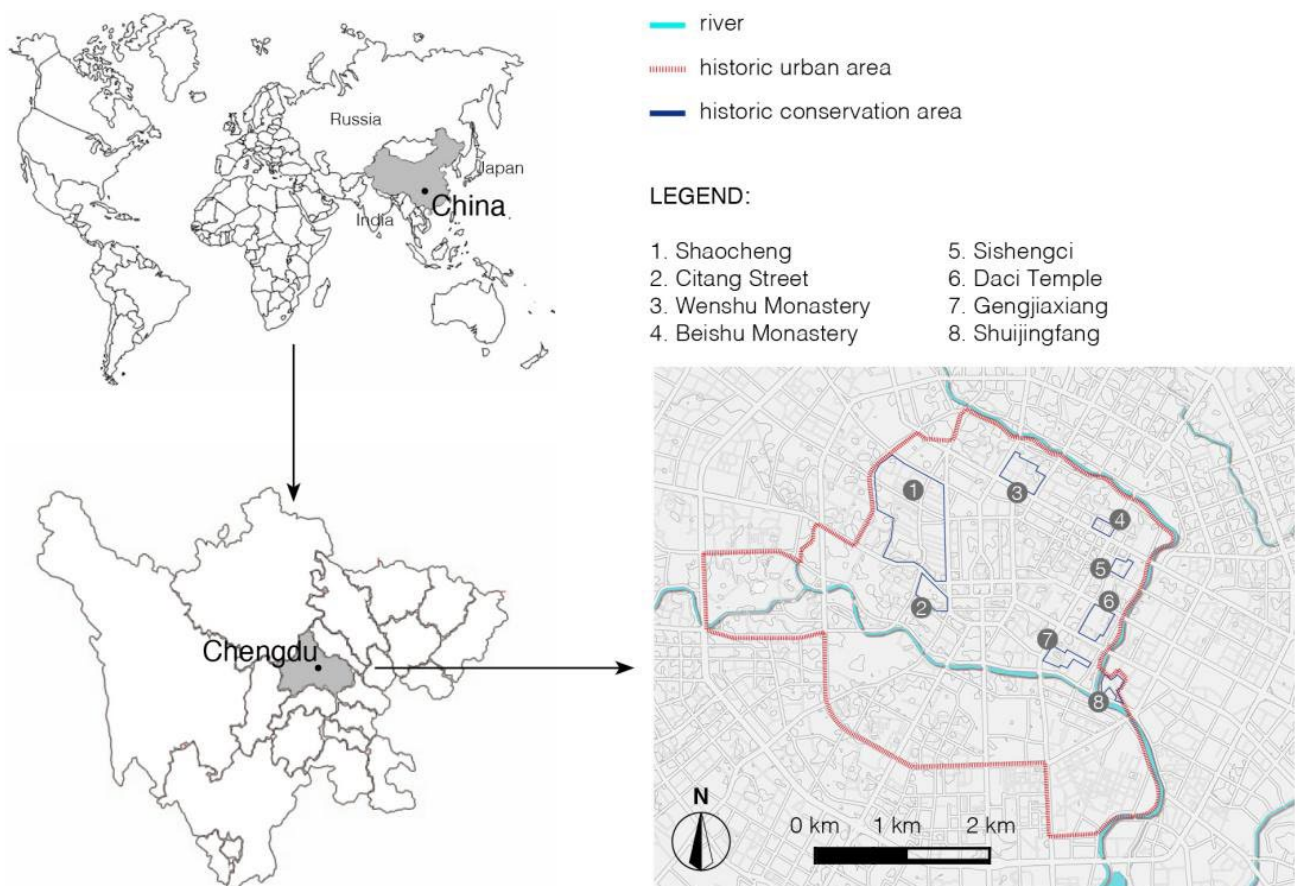


Figure 1. The location of the study area and distribution of historic conservation areas in Chengdu.

2.2. Study Design

2.2.1. Methodology and Analysis

This study utilized the field investigation method to collect, organize, analyze, and evaluate the current situation of Chengdu's HCA; the study conducted semi-structured interviews with local institutions, the public, and experts to seek in-depth information pertaining to subjective observations. Fieldwork is advantageous owing to its intuitiveness and reliability [31,32]. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews is reflected in

the ability to ask more in-depth questions and, thus, directly raise and resolve core contradictions [33]. This study is divided into five phases: (1) preparatory phase, (2) initial phase, (3) investigation phase, (4) report generation, and (5) supplementary investigation (Figure 2).

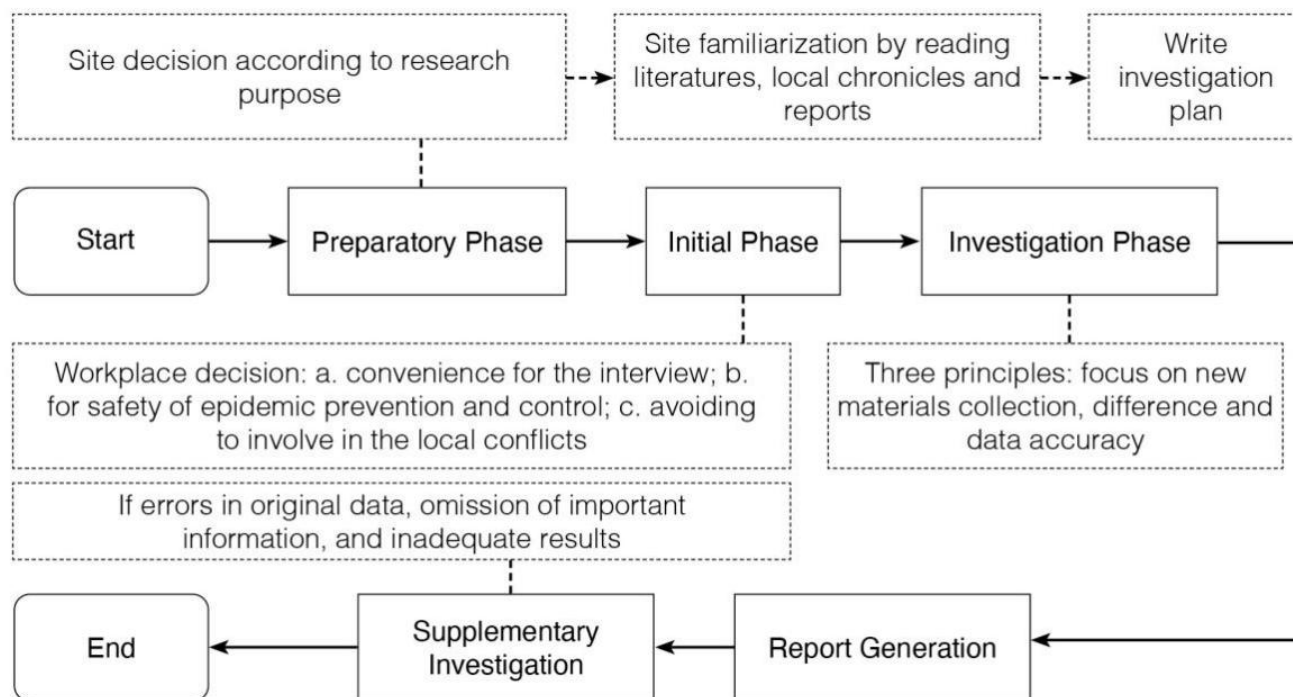


Figure 2. Research framework.

In addition, thematic analyses are considered an effective method for analyzing qualitative data [34]. Initially, the researchers recorded the data collected during the interview and studied it multiple times to gain a thorough understanding. The initial coding that was conducted is considered an important part of the overall interview process. This step is followed by an analysis of the coding, focusing on combining different codes to generate potential themes. However, a theme can be canceled or merged with another if there are insufficient data to support it or if it is extremely diverse. Next, all the themes are defined and further refined to ensure their representativeness. Finally, an analysis report is generated in order to present the results.

2.2.2. Investigation

During the three-month period (March–May 2022), we conducted a field survey on HCA by using photos, drawings, notes, documents, and interviews, paying particular attention to landscape features, functional changes, economic industries, and structural diversity and differences.

2.2.3. Participants

To obtain more comprehensive and novel research materials during the field research process, we published the information pertaining to recruitment of participants on social media (WeChat and Weibo), including contact details, volunteer qualifications, privacy protection statements, research purposes, and outlines, and we also sent interview invitations to suitable relevant persons and institutions. The criteria for respondents' recruitment were as follows: They should be less than 18 years old; they should have worked or lived in Chengdu for more than 1 year; they should have engaged in historical and cultural management, spatial planning and design, and tourism service industries. Meanwhile, some studies have indicated that the scientific soundness cannot be ignored in addition to the com-

munication and cooperation of stakeholders from multidisciplinary backgrounds [20,25]. Therefore, while recruiting respondents, we focused on people in the same occupation with different research interests. After the interviewees accepted the invitation, we conducted a short informal conversation pertaining to two main aspects: work experience and professional background. Finally, the qualified interviewees joined the formal interview process, and a specific time and place was fixed for the formal interview. To protect the respondents' privacy, all interviews were conducted anonymously, and only questions pertaining to age, gender, occupation, and seniority were asked (Table 1). Therefore, an ethical review of this research proposal was not conducted by our research institution.

Table 1. Profile of anonymous respondents.

No.	Age	Gender	Occupation	Seniority	No.	Age	Gender	Occupation	Seniority
1	27	male	landscape architect	3 years	16	21	male	restaurant staff	1 year
2	28	male	teacher	1 year	17	55	female	self-employed (owner of cultural creative shop)	20 years
3	32	female	civil servant	8 years	18	67	male	self-employed (owner of restaurant)	42 years
4	41	female	urban planner	10 years	19	27	male	landscape architect	2 years
5	38	male	architect	11 years	20	37	male	landscape architect	12 years
6	34	male	self-employed (owner of souvenir shop)	9 years	21	29	male	souvenir shop staff	4 years
7	49	male	teacher	27 years	22	36	female	architect	7 years
8	27	female	teacher	2 years	23	62	male	self-employed (owner of grocery)	28 years
9	33	female	teacher	5 years	24	42	female	self-employed (owner of restaurant)	18 years
10	48	female	urban planner	25 years	25	35	male	landscape architect	10 years
11	51	male	historical and cultural manager	23 years	26	39	female	civil servant	12 years
12	37	male	cultural creative shop staff	13 years	27	47	male	self-employed (owner of bar)	20 years
13	27	female	self-employed (owner of cultural creative shop)	3 years	28	26	female	landscape architect	1.5 years
14	39	male	historical and cultural manager	11 years	29	47	male	civil servant	23 years
15	30	male	urban planner	5 years	30	24	female	artist	2 years

2.2.4. Materials

Based on previous studies, the sample size for in-depth interviews is usually limited to 7–28 people under normal circumstances, which is acceptable [35–37]. At the same time, Gill (2014) and Van Manen (1989) pointed out that while focusing on the different experiences of individuals [38,39]. Furthermore, Gill (2014) further believes that a sufficient sample size is achieved if new respondents provide no new findings [38]. A total of 30 (18 males and 12 females) were recruited for this study from March to May 2022. Owing to the respondents' personal work arrangements, the interviews were conducted face-to-face and via telephone. Face-to-face interviews were generally conducted at the respondents' workplaces, cafes, and teahouses. All respondents' interviews were generally conducted between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. and between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m., and the interview process took an average of 19 min. In addition, to ensure that the interview proceeded smoothly and to obtain useful information, we formulated some key questions (Table 2).

Table 2. Key interview questions.

No.	Questions
1	What is the impact of the adaptive reuse of historic conservation area on your work or life?
2	What is your view on adaptive reuse in terms of historic conservation area in Chengdu?
3	Could you share your practice experience regarding the conservation of HCA?
4	How should the challenges be addressed in your opinion during the process of conserving the HCA?

In addition, some respondents did not provide consent for the interview to be recorded; hence, we recorded important information in real time using the shorthand method. The interview recording of the respondents who provided consent was saved and translated from Chinese to English after being typed. The respondents’ age range was 21–67 years, with average age being 37.8 years (SD = 11.3), and the average working age was 12 years (SD = 10.2). When subsequent respondents of the same age did not provide new information, the chosen sample size supported the rationality of the research results to a certain extent. Therefore, we considered the current sample size ($n = 30$) to be adequate.

3. Results

The research results indicate that the diversity of landscape features and the cultural atmosphere in Chengdu’s HCA have been well inherited, and the specific characteristics of the eras and the citizen’s lives have been preserved (Figure 3). However, the HCA with relatively high degree of tourism is also associated with some serious problems, and this study categorized these into “permanent resident loss,” “economic situation from prosperity to decline,” “cultural confusion,” and “marginalization of cultural heritage.”

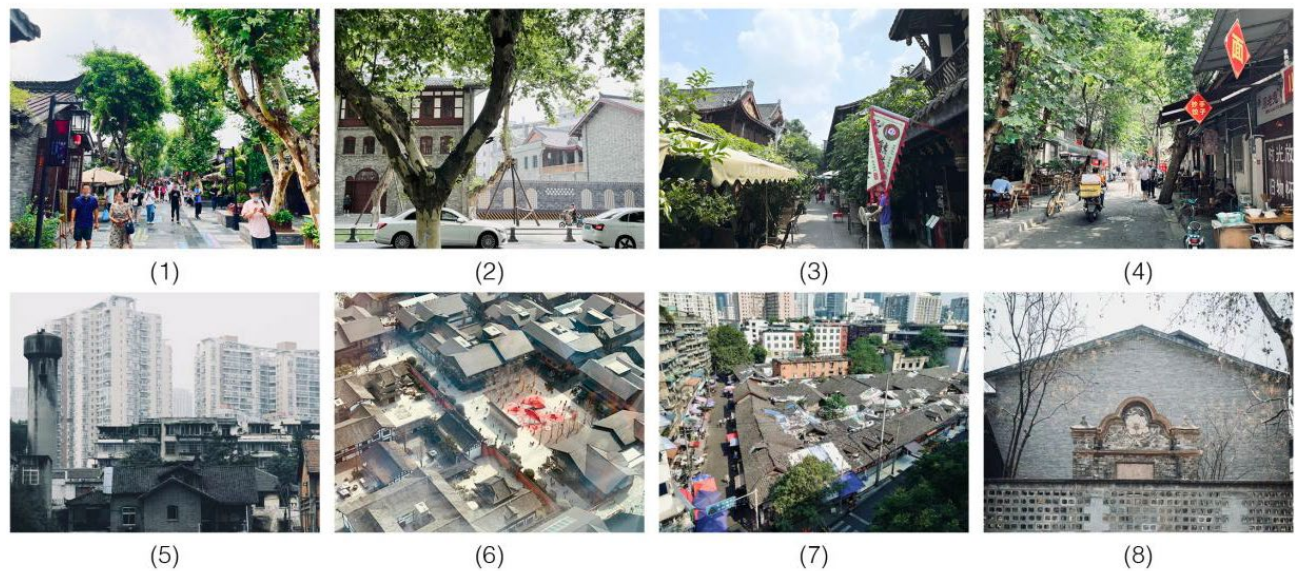


Figure 3. The cityscapes of the historic conservation areas. Source: Taken by the author. The numbers indicate the order of pictures order, which is consistent with the details provided in Figure 1 and Table 3.

Table 3. Functional changes in the tourism sites.

No.	Place	Original Function	Current Function
1	Shaocheng Historic Conservation Area	citizen life	commerce, entertainment, culture, citizen life
2	Citang Street Historic Conservation Area	culture	commerce, culture
3	Wenshu Monastery Historic Conservation Area	religion	religion, culture, commerce, entertainment
4	Beishu Monastery Historic Conservation Area	citizen life	citizen life
5	Sishengci Historic Conservation Area	culture, citizen life	culture, citizen life
6	Daci Temple Historic Conservation Area	religion	religion, commerce, entertainment, culture
7	Gengjiaxiang Historic Conservation Area	citizen life	citizen life
8	Shuijingfang Historic Conservation Area	commerce	commerce, culture, entertainment

3.1. Permanent Resident Loss

Livability is an intangible and qualitative condition related to the human soul and well-being, and it can be understood as a tool for evaluating the living conditions and residential comfort [40]. The basic conditions for citizens include a comfortable living environment and means to reduce various types of pressures created due to the urban lifestyle [41]. During the study, we found that, with an increase in the tourism activities, the noisy living environment and poor sanitary conditions posed great challenges to the residents' daily lives. Furthermore, some residential areas have been illegally converted into commercial areas to meet the needs of the tourism economy [42], with hidden dangers. According to the survey, in recent years, the residents moving away from the HCA and neighboring areas when their economic conditions improve has increased.

Many respondents shared current dilemmas among themselves pertaining to their economic and personal lives. For instance, a male businessperson, aged 67 years, owner of a restaurant, and working and living in the HCA of Shaocheng said, "The crowd is both good and bad for our family. I am running a store here since decades. I have been relying on cultural tourism for my livelihood since more than ten years. Yet, this kind of noise from people coming and going will continue until about 10 o'clock in the evening. As adults, we are used to it, but my granddaughter is always in a poor learning state the next day because of these disturbances." During further visits and observations, we found that almost all HCA have considerable mixtures of both commercial and residential buildings, with most of them being old houses, around 2000, and the spatial structure was relatively backward. Due to limited traditional urban structures and the pressure from the tourism economy, it is becoming increasingly difficult for HCA to maintain a balance between urban life and urban development.

At present, this phenomenon has not been effectively curbed. Some respondents expressed their concerns about this, and one of the women stated, "For HCA, the biggest disadvantage of losing the permanent residents is that the traditional citizen culture is diluted. In addition to the breathtaking historical buildings and historical landscapes, the invisible traditional urban lifestyles in the streets and lanes also have important values and they cannot be ignored. At the expense of the quality of the living environment, it seems to 'improve' the tourist's experience ... In fact, tourists miss the opportunity to deeply experience the traditional Chengdu life; for the HCA or even the whole city, it is like an empty shell without a soul" (cited by a female, an urban planner aged 48 years).

Solutions: (1) At any stage during the protection and development of HCA, the local's residences should be preserved as much as possible. (2) The green space landscape should be used to create a physical barrier, beautify the environment, and simultaneously should effectively curb the disorderly spread of the tourism market. (3) Infrastructure, public service facilities, and other systems should be improved to facilitate a better quality of life for the residents.

3.2. Economic Situation from Prosperity to Decline

Excessive adaptation and satisfaction may bury local industrial advantages, causing the economy to shift from being prosperous to experiencing a decline. Based on an economic structure survey in these eight areas, we found that almost every HCA has various types of industries, such as food, clothing, and cultural entertainment. However, on a broad scale, the differences are increasingly being minimized, which does not fully reflect the diversification of the social and economic environments under the influence of different cultures.

Meanwhile, the negative influence may continue to spread and potentially dissolve identifiable features in different areas and create undesirable confrontations. In the interviews, many urban planners emphasized that adaptive reuse has both favorable and unfavorable consequences. It is not only an important tool to help HCA realize the possibility of multiple values' but also a "weapon" that stifles culture and frustrates the economy: "In 2017, the renewal of an HCA in which our team participated, received a very optimistic response and became a popular tourist site in Chengdu. The project linked the local historical culture and creative cultural industry to bring out the charm of the HCA, and at the same time, it drove the surrounding folk toward commercial economy. However, the pursuit of adaptation weakened the local uniqueness under the urban context, resulting in the gradual disappearance of the industrial advantages" (cited by an urban planner, a female aged 41 years). As the economic structure of the HCA is increasingly becoming similar, some staff and self-employed personnel also expressed that, since its inception, the turnover has experienced a sharp decline and is increasingly reducing the advantages of the historical and cultural location, which is soon to face bankruptcy. In addition, a self-employed individual stated, "A tourist once told me in the store that when you come to Chengdu now, you can basically get all the tourist experience by going to one HCA, because the entertainment consumption is roughly the same" (cited by the owner of a cultural creative shop, a female aged 27 years).

Solution: (1) Excavate the unique charm of different HCA in the blend of tradition and modernity, and create a landmark characteristic economy. (2) The government should strengthen the supervision and management of cultural and economic industries, establish an innovative reward mechanism, and stimulate creativity, thereby reducing the vicious competition and repetitive economic industries.

3.3. Cultural Confusion

Thereafter, we also noticed a strange phenomenon. Some HCAs in landscape designs and tourism planning have almost no relationship with the corresponding cultural themes. We talked with one of the project leaders, and upon inquiring, one of the project leaders shared, "I have to admit that sometimes popular culture is used as a development gimmick in order to attract more social attention. Although I know that such an approach may have a negative impact on the authenticity of the historical culture, yet we feel very helpless. Because the marketing route of selling cultural emotions has indeed reaped enormous benefits, and the market environment remains the same" (cited by a 38-year-old male architect). Furthermore, from the perspective of cultural education, some education practitioners expressed their anger. One of the primary school teachers confided in us: "This spoof regarding history and culture will affect people's cognition of real history, especially with regard to children. In the past,

the spoof was seen more in virtual worlds such as games and movies, but at least the operator will remind them that the background of the story is purely fictional. Now it has appeared in the real world, I think this is obviously an obliteration of cultural memory and a serious misleading with regard to cultural heritage" (cited by a female, 33 years old teacher).

It is worth mentioning that in order to protect and develop HCA, people recognize its value and actively participate in the interaction such as cultural creation, which is actually a kind of progress. However, owing to the limited cognitive level of individuals, capital profit seeking, and unclear guidance methods, the results of adaptive reuse are mostly a mixture of sometimes good or bad results. In this regard, a community worker commented, "The phenomenon can be analyzed dialectically. First, it shows that the public's participation and attention is increasing. After all, the broad mass base is an important force for promoting the sustainable development of HCA and tourism economy. Second, the practical experience and theoretical knowledge about adaptive reuse are still in the exploratory stage; the system is not perfect, and the exposure to problems is a normal phenomenon. Therefore, under the premise of not causing destructive damage, we still encourage artists and designers to make bold attempts, and hope that the society becomes more tolerant" (cited by a female, 39 years old civil servant).

Solutions: (1) The utilization of historical and cultural values must be based on the existing historical relics and should be supported by historical literature. (2) The participation of all people should be encouraged and the understanding of the concept of historic urban landscape should be further expanded to provide reliable and realistic evidence for the development of the tourism economy.

3.4. Marginalization of the Cultural Heritage

We investigated the functional changes in these eight HCA (Table 3). During further discussion, some respondents shared their belief that, in order to meet the needs of the tourism economy, HCA is equipped with more functional features, and it is easier to marginalize the main body of cultural heritage; hence, the overall image of the culture is likely to appear blurred. As one interviewee observed over the years, "Since working on this management job, I have found that people pay less attention to historical buildings, historical stories, and historical people in the HCA; so far, the purpose is mostly to participate in the nearby entertainment activities. . . . When it comes to Daci Temple HCA, Shaocheng HCA, and Wenshu Monastery HCA, the vast majority of people will immediately think of shopping, street photography, and gourmet food. The heritage seems to be forgotten" (cited by a 51-year-old male historical and cultural manager).

Moreover, a female, 24-year-old artist engaged in artistic creation explained the following: "In the era of information explosion, mass art creators rarely respect the historical significance of cultural heritage, but only use it as an eye-catching tool, and overemphasize their commercial value. As the influence of self-media continues to expand, people are increasingly involved in its imitation. As you can see that more people have seen HCA 'without historical culture' through social media, and accepted its absurd setting." Many scholars and urban planners have seriously criticized the over-adaptation to the tourism trends and catering to tourists, which manifested because of selfishness and greed by only exacting cultural heritage. If we do not alter these perceptions, this unhealthy trend will tarnish the cultural essence of the HCA, and people will lose the cultural foundation they need to understand the present and create the future.

Solution: (1) Cross-border cooperation should consider cultural value and commercial value, and the traditional functions of HCA should be promoted actively in various fields. (2) The promotion of cultural heritage should be sought with the help of multiple media and marketing channels, and the public should be guided to better understand the essence of cultural heritage through the integration of content and form,

deeply understand the cultural heritage and connotation, and enrich the experience of HCA tourism.

4. Discussion

Adaptive reuse is widely being followed worldwide. Existing studies suggest that, in addition to prolonging the lifespan of the historic urban landscapes, value can be created. However, few studies have focused on its negative impacts, especially in HCA. Most modern cities develop by building historical environments. With the rapid economic development, the value of land continuously increases, and multiple interested parties contend for the heritage resources of HCA, giving rise to multiple complex relationships. The identification of the specific impacts and causes will balance the preservation of HCA with better returns to the local economy.

Catering to the preferences of the tourism market, the adaptive reuse of HCA may lead to the loss of the geographical advantage of tourism, the convergence of economic structures, and may give rise to a vicious and competitive business relationship. Some studies have shown that innovation is the core driving force behind the development and progress of human history, an important factor for a long-term standing, and a core element of economic development [43,44]. In a sense, this repetitive economic model may hinder creativity and disintegrate the soft power of urban culture. It is worth noting that different regions and different cultural atmospheres will inevitably bring about the differences and uniqueness of different local historical areas [45]. To a certain extent, adaptive reuse does not absolutely affect the diversified cultural display. An analysis of the interview data revealed that the current project planners and designers do not have sufficient time and favorable conditions (e.g., support of the leaders, favorable market environment) to complete a relatively high quality and competitive adaptive reuse project, especially the economic transformation and utilization of different cultural connotations. Mostly, formal and iconic designs are completed within a limited period.

However, based on Chengdu's urban development history, the current progress in the landscape feature diversity of HCA is an improvement. In the past, the rapid development of urbanization led to the convergence of the urban spatial layout and the landscape morphology, a lack of individuality, a neglect of historical and cultural protection, and the destruction of urban memory and historical sites, especially in urban central areas [46]. Based on the feedback from the interviewees, with increased cultural and tourism integration in recent years, the potential value and cultural charm of HCA is recognized by more people. This phenomenon seems to be explained as a positive transformation trend from the outside to the inside.

In addition, the current marginalization of the cultural heritage seems to require more attention. Since 1978, China has been implementing urbanization plans. At that time, people's understanding of the historic urban landscape was relatively limited. To meet the needs of modernization, most HCAs were destroyed. Those that were retained were reduced to a local area, with a relatively lagging level of modernization and relatively weak urban management. In this era of cultural and tourism integration, people have gradually realized the value of HCA in the fields of art, history, and economy. However, driven by economic interests, the protection of HCA, in the process of adaptive reuse seems to act as "pretense" for realizing the personal benefits. Many people only pay attention to how higher economic returns are obtained and do not pay attention to the integration of its historical functions with modernization, resulting in a decrease in the realization of its importance and historical value. As Gehl (1987) said, interaction maintains the meaning of space existence and can continuously improve the spatial structure and quality [47]. Conversely, we also found that social media may play a catalytic role. One study pointed out that social media can reconstruct people's perception of the meaning and value of historic urban landscapes [48]. Owing to the topical marketing nature of social media,

to create social topics of interest, HCAs are often over-decorated, which in turn affects people's value judgments.

As previously mentioned, in this study, we conducted a field survey of Chengdu's HCA, to investigate the challenges, causes, and solutions pertaining to adaptive reuse with respect to cultural and tourism integration. By conducting investigation and analysis, we found that in addition to causing permanent resident loss, adaptive reuse also leads to the convergence of economic structures, decreases the authenticity of cultural heritage, and weakens contemporary social values. Previously, very few studies have investigated the effect of adaptive reuse on HCA, especially the challenges. Most available studies focus on the built environment. However, their findings seem to be consistent with our study. For example, with respect to the degradation of the cultural heritage, a study indicates that adaptive reuse can conserve heritages while meeting both the physical and spiritual needs of the tourists and the locals to some extent; it can also increase their value in terms of tourism economy and cultural sustainable developments [17]. Notably, Hama and Petrişor (2017) found that due to lack of scientificity and multi-disciplinarity and considering the spontaneity and uncontrollable factors pertaining to the economic environment, the relevant rules pertaining to historical preservation cannot be strictly followed, and adaptive reuse may also lead to bad experiences for people and may even have a negative impact on the cultural heritage resulting in reduction in its authenticity [25]. In addition, there are some previous studies also that indicate that when cities are explicitly geared towards consumerism and activities related to leisure, culture, and global tourism, similar and interchangeable urban experiences in culturally diverse places can create a vicious circle of urban cultural and economic development [6,49]. At the same time, it may also lead to competition between multiple interests [21], such as permanent resident loss and a convergence of economic structures. Fantazi et al. (2019) adopted the same approach, using semi-structure interviews, and applied it to the old city of Constantine as a case study, further revealing that success in ensuring the protection and development of the cultural heritage is not possible without close cooperation between the public and its wider stakeholders [20]. Based on this, the study focused on different types of respondents (stakeholders) to deepen the understanding of the identified factors and the expansion of new findings.

Moreover, this study has certain limitations. Discussions on adaptive reuse of HCA should extend towards implementing local or national strategic planning. Currently, Chengdu is simultaneously implementing the construction of park city, Chengdu-Chongqing economic circle, and smart city. Although it is still in its initial stages, this is likely to present new opportunities and challenges in the future. Due to limited time and difficulty in reaching out to relevant respondents, this study did not explore this further. Therefore, in future research, we will focus on how the adaptive reuse of HCA can be integrated into the park city system to improve its livability, considering the integration of culture and tourism, improving the local economy based on Chengdu–Chongqing common historical memories, and realizing the possibility in more development fields through the multi-level integration of smart cities.

5. Conclusions and Implications

Adaptive reuse can have a dual impact on specific factors and may generate both opportunities and challenges. This study aims to clarify the challenges, reasons, and solutions of the adaptive reuse of Chengdu HCA with respect to integration of culture and tourism by using field investigation and semi-structured interviews. The main conclusions are as follows: (1) Livability is an important factor for the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage and a common fundamental condition for enhancing the sensory experience of residents and tourists. (2) The adaptive reuse of HCA is a progressive development process, from the outside to the inside and from a unique landscape feature to a diversified tourism economy. (3) Protecting the authenticity of HCA is the basic principle of adaptive reuse, the premise of cultural sustainable development, and an important pillar

to the tourism economy. (4) The historical function of the HCA needs to adapt to the current trend, find a development orientation in line with its own cultural value, and establish a foothold that resonates with the public's emotions, facilitating its potential for tourism economies.

These findings have important implications for the conservation and management of current and future HCAs. First, this study identifies the challenges posed by adaptive reuse for HCA in the context of historic and tourist cities; it also provides certain recommendations for practice and policy development in similar cities. Second, this study highlights the main reasons for improving the understanding of tourism economy. Finally, this study also provides solutions for practitioners that can help overcome the difficulties they may face in the future and promote the sustainable development of HCA.

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