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Babu P. George

Fort Hays State University, [bpgeorge@fhsu.edu](mailto:bpgeorge@fhsu.edu)

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## WHAT COULD TOURISM DO TO A SMALL FISHING VILLAGE: A CASE STUDY OF THE CITY OF WEIHAI, CHINA

Xiaofan Cui<sup>1</sup>  
Jerome Agrusa<sup>2</sup>  
Babu P George<sup>3</sup>  
Joseph Lema<sup>4</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Weihai City, located on the east end of Shandong Peninsula in Northeastern China was once a small and remote fishing village. In recent years Weihai City has become one of the most popular tourism destinations in China. The tremendous development of tourism has had a significant impact on Weihai's economy, physical environment, and culture. Weihai is now famous for the beautiful coastal scenery, high quality leisure living, and a strong Korean and increasingly Russian influence. This study examines the perception of Weihai residents on the position of Weihai as a tourist destination and also their vision of Weihai's future tourism development. Based on the resident surveys and available secondary data, tourism impacts in Weihai can be said to be largely positive. Place attachment and a sense of pride about belonging to the place are noticeable among the locals. Economic data suggests overall prosperity, too. However, available evidence also highlights some strained relationships among the various stakeholder groups.

**KEYWORDS:** RESIDENT PERCEPTION. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT. PLANNING. IMPACTS. WEIHAI, CHINA.

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<sup>1</sup> Graduate Student. College of Business. Hawaii Pacific University. 1132 Bishop Street, Suite 510. Honolulu, Hawaii 96813. E-mail: xcui@hpu.edu

<sup>2</sup> Professor. College of Business. Hawaii Pacific University. 1132 Bishop Street, Suite 510 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813. E-mail: jagrusa@hpu.edu

<sup>3</sup> Professor. College of Business and Entrepreneurship. Fort Hays University, USA. E-mail: bpgeorge@fhsu.edu

<sup>4</sup> Associate Professor. Hospitality & Tourism Management Studies. The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. Galloway, New Jersey 08205. E-mail: lemaj@stockton.edu

## INTRODUCTION

Many tourism attractions are metamorphosed natural and cultural resources. These are not built specifically keeping the tourists in mind; rather, the tourism industry reconstitutes and reinterprets the underlying meanings of these resources to match with a view to trigger tourist demand. This is received favorably or otherwise by the residents based on the relative benefits they see in the transformation. In most destination areas, resident attitudes shift gears as these areas develop across the lifecycle. While tourism area life cycle (TALC) models don't have much predictive power, learning about resident attitudes is still important for the fact that it informs tourism planners and policy makers about the aspirations of the community (Haywood, 1986).

Given the way destinations are typically developed in the capitalistic system, resident attitudes change from euphoria to antagonism (Doxey, 1975). However, exceptions are observed in community based tourism destinations where tourist products and services are developed with significant internal loci of control (Edward & George 2008; Hiwasaki, 2006). According to us, *prima facie*, destination Weihai in China fell under this category. Weihai did not exhibit significant resident resistance, unlike most other mainstream destinations that are at similar stages of development. In this backdrop, we decided to explore more about the historical development of tourism in Weihai and what the local residents perceive about the way it is developed currently.

## A BRIEF PROFILE OF WEIHAI

Located at the eastern tip of Shandong Peninsula of northeastern China, Weihai is currently a well-known port and tourist city. Weihai covers an area of 2,099 square miles with a population of 2.54 million (Weihai Yearbook, 2011). Weihai has the jurisdiction over three county-level cities of Rongcheng, Wendeng, Rushan and one urban district of Huancui.

At Longitude 120°11'-122°42' and latitude 36°41'-37°35', the average temperature of Weihai is 53.6 °F, and the average annual precipitation is over 31.5 inches. Strongly influenced by the surrounding Yellow Sea, Weihai enjoys a pleasant climate with four distinctively different seasons but the average temperature throughout the year has a minimal change, ranging within only 12.1°F. Backed by mountains and facing the ocean, the urban area is endowed with picturesque nature. The environmental quality indexes such as air and water quality are ranked as one of the top areas in China. The mild climate, the natural beauty and easy access through air, land and sea transportation make Weihai an ideal leisure tourism destination.

In recent years tourism has given Weihai an enormous amount of publicity and built the image of a clean coastal city that has rich natural beauty. However, prior to any tourism development, Weihai was merely a small fishing village until the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and then it has gone through many rapid changes over its history. There have been habitats living in the land of Weihai since ancient times.

In 1398, as part of the coastal defense policy against the raids of Japanese pirates, Weihai became a military strongpoint. In the 1880s the Liugong Island of Weihai was developed into a naval base for the newly founded Chinese Beiyang Fleet. During the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) when the Japanese defeated the Chinese fleet in Weihai and took over the base. In 1898, the British forced the Chinese to lease them Weihai. Under the name of Port Edward it remained a summer station for the British fleet until 1930 when Weihai reverted to Chinese administration after 32 years of the British leasing the area.

## **DECISION TO BRAND WEIHAI AS A TOURISM DESTINATION**

In 1987 Weihai was upgraded by the central government from a town level city to a prefecture level city and one of the "open" cities along the east coast of China. At that point, the government of Weihai decided to take full advantage of the resources in Weihai, such as the sun, sand and sea and the history of the navy base along with the war, to develop tourism in Weihai. Efforts were devoted to brand Weihai as an attractive

place to visit, live and invest, thus leading the development of various industries, such as retail, real estate, transportation, restaurant and lodging as well as other light manufacturing industries.

The ongoing emphasis on tourism by the government has had several significant impacts on Weihai. The most obvious one is the change in landscape and the physical environment. The government realized that Weihai has abundant resources for tourism development. Places of interest have the potential of becoming first class attractions with some or little effort being placed into them because they already have a solid foundation or even a head start. A case in point is Liugong Island which is 2.4 miles away from the Weihai city shore. As mentioned in the brief history of Weihai above, Liugong Island was where the navy fleet stationed in Qing Dynasty and where the Chinese navy encountered the Japanese navy and was annihilated (Kong, 2000). There are navy facilities and British architectures from hundreds of years ago and battleship ruins from Sino-Japanese war in 1894 stationed on the island. Therefore, the government turned this resource that was in the raw form into Sino-Japanese Naval Battle Memorial. The chief commander of the Chinese navy Ding Ruchang, who died fighting for his country, and all other soldiers who fought and sacrificed have a memorial monument dedicated to them as they are recognized as national heroes.

### **WEIHAI ON THE PATH TO BECOMING A FULL-FLEDGED TOURISM ECONOMY**

The government gradually built a visitor center, a museum, a natural preservation park, restaurants, roads, shops, a golf course as well as all other necessary facilities on the island. They also established shuttle boats that run every 30 min to transport visitors between Weihai City and Liugong Island. Currently, the government is still trying to expand the functions of Liugong Island by building more attractions. Their goal is to make Liugong Island a top patriotism education base of China where you can also play golf and hike in the natural beauty as well as visit a navel memorial. The change of Liugong Island is just one of the examples of how tourism is transforming the landscape and physical surroundings of Weihai. Not only did the existing attractions get

a face-lift, the government also planned and built a series of new attractions or facilitative infrastructures.

According to the Government Yearbook (Weihai, 2011), the city completed building the Visitor Center of Weihai in June 2011, which now serves as the hub for visitor inquiry, hospitality desks, attraction display, service center, car renting, etc. It is the first official and comprehensive hospitality center for the city. Meanwhile, a number of hotels have been built to accommodate the increasing demand. As stated by the government report, eight hotels started construction in 2011 alone, approved by the authorities and invested by private business sectors. In addition, the city has other six key tourism attraction projects that have been established or are being planned: Huaxia City, Da Rushan Ocean Resort and Tangbo Hot Spring Resort, just to name a few. Every new resort that has been built has led to the development of the surrounding area. New freeways are paved, new restaurants and stores are opened, new residential buildings are built and medical and transportation services are equipped accordingly. Tourism has had a remarkable change on the physical landscape of Weihai city; improvements on infrastructure facilities have become evident.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACTS**

Based on the statistics reports (Shandong Government Database, 2011), Weihai hosted over 24 million tourists from domestic and overseas in year 2011. The revenue generated by the tourism industry in 2011 reached 25 billion Yuan which is equivalent to 4 billion U.S.dollars according to the exchange rate of 6.3 Yuan: 1 Dollar (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2012). Reviewing the reports of the past five years, both the visitor arrivals and the tourism revenue have been increasing rapidly and steadily, at over 15 percent every year. This is a large amount of money being pumped into the local economy. As stated in The Multiplier Effect Singapore's Hospitality Industry, tourist spending can have multiplier effects on the host country's economy in three ways- direct, indirect and induced (Khan, 1995). The recipients of direct expenditures spend that money to purchase necessary goods; therefore earnings from tourism help all



supportive industries. The beneficiaries of the direct and indirect spending in turn spend that revenue on unrelated goods and services, thus creating an induced-multiplier effect. Tourism's contribution to Weihai's GDP has increased over time and reached nine percent in 2010, indicating a strong contribution to the local economy, especially with respect to the hospitality industry.

Moreover, the economical impact of tourism to Weihai's should also include the large amount of investment that Weihai is able to attract, with the help of tourism building a positive image and publicity. In 2010, Weihai received investment worth 18 billion U.S. Dollars from the government, banks and private sectors domestic and overseas, an increase of 18.7 % than the year earlier. The investments will be used to build infrastructure, manufacturing factories, conduct high end research and most importantly a fair amount will be reinvested in tourism development to reinforce the positive cycle. Tourism grow this a major push for the GDP of Weihai, which has skyrocketed in the recent years. As illustrated by chart one, Weihai's GDP started to rise around 1988. It is evident that there is a strong link between the establishments of emphasis on tourism development in 1987 by the Weihai government and the rapid increase in the economy shortly thereafter.

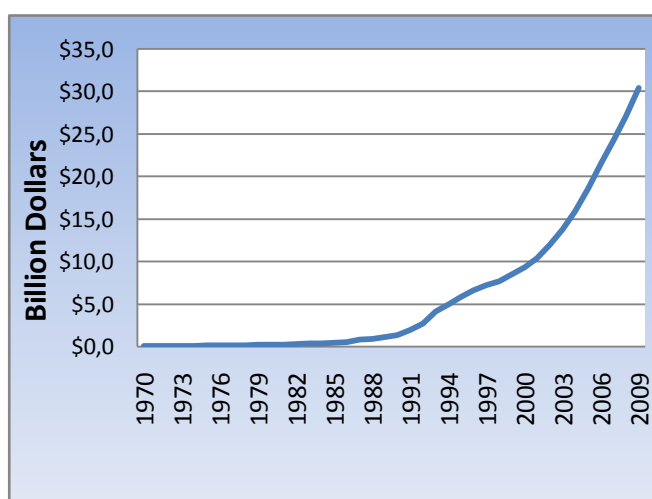


Chart 1: Weihai GDP Growth. Shandong Government Database

Thanks to tourism, the real estate industry has also accelerated in Weihai city. With the good name of Weihai becoming more recognizable, more people want to live in Weihai, either permanently or seasonally. Tourists and investors are purchasing properties in the prime locations of Weihai, such as near beaches and parks. Driven by the increasing demand, more residential areas are being built and sold mainly to “outsiders”—people that are not originally from Weihai. A phenomenon has newly occurred that groups of potential buyers from other cities such as Beijing or Xi’an would gather and rent a charter train or bus to come to Weihai to shop for a vacation house or investment property.

These out-of-towners hope to gain some negotiation power with agents/sellers by coming in groups. The housing market has never been so heated by outsiders and investors. Price of houses in Weihai has doubled in a short period of five years (from 2004 to 2009), and it expects to continue to rise, as indicated in Chart 2.

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Price (Yuan/Square meter)	1767	2028	2301	2915	2993	3472	3774	4095	4437	4779

Chart 2: Weihai Bureau of Statistics. 2012.

The amount of money spent in real estate construction has more than tripled from 2006 to 2010 as show in Chart 3. Visitors that have been to Weihai in recent years must have found it quite common to see construction sites throughout the city. The positive impacts of this mass construction include but are not limited to the modernization of the city, the extra employment opportunities, and increased income of the local population.

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Real Estate Construction (Billion Yuan)	8	9.4	15	20.9	26.9

Chart 3: Weihai Bureau of Statistics. 2012.

Unfortunately, however, serious negative consequences of tourism development in Weihai cannot go unnoticed. First of all, the new housing and high rise apartment



buildings have taken up a lot of land and beaches that used to be agriculture or aquaculture area. Farming and fishing were a major income source and the heritage of Weihai evolving from a small fishing village. Now the landscape looks very different and some of the areas are difficult to recognize as the once pristine beaches and mountains are replaced by gated living complexes. Second, the movement of part time residents and visitors has caused a strong seasonality predicament where many of the immigrants' homes are only being used for the summer period so for the rest of the year these homes are left empty. Since the occupancy is low in certain areas, the small businesses that rely on the area residents are also seasonal. In non-peak seasons such as winter, some of the ocean view residential areas have the impression of a ghost town. The shops are shut down and not many people are around. As an undesirable result, security and safety can become a concern of home owners and local residents. Although Weihai is relatively a very safe city, rows of empty houses can lure theft. The seasonality of residents is not beneficial for a healthy local community.

### **CHANGING SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS**

Another impact arising from the movement of tourists seeking residential homes is the competition they are creating for the local house hunters. The housing prices have been driven up so much due to the wealthy national or international buyers; the local people are bearing the cost which they probably did not have to burden prior to the dramatic increase of mass tourism in the area. This might also create social disharmony in the near future and leave a negative effect on Weihai's local culture (Agrusa, Coats & Donlon, 2003). Nevertheless, tourism impacts on the local culture is more far reaching than mentioned above. Tourism's intrusion into the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions (Li. Karakowsky, 2001) is difficult to identify and quantify.

Many local households who have lived on fishing and farming for generations have recently started agritainment or agritourism as another source of income since this

increase in tourism. Mississippi State University published on their website that agri-tourism & agritainment may be any form of farm-based tourism operation that provides economic benefit to the farm owner(s) and provides on-farm entertainment, activity, or product for the visitors (Mississippi State University, 2011). In this case, instead of hay rides or cow milking, they give the tourists the opportunity to live in their house and eat their home made food and fish with the residents and pick the vegetable or fruits with them. The purpose is to allow the tourists to experience a unique Weihai fishermen lifestyle. Agritourism is extremely popular and has attracted many tourists even some of local population who are not fishermen to give it a try.

It can be argued that a bottom-up approach was taken where it allows the local people to decide what, when, how and to whom their culture will be exposed (Albieri & Agrusa 2006). Some locals who chose to convert their home to a resort or tourist establishment did so voluntarily for two reasons. On one hand, the new technology and methods of aqua farming increased efficiency and gave the farmers more leisure time. On the other hand, with the mass tourism in Weihai provides them the entrepreneurial opportunity to earn more income. The bottom-up approach allows a community to have a diversified economic base where different resources of the local area are being used. This may result in a win-win situation.

### **WEIHAI: A KOREAN CITY INSIDE CHINA**

The geographic location provides Weihai the natural advantage of international exposure with South Korea being directly across the Yellow Sea and only 268 miles flight distance away. This means a flight to Weihai from South Korea is approximately 50 minutes. Currently there are flights from Weihai to Seoul twice a day, seven days a week as well as a ferry boat every other day and it takes about eight hours. The convenience of transportation allows the residents of these two nations to communicate on a regular and frequent basis and that has helped create a valuable relationship. On a larger scale of China's inbound tourists market, Korea is an important tourist source country. In 2005, the number of Korean tourists to China reached 3.54 million, and that was the first

time that Korea surpassed Japan to become the largest tourist source country of China (Shi, 2009). The City Yearbook calculated that Weihai welcomed over 290,000 Korean tourists in 2011, an increase of 14.9% from the year earlier. According to China.com Travel News, 30 thousand Korean people live in Weihai as of 2006. They enjoy living in Weihai as it is less expensive but with a high standard of living.

Over 3000 Korean companies have established branches or factories in Weihai, including such major companies as Samsung and Lotte. As a local resident, you can encounter a Korean person on a daily basis, either in a restaurant, in a department store or walking on the streets. The majority of Koreans in Weihai are for business, leisure or studying. To attract tourists, the city government gathered a number of Korean clothing, food, and household products as well as other merchandisers and created a Korean Town in downtown Weihai. Their primary target market is tourists but local shoppers are also attracted by the various imported products. Korean restaurants, beauty salons, boutique stores are widely scattered throughout the whole city. Most of the shop signs in Weihai are bilingual in both Chinese and Korean. As the chairman of Weihai Chamber of Commerce Yongliang Shao (2006) told the *Finance Daily*, “in some neighborhoods, it is hard to tell if you are in Korea or China.”

The “Korean Wave” encouraged the birth of the golf industry of Weihai. Recently Weihai has been recognized as a popular golf tourism city along with its neighbor cities Yantai and Dalian as well as Guangzhou which is further south (Shi, 2009). Weihai’s climate and landscape is very ideal for golf courses, several high-class golf courses have sprung up. Their main target market is Korean players. Yu Sun, the marketing director of Fan Hua Golf Club said during his interview with *Finance Daily*, that 80% of their clients are Korean players. The membership fee to golf clubs is only one fifth of Korea’s but the course is very nice. So even with the flight and boarding expenses, it is still well worth it to fly to Weihai in 50 min and play golf. In 2010, the city government and local golf clubs for the first time ever, cooperated with Hana Tour, one of the largest travel agencies in South Korea, and held a golf tournament. Over 100 Korean players came to Weihai and competed in the tournament with Chinese golf lovers (Weihai Year Book, 2011).

Influenced by the Korean golf enthusiasm, more and more Weihai people are getting to know and enjoy the sport.

Also, with the increasing communication between the two cultures, there is a rapid increase in residents of Weihai learning Korean language, similar to the Korean students studying Chinese in schools in China. With the strong influence of Korean culture and commerce, attaining both Korean and Chinese language skills equates to job opportunities in many cases.

### **INCREASING INTERNATIONALIZATION**

Weihai is a small city compared to other mega cities in China; however, due to the portal location and the development of tourism, Weihai is much more international than most cities of this magnitude. Not only has the city of Weihai embraced Korean tourists, but also Russian tourists as well. A total of 18,000 Russian tourists came to visit Weihai in 2010, an increase of 35.3% from 2009. There is one direct flight once a week during summer months between Weihai and Khabarovsk Russia. It is not the number one international market for Weihai tourism; however, it is growing faster than the South Korea market and has a very large potential.

Multiple large scale special events are held every year to market Weihai as a prime tourism destination, such as International Triathlon Championship which is a sport event where athletes from all over the world come to Weihai and compete in three different sporting events- swimming for 3 kilometers, cycling for 20 km and running for 5 km. This event provides Weihai with an ample amount of media attention and it strengthens Weihai's image as a destination of healthy lifestyle and wellness. Local people benefit from this event, they see the sports happening around them, they are more motivated to exercise and strive for fitness.

Weihai Habitat Festival, Cherry Picking Festival, Hot Spring Festival, just to name a few of the major events that are being organized and enjoyed by both international tourists and the local residents. Tourists have more ways to spend money and the local community culture is greatly enriched. Tourism also boosted the sense of pride of the

Weihai people who come to realize that their hometown is popular in many ways and people desire to visit or to live in Weihai. Local people feel privileged, such as they live in the fresh air and beautiful scenery that tourists have to pay for and can only enjoy for a few days.

In 1996, Weihai was awarded by the national government the title of “First Garden City”. Weihai and has twice been recognized by the United Nations as the “Best Practice towards Improving Living Environment”. On September 6, 2003, Weihai became the only city government that has received the “United Nations Human Living Award” which recognized Weihai’s excellent job in improving the human living condition and preserving the ecological environment. Authorities nationwide are using Weihai as a model city to learn about protecting the environment and developing eco-friendly tourism.

## THE STUDY

A research instrument was established to gain a sense of the perceptions of Weihai as a tourist destination from local residents as well as their opinion on the direction of Weihai’s tourism development. Multi-item scales were used to measure each of the constructs that served as the basis for the questionnaire items. The item scales were taken from previous studies (e.g., Ajzen & Fishbein 1980; Joensen, J., Agrusa, J., Lema, J., Tanner, J., & Guidry, B. N. 2013; Agrusa, J., Lema, J., Afo, A., Prideaux, B., & George, B.; Zhou, 2002; Chen & Wells, 1999; Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989) and modified to serve the objectives of the present study. Likert scales were used to measure the items. For Likert scale questions, a five-point scale was used with extremes labeled “Strongly Disagree” and “Strongly Agree” was used.

Due to the native language of Weihai is Mandarin Chinese, questionnaires were provided in Chinese for the respondents. The survey was initially written in English and then translated into Chinese. An independent bilingual individual then translated the Chinese version back into English in order to check for inconsistencies or mistranslations. Finally, the English version was then translated back into Chinese



addressing any inconsistencies. This type of questionnaire design known as the double translation method (back translation) was utilized prior to distribution (McGorry, 2000). Even though occasions exist where the literal translation process may have missing information, the double translation method is one of the most adequate translation processes (Lau & McKercher, 2004). To avoid ambiguity in the questions, and to ensure that all of the questions written on the survey instrument were clearly understood, a pilot test of 20 Chinese speakers was completed prior to data collection. In order to attain these objectives, the survey questionnaire was distributed to 300 Weihai residents in the Summer of 2012 and 250 effective questionnaires were returned.

The survey consisted of a total of 21 questions: some of them were Likert-type scale item statements along with multiple choice questions, and several were open ended questions. Data collected included demographic information such as age, gender, and the particular locality in Weihai where they lived. Respondents were also asked about best season to visit Weihai, if they had previously worked in the tourism industry, top images that come to mind when they think of Weihai, their satisfaction of several elements pertaining tourism in Weihai, their desired outcome of tourism development, how well the government had promoted tourism, how well the tourism industry had given back to the community, if tourism had brought more positive or negative impacts to Weihai, if tourism should be further promoted, and if they were willing to see more foreign tourists, among others.

The question about top destination images offered the following choices, based on a content analysis of promotional materials and online tourist reviews of Weihai attractions: rich culture (museums, heritage, etc.), clean city, beautiful beach scenery, shopping, golf, friendly people, special events (exhibition, sports, etc.), fishing and boating, Korean culture, eco balance/ wildlife, seafood, real estate/ investment and other for which they could fill out themselves. Also, in particular, resident satisfaction with the following elements was sought. the cleanliness of the community, friendliness of residents, quality of the food (especially seafood), quality of accommodation, quality of service of industry professionals, availability of entertainment, opportunities for



cultural exchange, quality of the golf courses, quality of public services (bus, taxi, signage), efficiency of commuting between tourist destinations.

## ANALYSIS

The age range for the residents surveyed was from 19 to 60 years old. The median age was 28, the average was 31.2 years and the largest group surveyed was those 21 years of age (10%). The majority of the respondents were female (58.4%), and the rest were male. 61.2% of the respondents live in the High-Tech zone of Weihai, which is a newer development zone compared to downtown Weihai. May to October was ranked as the best season to visit Weihai, of which July and August were ranked the highest. At the time the study was implemented, 12% of the respondents answered that they had or currently work in the tourism industry.

Overall, as shown in Chart 4, Weihai residents ranked Beautiful Beach Scenery (79.6%), Clean City (72.4%), and Sea Food (50%) as their top three images when they perceive their hometown as a tourist destination. These responses are remarkable in that they stand for the desire of the residents to preserve a wonderful community and nature. To complement this view, the three images that received the least votes were Golfing (2.4%), Conference & Exhibition (3.2%) and Real Estate and Investment (4%). These least voted items are evidently reflective of external control of the economy, which the residents did not want.

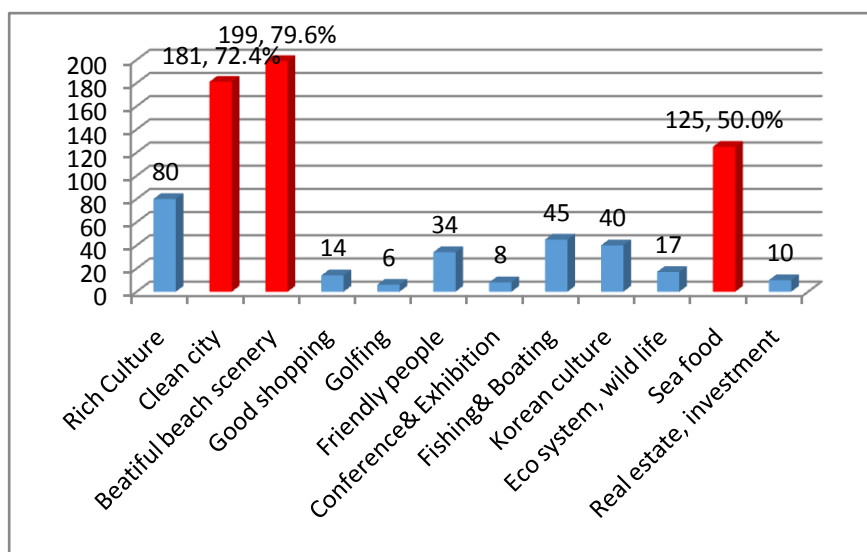


Chart 4: Ranking of Images as a Tourist Destination.

The responses are indicative of the 'place attachment' of the community members: place utility, place identity, and place culturality (George, 2005). Likewise, according to the local residents, the most important factors pertaining Weihai as a tourist destination were Cleanness of the City, Beautiful Nature, and Weather and Climate.

Interestingly, the evaluations towards Korean Culture and Real Estate/ Investment, while not negative, were very close to 'neutral' on the 5- point scale (See Chart 5). It looked as if the residents find it difficult to develop a clear opinion on these yet. The factor that the residents ranked the least important was Golfing. When inquiring about the evaluation of quality of tourism elements and their satisfaction with these elements, the residents ranked Golfing Facilities the least satisfactory and the Cleanness of the City as the element that most satisfied them (See Chart 6).

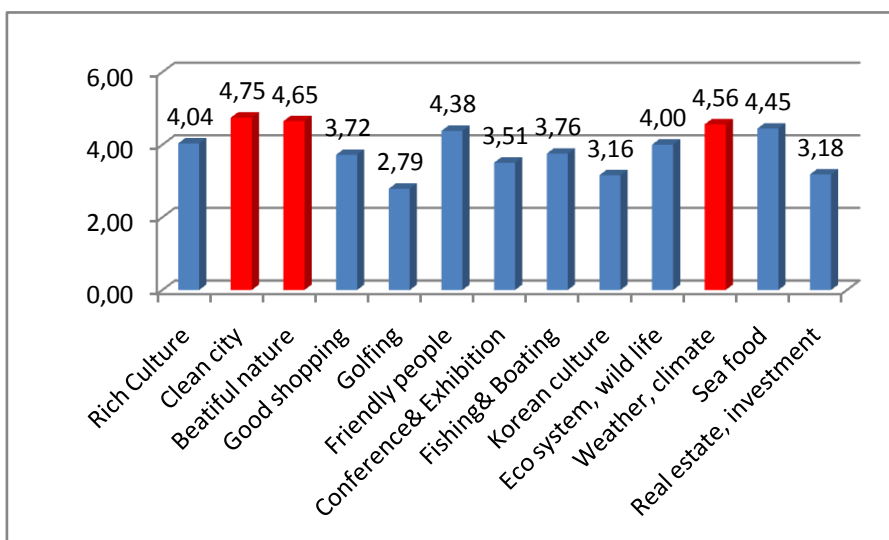


Chart 5: Importance of Factors Pertaining Weihai as a Tourist Destination. 1-least important, 5- most important

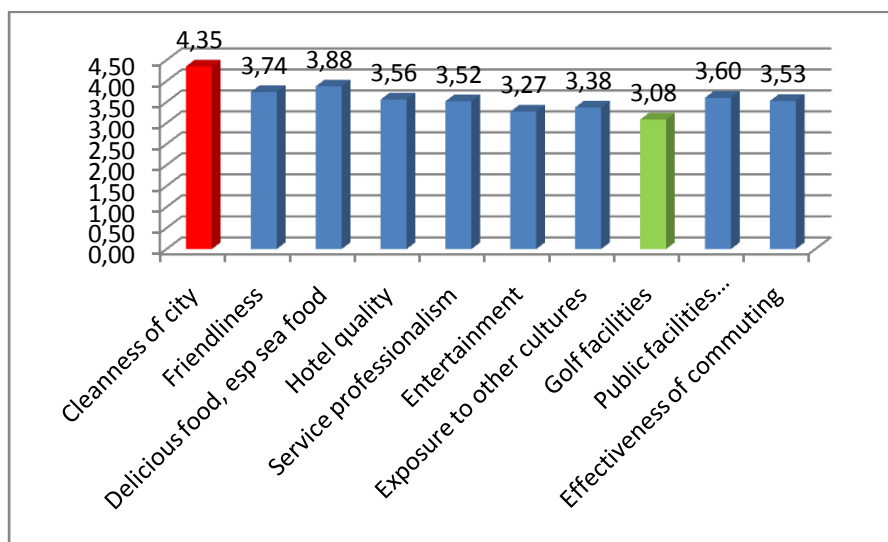


Chart 6: Residents' Satisfaction of Tourism Elements of Weihai. 1-least satisfied, 5- most satisfied.

As shown in Chart 7, the residents agree that overall, tourism has brought more positive impacts than negative impacts to Weihai. Residents surveyed also agree that Weihai should develop more outdoor activities for tourists and locals, such as hiking, fishing and water sports. They indicate that the tourism industry has done an “okay” job of giving back to the community (3.27/5). The respondents had reservations on agreeing that the local government is promoting Weihai as a tourist destination

effectively with only 0.14 points over neutral. Overall, the results to these five questions have indicated that there is room for improvement for the government to promote tourism in Weihai more effectively and that the residents expect to see the tourism industry do a better job of giving back to the community. These concerns are legitimate, given the recent diversions in tourism policy that identified mega projects and external capital as the way forward. Tourism destination area life cycle theory predicts such apathy and antagonism, too (George, Henthorne, & Williams, 2013).

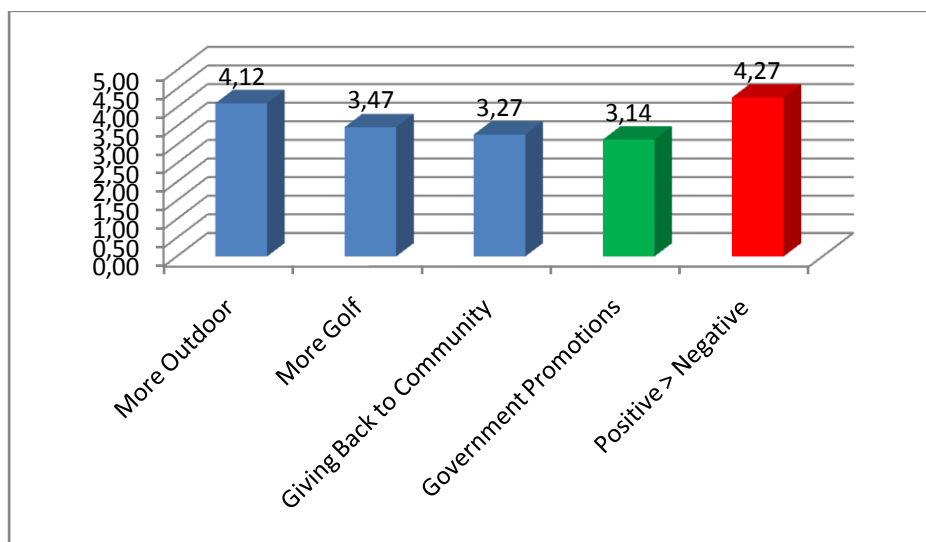


Chart 7: Residents' Suggestion for Future Tourism Development

When asked about the benefits tourism brought to Weihai City, 64% of respondents wrote economic prosperity, 48% mentioned positive reputation, and 35.2% mentioned job opportunities. When asked about the negative impact tourism had brought or might bring to Weihai, 42.4% wrote environment pollution, 39.6% input high housing price and 36.4% brought up traffic jam. Other negativities brought up were higher prices for goods (6.8%), over population (5.2%) and safety and security (2%).

Qualitative statements of the respondents indicated their pride about being associated with Weihai. Yet, sentiments shaded with gloom and uncertainty about the future also stood out. As shown in Chart 8, when asked if they were willing to see more tourism development in Weihai, 76% of residents answered yes, 4% responded neutral

and 20% answered no. Some of the reasons they wrote down for answering no were noise, overpopulation, and the existence of tourist attractions that are not clearly demarcated from residential areas.

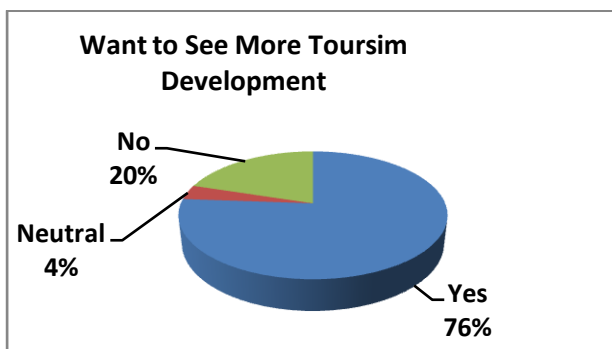


Chart 8: Percentage of Weihai Residents Welcome Tourism Development

When surveyed if the residents were willing to see more foreign tourists in their community, particularly Korean and Russian tourists, 74% answered yes, 11% responded neutral and 15% were unwilling to see more international tourists. The residents' top reasons mentioned in the survey were that the foreign tourists bring the worst of their behaviors to Weihai and that they contribute to the rising cost of living. Many also lamented that not knowing their languages makes it hard to communicate.

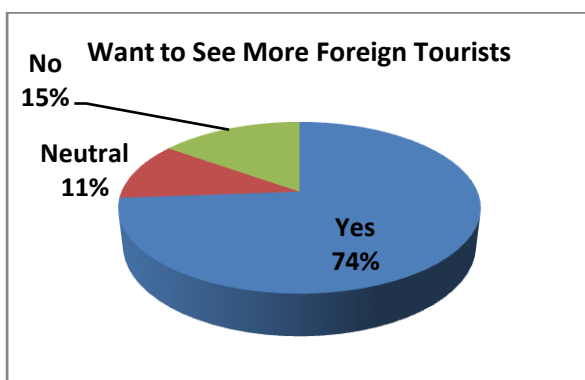


Chart 9: Percentage of Weihai Residents Welcome More Foreign Tourists

## CONCLUSION

In many village turned tourism mega destinations around the world, traditional residents rarely seemed to be content with the developmental pressures (Chen, 2010; George, 2008; Nunez, 1963). Citing specifically examples from rural China, Ying & Zhou (2007) observe that the asymmetric power relations among the stakeholders of the tourism developments will not help make peace easily. However, quite surprisingly, the perception of residents about Weihai as a tourism destination was generally positive based on tourism images, importance of tourism elements, and satisfaction based on a number of miscellaneous other tourism related factors. A combination of strict regulatory controls and sustainable development focused activism of the locals played key roles in ensuring this.

Yet, while investors who are not originally from Weihai see it as a great investment opportunity, local residents seem to harbor the fear that they have to bear the increasing cost of living due to Weihai's increasing value in the real estate market. Golf is a particularly contentious topic: say, compared to tourists, the local residents do not see the importance of a golfing facility and they are increasingly reluctant to see more development in that area. It is recommended that, as golfing facilities were mainly a service for Korean tourists, local authorities should try to build understanding and integrate local residents into this sport. Alternatively, golfing centers should be clearly demarcated from resident populated areas and their exploitation of scarce resident resources should be minimized.

Overall, tourism has brought Weihai great economic prosperity. Certain segments of the local population receive more income now from providing agri-tourist services than from fishing and farming alone. The real estate, hotel and golfing industry is probably the biggest beneficiaries of the tourism boom. The Korean and Russian tourists brought international exposure to Weihai and Weihai is more open and inclusive to different cultures in recent years. As new attractions are being built and traditional attractions are being improved, Weihai will continue to grow as a desirable tourist



destination. Tourism policy makers should take more active interest in fostering harmony between the traditional residents and recent immigrants whose interests do not often match. An important way to do that is to continue the process of integrating tourism into agriculture and vice versa.

**QUE PUEDE HACER EL TURISMO POR UNA PEQUEÑA VILLA DE PESCADORES: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO DE LA CIUDAD DE WEIHAI CHINA**

**RESUMEN**

Weihai City, situada en el este de la península de Shandong en el Noreste de China fue una vez una villa de pescadores pequeña. En los últimos años, la villa se ha convertido en un centro turístico de gran demanda para China. El gran desarrollo del turismo ha generado sobre Weihai muchos impactos desde lo económico, y lo ambiental. Conocida por su belleza, y su gran calidad de vida, Weihai se encuentra sujeta a una fuerte demanda turística proveniente de Rusia y Corea. Este estudio explora la percepción que los residentes muestrean de la ciudad como así también el futuro del desarrollo en la región. Centrados en entrevistas a los residentes locales, se puede afirmar que Weihai mantiene un fuerte apego al territorio y un sentido de orgullo altamente positivo. No obstante, evidencia marginal sugiere que existen relaciones de tensión entre los agentes involucrados que amerita ser discutida.

**PALABRAS CLAVES:** PERCEPCIÓN DE LOS RESIDENTES. DESARROLLO TURÍSTICO. PLANIFICACIÓN. IMPACTO. WEIHAI, CHINA.

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