

Title: Tourism Impacts on Residents' Quality of Life of an Ethnic Minority in China: The Buyi in Zhen Shan Village—Residents' Perspectives

Authors:

Hanny Kadijk
NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands

Akke Folmer
NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands

Chenwei Liang
NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands

Abstract:

There is a growing interest of tourists in local culture and authentic experiences, and different ethnic minority areas attract tourists by offering an exotic cultural experience through interaction between the tourist and local community members. It is suggested that these interactions may have a strong impact on the quality of life of the host residents and that observing social tourism impacts is essential to understand quality of life of local community members (Deery, Jago, and Fredline, 2012). This research focused on the local community of Zen Shan, a tourist village in China, and sheds some light on the impact of cultural tourism on local community members in Zhen Shan. The research explored quality of life of the Buyi ethnic group living in Zen Shan. Defining quality of life is not easy, since it is a subjective evaluation of how people assess their life. For this research, four layers of perceptions towards social impacts and quality of life were used. These layers are residents' attitudes toward tourism, their reactions to tourism, their judgements about tourists' behaviours, and the values residents hold about tourism. During the spring of 2017, 9 narrative interviews were conducted with Buyi residents. The outcomes of these interviews reveal that Buyi perceive mostly positive impacts of tourism, mainly reported as economic benefits. Although Buyi also perceive negative cultural and natural impacts of tourism, they accept cultural and natural changes since it brings economic benefits in Zhenshan Village. Hence, economic benefit is the critical concern of residents' quality of life, which is also the decisive factor of residents' supportive behaviours towards tourism and positive judgement and shared values on tourism. While economic factors seem decisive for the subjective valuing of quality of life, it may well be the case that a loss of culture and damage of nature has negative consequences for economic income. The challenge for the Buyi is how to balance between this striving for economic growth, cultural changes to Buyi traditions and damage to nature in Zen Shan. This is not a unique challenge for only the Buyi, but counts for more ethnic minority groups who attract tourists by offering exotic and cultural experiences.

CTS 2019

Deery, M., Jago, L., & Fredline, L. (2012). Rethinking social impacts of tourism research: A new research agenda. *Tourism Management*, 33(1), 64-73.
