

A Comparison of Local Residents' Perceptions Toward Tourism Impacts: The Case of Chengde, A World Heritage Site in China

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Abstract

Tourism industry has been contributing to the economy and employment worldwide. Nevertheless, numerous environmental and social-cultural problems were found with the development of tourism in many tourist destinations. In fact, understanding the local residents' perception of tourism impacts is crucial and necessary to the local authority when proposing new tourism development at their tourism destinations. This study aims to compare local residents' perceptions of tourism impacts in Chengde; a UNESCO listed World Heritage Site in China. A total of 1004 usable questionnaires were collected from residents staying in 14 villages in Chengde. The researchers used t-tests to analyse the differences in the residents' perceptions of positive and negative impacts of tourism based on their characteristics of either born in Chengde or not born in Chengde and having jobs of either related to tourism or not related to tourism. Based on the findings, residents who were born and not born in Chengde were found to have significantly different perceptions of tourism impacts; such as promoting varieties of cultural activities and boosts of shopping opportunities. Those residents were not born in Chengde agreed more on; tourism development increases the traffic problems; tourism burdens the community and tourism results in an increase in the cost of living. Significant differences were also found when considering the perceived impacts of tourism by the residents whose jobs were related to tourism or not related to tourism.

Keywords: Perceived Positive Impacts of Tourism, Perceived Negative Impacts of Tourism, Local Residents, World Heritage Site, Chengde China.

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1. Introduction

According to WTTC's Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2017 report, the tourism industry is estimated to have generated USD7,613.3 billion worldwide in 2016 accounting for 1 in every 10.4 jobs. Since 1978, promoting tourism was considered as an important part of the development strategies with strong government policies in China. During that period, China has adopted the open-door policy to the world to reform its economy. China initiated tourism developments through a different pathway from the developed countries. For example, member of OECD (Organization of Economic Cooperation Development) countries started with domestic tourism to mass tourism and then extended to international tourism (Luo, Qiu, & Lam, 2016).

China opens up its country for selected inbound tourists in late 1970s to domestic tourism in 1980s and 1990s. From 2000s, China government gradually and methodically started to cancel the restriction on outbound tourism. Thus, travelling to worldwide becomes the new fashion for Chinese people, but travelling to overseas is still limited to high or middle-income people. Holidays with payment, travelling to nearby places during weekend for recreation purpose within China can be done in reasonable expenses compared to overseas travel. As a result, rural tourism attracted increasing number of domestic tourists and broaden destinations around big cities (Yang, Liu, & Qi, 2014).

Certainly, the rapid increase of domestic tourism formed positive significant impacts for both the country's economy and rural tourism. In contrary, mass tourism has some negative effects such as increasing income disparities between households and resource exploitation by overdeveloping the tourist area (Ashley, Boyd, & Goodwin, 2000). Thus, leads to social conflicts in the destination. Hence, Chinese government are more likely to

invest in tourism development (Leung, Li, Fong, Law, & Lo, 2014).

This study was conducted in Chengde, a prefecture-level city located in the northeast of Hebei Province in the People's Republic of China. UNESCO had listed 52 sites in China under its World Heritage Sites, and one of them is in Chengde, that is the Chengde Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples. Chengde Mountain Resort is the largest imperial garden in China, covering 5.64 million square meters. According to CNN Travel News (2017), Chengde Mountain Resort is ranked 11 out of 40 beautiful places to visit in China.

To the researchers' knowledge, less attempts were carried out to examine the local residents' perceived positive and negative impacts of tourism and their attitudes towards future tourism development in Chengde. In order to sustain advancement of future tourism development in Chengde, the local authority of Chengde must understand how the local residents perceive tourism from its positive and negative points of view. The understanding on the residents' perception of tourism impacts and community attachment to the destination based on their characteristics were not well-understood (Bagri & Kala, 2016). This study aims to analyse the differences in the residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism based on their characteristics of either born in Chengde or not born in Chengde and having jobs of either related to tourism or not related to tourism.

2. Literature Review

In 2001, the World Heritage Committee introduced the world heritage sustainable program to assist the states parties for the establishment of consuming process, assessment of environmental impacts, and ongoing monitoring to promote sustainable cultural and heritage tourism in the world (King & Halpenny, 2014). The main targets of the program are to build and develop internal link between tourism development and conservation efforts to foster implementation of the policies in WHS. The proper implementation of policies will contribute to social, environmental, and economic well-being for local community.

In recent decades, rapid development in China leads to fast developments in world heritages sites in the country. To balance the site developments and resources, WHS management faces many problems that needs to explain in depth with discussion. In China, many of the world heritage sites nearby big cities and clustered in more developed and populated areas (Zhang, Fyall, & Zheng, 2015). To visit famous sites with official recognition is the part of the culture of Chinese people (Nyiri, 2006). Hence, developing the heritage sites in China has been considered as expected and realistic choice (Wu, Li, & Huang, 2002) thus lead the rapid developments of world heritage sites in the recent decades.

The most important stakeholders at world heritage sites are the local communities. The local people are rich in knowledge on social-cultural traditions, environments, and possess great experience and have capability to deal with local problems (Vong & Ung, 2012). Furthermore, they are more capable of understanding and interpreting the values of their heritage resources. To understand and interpret the heritage values are the critical elements to ensure the appropriateness of development at world heritage sites (Shen, Guo, & Wu, 2014; Yang, Lin, & Han, 2010). Nevertheless, according to Deng (2004), inadequate attention were given by the local authorities to the local residents when managing the WHS, compared to other WHS world-wide.

The previous studies shown the direct relationship tourism development and locals' attitude toward tourism (Nicholas, Thapa, & Ko, 2009). Obviously, the positive attitude of residents toward tourism developments lead more opportunities for successful tourism development in the communities. In contrary, negative attitude of residents toward tourism deter the growth of tourism industry. For example, tourism development provides opportunities to develop and protect locations, improve resident's quality of life, enhance local economic growth, protect environment, attracts and meet needs of tourists (Ouattara, Pérez-Barahona, & Strobl, 2016). Hence, future tourism development much more depends on the attachment of the community throughout the process (Sebele, 2010).

Researchers focused positive aspects of tourism developments in 1960s, negatives aspects in 1970s, and more balanced aspects of tourism developments were focused in 1980s (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). Importantly, researchers were more interested in 1970s about residents (Vargas, Plaza, & Porras, 2009) and the early studies concentrated on the attitudes of residents to the impact of tourism (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). As stated by Sirakaya et al., (2002), since then, the widespread empirical and theoretical research has been found that examines the residents' attitudes at different tourists' sites across the world.

Tourism has many effects on local people of the destinations in many ways such as changes in habits, customs, social values and beliefs, and other sociocultural characteristics (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). In the social cultural perspective, visitors and destinations' people interacts each other which may lead to bring in new culture

and social opportunities. In contrary, other may feel distress, congestion, pressure and so forth due to the facts that new culture threatens their own cultural identity and social reality.

Many studies reported some perceive negative impacts of tourism development in destinations e.g. having problems to park the vehicle in the place (Sheldon & Abenoja, 2001); huge traffic (Bujosa & Rosselló, 2007). To look at from social viewpoint, tourism may increase vandalism, serious crime, delinquency, and theft, drug abuse, consumption of alcohol (Diedrich & García, 2009) and increases prostitution (Sheldon & Abenoja, 2001).

Socio-cultural impact of tourism in the residents have been studied widely although many of them provided different and contradictory findings. Few researchers reported that local people have the intention to see more of negative sociocultural aspects (Andereck et al., 2005). On other hand, other residents may see tourism provides wide range of benefits for the community (Besculides et al., 2002). Study also showed direct positive relation between the positive evaluation of sociocultural impacts and support for tourism developments (Besculides et al., 2002). Nonetheless, some studies reported that tourism provides benefit for the local community along with social costs (Gursoy et al., 2002). As a result, it is hard to find consensus on this impact. So, it depends on the context and circumstances to see a greater or lesser extent of sociocultural impacts.

3. Methodology

For this research, data were collected for one month from 18 September until 18 October 2018 from 14 villages from Chengde. A total of 6 university students were appointed as enumerators to assist during data collection from the villages. The enumerators distributed 1200 questionnaires and collected 1004 usable questionnaires with a response rate of 88.4%. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), 384 responses are considered as an acceptable number for researcher to proceed with data analysis. Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 24 was used to conduct the data analysis of the study. In this study, the researchers used t-test to compare the mean values in terms of residents perceived positive impacts of tourism and perceived negative impacts of tourism.

4. Findings and Discussion

Descriptive statistics of study variables were calculated in order to understand the perceptions of tourism impacts among the residents of Chengde. Using the 5-point Likert scale of 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”, Table 1 shows that the perceived positive impacts of tourism received the mean value of 4.05 (“agree”) and perceived negative impacts of tourism conceded the mean score of 3.15 (“neither agree/disagree”).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean Value	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Deviation
Perceived Positive Impacts of Tourism (9 items)	4.05	1	5	.589
Perceived Negative Impacts of Tourism (12 items)	3.15	1	5	.879

Comparing Differences in Perceptions of Tourism Impacts between residents who were born in Chengde and not born in Chengde

T-tests were used to determine if there are any significant differences in the perceptions of the 9 items of positive impacts of tourism between residents who were born in Chengde and not born in Chengde (Table 2).

Table 2. T-test results of Mean Differences for Perceived Positive Impacts of Tourism between Chengde Residents who were Born in Chengde and Not Born in Chengde

Variable	Born in Chengde Mean (SD)	Not Born in Chengde Mean (SD)	t value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Tourism encourages a variety of cultural activities by local residents	4.05 (.714)	3.91 (.900)	1.690	.025*
Tourism promotes cultural exchange and education	4.15 (.672)	4.14 (.761)	.099	.125
Tourism helps preserve the cultural identity of my community	4.18 (.659)	4.07.796)	1.568	.115
Tourism improves understanding and image of my community or culture	4.22 (.675)	4.17 (.710)	.668	.456
Because of tourism, communities develop more parks and recreational areas that local residents can use	4.08 (.787)	4.07 (.831)	.141	.466
Shopping opportunities are better in communities as a result of tourism	3.90 (.890)	3.81 (.977)	.857	.055
Tourism provides incentives for restoration of historic buildings	3.95 (.845)	3.94 (.803)	.039	.712
Tourism development improves appearance of an area	4.02 (.834)	4.04 (.755)	-.224	.832
The quality of public service in my community has improved due to tourism	3.96 (.908)	3.98 (.915)	-.166	.767

Note: * $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 2, only one item is significantly different at $p < 0.05$ or 5%, namely; “Tourism encourages a variety of cultural activities by local residents” (Sig.= 0.025).

T-test were used to determine if there are any significant differences among the 12 items of perceived negative impacts of tourism between residents who were born in Chengde and not born in Chengde (Table 3).

Table 3. T-test results of Mean Differences for Perceived Negative Impacts of Tourism between Chengde Residents who were Born in Chengde and Not Born in Chengde

Variable	Born in Chengde Mean (SD)	Not Born in Chengde Mean (SD)	t value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Tourism results in more vandalism in a community	2.66 (1.087)	2.83 (1.037)	-1.432	.062
Tourism development increases the amount of crime in an area	2.59 (1.127)	2.61 1.118)	-.202	.410
Tourism results in more litter in an area.	2.88 (1.172)	3.22 (1.113)	-2.667	.357
Tourism development increases the traffic problems of an area	3.10 (1.177)	3.41 (1.094)	-2.422	.020*
Tourism causes change in traditional culture	2.67 (1.083)	2.79 (.993)	-1.058	.068
An increase in tourists in my community will lead to friction between local residents and tourists	2.75 (1.084)	2.79 (1.084)	-.358	.718
Native people are being exploited by tourism	2.70 (1.117)	2.76 (1.056)	-.535	.211
In recent years, my community has become overcrowded because of tourists	2.84 1.170)	2.97 (1.134)	-1.029	.562
Tourists are a burden on a community's services	2.68 (1.114)	2.80 (1.027)	-1.002	.050*
Tourists negatively affect a community's way of life	2.75 (1.115)	2.73 (1.010)	.176	.160
Tourism results in an increase in the cost of living	3.03 (1.109)	3.17 (1.055)	-1.162	.011*
Tourism usually benefits a small group of residents	3.27 (1.001)	3.26 (.998)	.032	.936

Note: * $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 3, mean differences in terms of perceptions as perceived by residents who were born in Chengde and not born in Chengde. Significant differences in perceptions (at $p < 0.05$ or 5%) by the two groups were found in the following 3 items; “Tourism development increases the traffic problems of an area” (Sig.= 0.020), “Tourists are a burden on a community’s services” (Sig.=0.050) and “Tourism results in an increase in the cost of living” (Sig.= 0.045).

Comparing Differences in Perceptions of Tourism Impacts between whose jobs were related to tourism and not related to tourism

Analysis using t-tests were conducted to identify any significant differences on the 9 items that measure positive impacts of tourism as perceived by Chengde residents whose jobs were related to tourism and not related to tourism (Table 4).

Table 4. T-test results of Mean Differences for Perceived Positive Impacts of Tourism between Chengde Residents whose Jobs were Related to Tourism and Not Related to Tourism

Variable	Job Related to Tourism Mean (SD)	Not Related to Tourism Mean (SD)	t value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Tourism encourages a variety of cultural activities by local residents	3.96 (.531)	4.03 (.813)	-.817	.000**
Tourism promotes cultural exchange and education	4.08 (.597)	4.17 (.715)	-1.204	.000**
Tourism helps preserve the cultural identity of my community	4.11 (.561)	4.17 (.725)	-.796	.002**
Tourism improves understanding and image of my community or culture	4.18 (.588)	4.22 (.708)	-.444	.014*
Because of tourism, communities develop more parks and recreational areas that local residents can use	4.07 (.700)	4.08 (.822)	-.084	.411
Shopping opportunities are better in communities as a result of tourism	3.96 (.769)	3.86 (.945)	1.038	.014*
Tourism provides incentives for restoration of historic buildings	3.96 (.740)	3.94 (.862)	.272	.211
Tourism development improves appearance of an area	4.04 (.690)	4.02 (.852)	.196	.354
The quality of public service in my community has improved due to tourism	3.96 (.803)	3.97 (.938)	-.160	.262

Note: * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

As shown in Table 4, significant differences in perceptions (at $p < 0.01$ or 1%) were found between residents whose jobs were related to tourism and not related to tourism on 3 items, namely; “Tourism encourages a variety of cultural activities by local residents” (Sig.=.000), “Tourism promotes cultural exchange and education” (Sig.=.000), “Tourism helps preserve the cultural identity of my community” (Sig.=.002), and at $p < 0.05$ or 5% on 2 items; “Tourism improves understanding and image of my community or culture” (Sig.=.014), and “Shopping opportunities are better in communities as a result of tourism” (Sig.= .014).

T-tests were used to determine if there are any significant differences among the 12 items that measure negative impacts of tourism as perceived by Chengde residents whose jobs were related to tourism and not related to tourism (Table 5).

Table 5. T-test results of Mean Differences for Perceived Negative Impacts of Tourism between Chengde Residents whose Jobs were Related to Tourism and Not Related to Tourism

Variable	Job Related to Tourism Mean (SD)	Not Related to Tourism Mean (SD)	t value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Tourism results in more vandalism in a community	3.24 (.989)	2.54 (1.052)	6.312	.735
Tourism development increases the amount of crime in an area	3.32 (1.108)	2.38 (1.039)	8.316	.015*
Tourism results in more litter in an area.	3.40 (1.070)	2.82 (1.161)	4.823	.722
Tourism development increases the traffic problems of an area	3.59 (.939)	3.04 (1.197)	4.506	.014*
Tourism causes change in traditional culture	3.39 (.917)	2.49 (1.020)	8.406	.097
An increase in tourists in my community will lead to friction between local residents and tourists	3.32 (.926)	2.59 (1.071)	6.606	.011*
Native people are being exploited by tourism	3.18 (1.018)	2.57 (1.091)	5.321	.209
In recent years, my community has become overcrowded because of tourists	3.34 (1.063)	2.73 (1.155)	5.067	.487
Tourists are a burden on a community's services	3.21 (1.109)	2.56 (1.049)	5.753	.152
Tourists negatively affect a community's way of life	3.20 (1.109)	2.61 (1.049)	5.232	.738
Tourism results in an increase in the cost of living	3.32 (1.032)	2.98 (1.074)	2.951	.985
Tourism usually benefits a small group of residents	3.29 (1.000)	3.26 (1.115)	.274	.426

Note: * $p < 0.05$

From above results in Table 5, significant differences in perceptions (at $p < 0.05$ or 5%) by the residents whose jobs were related to tourism or not related to tourism, were found in 3 items, namely; “Tourism development increases the amount of crime in an area” (Sig.= 0.015), “Tourism development increases the traffic problems of an area” (Sig.= 0.014) and “An increase in tourists in my community will lead to friction between local residents and tourists” (Sig.= .011).

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study brings new knowledge to the body of literature by exploring how the local residents staying in Chengde city in Hebei Province, perceived the positive and negative impacts of tourism at their city. It also examined residents' opinion by dividing them into different segment such as born in Chengde or not born in Chengde and job related to tourism or not related to tourism. By exploring these indicators, residents' attitudes toward future tourism development in Chengde could have examined from different angles. Based on findings, perceived positive impacts of tourism consists of highest mean values and perceived negative impacts of tourism in Chengde has lowest value. Findings also suggests that, who were born and not born in Chengde have significantly different perceptions to the impacts of tourism. Significant differences were also found for several items while considering perceived positive impacts of tourism and perceived negative impacts of tourism by the residents whose jobs were related to tourism or not related to tourism.

Future research ought to explore more on finding empirical relationships between the local residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their support on future development of tourism at their destination. Current study only focused on quantitative method, therefore future studies using both qualitative and quantitative methods should be conducted to contribute more on the body of knowledge on tourism impacts as perceived by the residents,

particularly living at World Heritage Sites.

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