



# **OVERVIEW OF LOCAL RESIDENTS OF CHENGDE'S WORLD HERITAGE SITE'S PERCEPTION TOWARDS FUTURE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

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## **Abstract**

*Fast economic evolution and rapid development of infrastructure and greater accessibility to China has led to high number of tourist arrivals to these world heritage sites. China has 52 World Heritage Sites listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The most important stakeholders at world heritage sites are local residents and the interest of local residents must be looked into before introducing tourism development in the area. When the tourist numbers are high, the local residents have to share the available resources with the tourists. This study aims to demonstrate an overview of local*

*residents of Chengde's world heritage site's perception towards future tourism development. In current study, the researchers relied on existing literature to explore local residents' attitudes toward future tourism development. The development of this extensive literature review, suggestions and conceptualization would be helpful for researchers while they aim for further empirical investigation of local residents of Chengde's place attachment and perception on positive and negative impacts of tourism, and how it influences their attitudes toward future tourism development in Chengde Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples.*

*Keywords: World Heritage Site, Impacts of Tourism, Residents Attitude, Future Tourism Development, China*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the early 1950s, China set up some special institutions to look after business travel arrangement. Until the end of 1970s, the business was only related to foreign affairs and no relation with commercial operations. In the early 1980s, China was only a small player in the tourism world, when it was not even ranked in the top 40 major world tourist destination countries (Sofield, & Li, 1998). Tourism development and its promotions have increased opportunity for new employment, brought additional governments taxes and revenues, increased foreign exchange, developed new local infrastructure that attracted other industries (Sigala, 2017). China starts to develop its tourism sector only recently.

The rapid growth of heritage tourism developments internationally has increased education, income, developments in technology, awareness of the world, and increased visitors' interest in cultural and natural importance (You et al., 2014). Heritage tourism does not have any widely acceptable definition and was subdivided into many overlapping concepts and categories, e.g. natural heritage, tangible heritage, intangible heritage, and cultural heritage (Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2004; Vong & Ung, 2012). The word "*heritage*" is generally defined from the word inheritance which is something being transferred from one generation to another (Herbert, 1995). Heritage tourism offers opportunities to portray the past in the present. It provides an infinite time and space in which the past can be experienced through the endless possibilities of interpretation (Wong, 2015).

In China, UNESCO had listed 52 sites under its World Heritage Sites. A World Heritage Site is a place with special cultural or physical significance (Yang, Lin, & Han, 2010). One of the most famous sites is Chengde Mountain Resort in Shuangqiao district in Chengde City. Chengde City is located in the northeast of Hebei Province. The city is adjacent to Beijing,

Tangshan and Qinhuangdao in the south, Liaoning Province to the northeast, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region to the northwest and Zhangjiakou in the west (Refer to Figure 1). The total area of Chengde City is 39,500 square kilometers, with a population of 3,530,100 in 2017 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2017). Chengde Mountain Resort is the largest imperial garden in China, covering 5.64 square kilometres.

According to Cable News Network (CNN)Travel News (2017), Chengde Mountain Resort is one of the most beautiful places to visit in China and was ranked 11 out of 40 destinations in China. In 1998, China National Tourism Administration had introduced China Excellent Tourism Cities Award and Chengde was one of the cities that received the award in 1998 (CNTA, 2013). In 2017, Chengde has a new airport, and by 2020 there will be a high-speed train linking Beijing and a few cities with Chengde. This will attract more tourists to come to Chengde and thus, may affect the local residents' participation in tourism and place attachment.



Figure 1. China Map Showing Chengde (Source: Travel China Guide, 2018)

Many studies were conducted on the relationship between residents' participation and the conservation of World Heritage Sites (WHS) (Su & Wall, 2015). According to Yung and Chan (2012), residents' participation is fundamental when developing sustainable tourism. However, the research on identifying the relationship between residents' perception of tourism impacts and place attachment were not well-understood (Bagri & Kala, 2016). To the researcher's knowledge, research in examining the relationship between local residents' perception on positive and negative impacts of tourism and their attitudes toward future tourism development in China was scarce. Thus, this study, is conducted on the local residents living in Shuangqiao district surrounding Chengde Mountain Resort, aimed to provide an insight on the role of place attachment and residents' perception on impacts of tourism and their attitudes toward future tourism development.

### **Place Attachment**

Place attachment is an affective bond or link between people and specific places (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). A comparison on the level of place attachment between different tourism regions may help in understanding the features that help to shape tourist interpretations of destination lifestyle (Gross & Brown, 2006). This information is of utmost important for marketers since it enables the marketers to distinguish those features that are substitutable from those that are perceived to be unique to a particular place. The concept of place attachment, while seemingly an important issue in the assessment of the social impacts of tourism, has not received much attention in the tourism research literature (Lee, Lee, & Arcodia, 2014).

However, many sociologists, operating in other contexts, have attempted to define and measure attachment to community with varying levels of success. Researchers in leisure study stated that, place attachment is primarily a psychological element of recreational experience (Williams, 2002), and the construct has typically been described as having two distinct dimensions: (i) place identity, which refers to a symbolic or affective attachment to a place, and (ii) place dependence, which refers to a functional attachment to a place (Backlund & Williams, 2003). Many studies were conducted to evaluate the support of local people in tourism developments with the focus on to what extent they involve themselves in tourism related activities (Nicholas et al., 2009; Bennett & Dearden, 2014; Styliadis, Biran & Szivas, 2014). Besides, many studies showed that engagements of the local community in management and decision-making process may convince the residents the needs on integrating tourism in local economy (Wager, 1995).

Additionally, in a theoretical model (Nicholas et al., 2009), perceived benefits and costs proved to be mediating variable between support for tourism development and place attachment, and environmental attitudes. This study has clearly documented both positive consequences of tourism to individuals and communities. The researcher is interested in examining how some of the adverse effects of tourism development may affect feelings of place attachment by observing how a person develops feeling or attitude towards the community. This place attachment or attitudes can be assessed based on among their other perception and integration into community life (Cheng & Wu, 2015).

### **Local Residents' Perception of Tourism Impacts**

Studies on the positive and negative impacts of tourism on the local residents have attracted great attention in tourism literature (Díaz & Gutiérrez, 2010). The residents were assumed to perceive tourism as beneficial as well as costly. Besides, many studies were also conducted to find variable identifications which will influence residents' attitudes toward tourism development (Bujosa & Rossello, 2007), as well as theoretical perspective of residents' attitudes in various places.

Literature suggests that some thirty years ago, many studies had been conducted on impacts of tourism developments on local residents. In 1960s, the focus was on the positive impacts of tourism while in 1970s, the focus was more on negative impacts, and more balanced impacts of tourism developments in 1980s (Andereck & Vogt, 2000). Importantly, in 1970s researchers were more interested in studies on residents at tourism destinations (Vargas, Plaza, & Porras, 2009) and in studies on the attitudes of residents on the impacts of tourism (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Sirakaya et al., 2002). Substantial number of studies on residents' attitudes was conducted in the United States of America and many other studies had focussed on the case study in developed countries, especially in sites where rural and leisure tourism are more important (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). Studies conducted in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean had focused on tourism impact from the economic perspective (Perez & Nadal, 2005; Sharpley, 2014). Local residents' perception on tourism development is likely to influence their attitudes towards future tourism development in Chengde, China.

### **Residents Attitudes towards Future Tourism Development**

How residents experience the impacts of tourism have been rigorously discussed in tourism studies (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Styliadis, Biran, Sit, & Szivas, 2014; Xue, Kerstetter, & Buzinde, 2015; Patwary, Roy, Hoque & Khandakar, 2019). More often than not, previous studies have explained the association between residents' perceptions and tourism

impacts using the Social Exchange Theory (Kang & Lee, 2018). Local residents will support tourism development if they believe it will bring positive impacts. On the contrary, residents will not support tourism development when negative impacts from tourism are perceived (Wheeler, 2017). Doxey (1975) proposed model of irritation which has directed to contribute in assessing the impacts of tourism from social point of view. The author also thought that, when tourists' arrival is started to increase, and tourism industry is booming rapidly in a certain tourist destination, that can result in irritation among the local residents. Variations in the attitudes of supporting or not supporting further tourism development depend on the number of tourists visiting the area, economic benefit of tourism and the impacts on the residents through crowding, congestion, litter, and increase in prices of goods and services (Garau-Vadell, Díaz-Armas, & Gutierrez-Taño, 2014; Patwary & Rashid, 2016).

Usually residents' attitudes of supporting tourism development are divided into additional and restricted tourism development. Additional tourism development refers to the long-term planning and involving or empowering the residents in decision making for tourism development by local government. Restricted development refers to a more on protecting the environment of the area rather than promoting to attract more tourists (Ko & Stewart, 2002; Latkova & Vogt, 2012; McCool & Martin, 1994). Social Exchange Theory as "a general sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation" (Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Kock, & Ramayah, 2015). The above theory indicates that, if individuals receive benefits, they will respond positively towards the actions, while individuals experience the opposite will respond negatively towards the actions (Andereck, Pachmayer, & Zhao, 2016). The crucial role of empowerment in tourism development is one of the examples of positive exchange (Patwary & Omar, 2016). Whether the locals experience themselves politically, psychologically, or socially empowered or not could be measured by Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (RETS) (Boley & McGehee, 2014).

Based on the above discussions from existing literature, Figure 2 is developed to reflect the link between place attachment, local residents' perception of tourism impacts and attitude toward future tourism development.

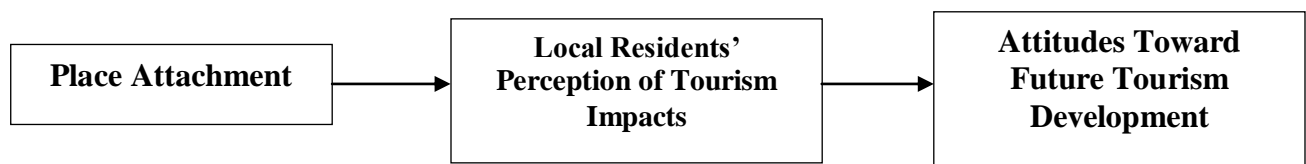


Figure 2: Research Framework



## CONCLUSION

Understanding about tourism's influences has becoming more comprehensive, since tourism has been closely related to wider socio-cultural development issues. Meanwhile, these relative new phenomena have brought about more fascinating themes for future tourism development research. The comprehension regarding tourism's persuasions is ending up more inclusively, with the goal that tourism is firmly identified with more extensive socio-cultural advancement problems. Therefore, this experience has motivated the researchers to embark on more fascinating research in tourism.

Tourism has many effects on the local residents of the destinations such as changes in habits, customs, social values and beliefs, and other sociocultural characteristics (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). In the social cultural perspective, visitors and local residents more often than not, would interact with each other thus, expose the locals to new cultures and social opportunities. On the contrary, many locals may feel discomfort due to the facts that the new cultures may threaten their own cultural identity and social reality.

The development of conceptual framework in this research will enrich the literatures regarding the construct of residents' attitudes and tourism development. The above evidence clearly indicates that perceived benefits and costs of tourism are the important antecedents of supporting local tourism developments at world heritage sites. Besides, the cultural, local, social, and environmental impacts may also change residences' attitudes toward supporting tourism developments. Furthermore, by understanding the residents' attitudes towards tourism development, the local tourism stakeholders will be able to better comprehend what local residents perceive about future tourism development.

Since local residents directly interact with visitors, their support has been viewed as one of the most critical determinants of success of tourism development. With the support of residents, a tourism related activity can be transformed into a memorable and enjoyable experience for both the hosts and the visitors and thus, promote tourism development. Obviously, the positive attitude of residents toward tourism developments could lead to more opportunities for successful tourism development in the communities. On the contrary, negative attitude of residents toward tourism deters the growth of tourism industry. In order to overcome the residents' negative attitudes towards tourism developments, future tourism development should be extensively discussed in tourism literature since developing tourism can meet both the needs of visitors and locals.

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