
Editorial

Ming Ming Su

School of Environment and Natural Resources,
Renmin University of China,
59 ZhongGuanCun Dajie, Haidian District,
Beijing, 100872, China
E-mail: smm52@hotmail.com

Destination communities are commonly among the most affected but the least empowered among tourism stakeholders. The relationship between tourism and communities is multi-dimensional, encompassing economic, social, cultural, ecological, and political forces. They often play multiple roles in tourism, such as service providers, sellers, craftspeople, and even as ethnic attractions (Scheyvens, 2003). Possessing rich knowledge of the local natural and cultural environment, communities often have the experience and ability to address local issues (Bramwell and Lane, 1999). These are critical elements in ensuring that tourism development is well-informed, appropriate (Bramwell and Lane, 1999) and not at odds with local traditions and environments.

Destination communities receive various impacts from tourism development and have different responses to it (Wall and Mathieson, 2006). They may perceive tourism as a positive opportunity to enhance their living standard and cultural identity (Perdue et al., 1990; Su and Wall, 2012, 2013). Alternatively, negative attitudes and perceptions toward tourism may also arise due to economic, socio-cultural and environmental costs (Perdue et al., 1990; Su and Wall, 2012, 2013). It should be noted that communities are often heterogeneous. Different sections of the community may generate a diversity of reactions caused by different ways and levels of tourism involvement and different impacts received (Andriotis and Vaughn, 2003; Nicholas et al., 2009).

Despite their important roles in tourism, communities seldom have genuine control over the nature and direction of tourism development (Scheyvens, 2003; Wall and Mathieson, 2006), which hampers the development of a healthy tourism-community relation necessary for sustainable tourism development. Therefore, the need for community participation in tourism is highly recognised, which can ensure community benefits, empower the local, and sustain community development.

This special issue of *International Journal of Tourism Anthropology* is devoted to studies on tourism and community from both empirical and conceptual perspectives. With a focus on marginal communities in developing countries, authors in this special issue drew examples from diverse geographical and cultural contexts and generate stimulating discussions on a variety of important issues associated with tourism and community.

Based on a one-year ethnographic fieldwork in an East-African pastoral society, Regi presents an in-depth study on how tourism, as a new source of wealth, is perceived in a small-scale localised community in Ethiopia and how this view differs from the national rhetoric and development plans in the country. The study addresses how contacts with tourists encourage the emergence of local political institutions, which begin as tentative

interest groups but become protagonists in local politics and how local identities are reshaped through this process. This paper relates community participation in tourism development to the wider political and economic contexts and drawn attention to the political aspects of tourism and community relations.

Dansac and González examine community perceptions of tourism between two Mexican settlements on the Agave Landscape World Heritage Site: Tequila and Teuchitlan. Both are respectively associated with two tourist attractions: the 'Magic Town' of Tequila and Los Guachimontones archaeological site. Residents' perceptions toward tourism impacts on their natural and socio-cultural environments are acquired and compared. Factors that might lead to these differences are also analysed. The existence of different perceptions illustrates the discrepancies between individual and collective costs and profits associated with tourism development. Preventive measures to counteract negative impacts from tourism are suggested to facilitate a sustainable development of tourism and community in the future.

Through examining the Amphawa Floating Market (AFM) in Central Thailand, Vajirakachorn and Nepal explores local perspectives of community-based tourism. The processes of local engagement in tourism development and promotion, residents' views about community involvement, and tourism impacts on local livelihoods are documented. Results indicate that successful implementation of a community-based tourism is dependent on contributions of local catalysts, strong economic interests of residents, and their willingness to work together as a community. However, residents may gradually lose control as tourism development succeeds and outsiders are drawn in. This paper argues that community-based tourism faces similar challenges as mainstream tourism if economic interests outweigh environmental and social concerns. Proactive community engagement in tourism planning and continuous collaborations between various agencies and stakeholders are needed to nurture community-based tourism.

The article by Su and Wall examines residents' use and perceptions of the Summer Palace World Heritage in Beijing, China. It addresses the lack of research on the recreational and social uses of heritage by local residents, who are often portrayed and examined as service providers and impact receivers. To provide a more balanced understanding of tourism and recreational use of heritage sites, this paper identifies use patterns, motivations, perceptions and experiences of local users through a questionnaire survey at the Summer Palace. Despite their different use pattern from tourists, residents demonstrate high evaluation and appreciation of the cultural and historical values of the place, which are closely linked to their identity. Measures to manage the differences in use pattern and enhance visiting experiences are suggested, which can also inform other heritage sites shared by local users and tourists.

Sharing the same focus on tourism and community, four papers in this special issue attend to issues occurring at different contexts and generate illustrative and provocative comments on different aspects of tourism and community relations. I would like to thank all the authors and the reviewers for their valuable contributions. Without them, this special issue cannot be possible. I sincerely hope that this special issue will further stimulate scholar debates on this agenda.

References

- Andriotis, K. and Vaughn, R. (2003) 'Urban residents' attitudes toward tourism development: the case of Crete', *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp.172–185.
- Bramwell, B. and Lane, B. (1999) 'Collaboration and partnerships for sustainable tourism', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 7, Nos. 3–4, pp.179–181.
- Nicholas, L.N., Thapa, B. and Ko Y.J. (2009) 'Residents' perspectives of a World Heritage Site The Pitons Management Area, St. Lucia', *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp.390–412.
- Perdue, R.R., Long, P.T. and Allen, L. (1990) 'Resident support for tourism development', *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp.586–599.
- Scheyvens, R. (2003) 'Local involvement in managing tourism', in Singh, S., Timothy, D.J. and Dowling, R.K. (Eds.): *Tourism in Destination Communities*, pp.229–252, CABI Publishing, Wallingford, UK.
- Su, M.M. and Wall, G. (2012) 'Global-local relationships and governance issues at the Great Wall World Heritage Site, China', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 20, No. 8, pp.1067–1086.
- Su, M.M. and Wall, G. (2013) 'Community participation in tourism at a World Heritage Site: Mutianyu Great Wall, Beijing, China', *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp.146–156.
- Wall, G. and Mathieson, A. (2006) *Tourism: Change, Impacts and Opportunities*, Prentice Hall, Pearson.