Sociocultural Impacts of Tourism on Residents of World Cultural Heritage Sites in China

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Abstract: The development of tourism induces changes in the social character of a destination. Tourism is a globalized business activity and thus presents growing challenges in terms of traditional social culture. With the continuous development of the tourism industry, traditional social culture has changed dramatically at many World Heritage sites (WHSs). Additionally, the growing dependence of many regions' economies on the tourism industry has brought about an inexorable shift in the perception of many rural residents. These transformations include the impact of tourism development and its economic efficiency on inhabitants' traditional values, lifestyles, and interpersonal relationship in ancient villages serving as WHSs. A qualitative analysis including participatory in-depth interviews was conducted to compare changes in the social culture induced by tourism development at the WHS comprising three ancient villages in China. Furthermore, a qualitative content analysis was chosen to examine the impact of tourism development on residents' perceptions of changes in moral values. The results demonstrate that tourism development is the major catalyst for change in local residents' moral values.

Keywords: Tourism development; sociocultural impact; perception; World Heritage site; China; local residents

1. Introduction

Tourism, increasingly seen as an important economic activity, has become a significant engine of overall development in many destinations. It generates 10% of employment around the world and accounts for 10.4% of global GDP [1]. Promoting tourism can attract regional investment, create commercial opportunities, and support other industries within a destination area [2–4]. For example, tourism can upgrade local life through better local infrastructure and common devices (for the sake of sustaining tourism) that can ameliorate health care, education resources, job opportunities, and income levels [5].

Tourism can help propel poverty reduction in the least developed countries since even unskilled laborers in remote areas can find jobs in this diverse and labor-intensive industry [6]. Additionally, in developing countries tourism development creates benefits for the social culture of host communities. The sociocultural value of tourism may include a great sense of community identity, a heightened sense of linking with local environments, and increased social capital following an increase in tourists [7]. For example, in Indonesia, the existence of a tourism destination improved the attitudes of local residents toward accepting differences, improved their understanding of other people's habits, and allowed them to live healthier lives [8].

However, a booming tourism market also exerts negative influences on developing countries, and the negative sociocultural impacts on host communities have attracted increasing scholarly attention [9–13]. First, local culture and traditional values may be weakened by the acculturation and

development process [14], which is particularly evident in seniority and relationships within both the family and the community [12]. Changes in values or behavior threaten indigenous identities, and these changes often alter the community fabric, family relationships, collective conventional lifestyles, ceremonies, and morality [9]. In some areas such as Koh Samui in Thailand, possible negative sociocultural impacts include demographic changes, increased poverty and slums, a rise in the crime rate, drug abuse, pornography and prostitution, and HIV/AIDS infection [15]. Second, the widening income disparity may aggravate conflicts within a community and lead to hatred between the local residents who benefit from tourism businesses and those who do not [16].

Recently, the threats of tourism to the world heritage of certain areas in developing countries have received more attention. Scenery, architecture, and cultural diversity are major tourism attractions of heritage sites. However, overexploitation or poor management of tourism may damage heritage sites' integrity, intrinsic properties, and significant characteristics. For example, an increasing number of natural World Heritage sites (WHSs) in developing countries are threatened by the promotion of tourism. A WHS is a landmark or area designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its cultural, historical, scientific, or other form of significance. WHSs in developing countries account for 60% of all WHSs worldwide. The inscription of a site as a WHS by UNESCO raises the site's international profile, thus attracting tourism development [17]. Heritage can provide visitor attractions, whereas tourism can provide financial and public support for heritage conservation [18,19]. Meanwhile, as the 'owner' and custodian of said heritage, local communities are directly impacted by tourism development [20]. For example, tourism can affect, and on occasion does substantially affect, the local social culture [21]. However, despite the large number of studies on the sociocultural impact of tourism, relatively little attention has been paid to WHSs within developing countries. Therefore, this research aims to identify the sociocultural impacts of the tourism development on the Kaiping Diaolou and Villages area, China, since its recognition as a WHS, by comparing residents' lifestyles and their values before and after tourism development on their perceptions of changes in moral values.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Tourism Development in the Developing Countries

In recent years, tourism has received increasing attention as a major economic driver for many states, in particular for developing countries. Tourism is recognized as a mechanism to foster economic growth and development in developing countries [22,23]. For several decades, tourism has been considered as an ideal means of obtaining foreign currencies, creating job opportunities, and controlling the rural–urban movement in developing countries [24]. Through a survey of the literature on the economics of tourism, Sinclair (1998) found that tourism development even played the role of an alternative for economic growth in some developing countries [25], since conventional industries including manufacturing and agriculture had declined [26]. At a global level, it is assumed that much of the growth in tourism will be derived from developing countries in the future [27].

Tourism, like other economic activities, exerts a positive influence on host communities. Since the 1970s, it has been suggested that tourism's potential as an instrument for economic development is real and that its realization is within developing countries' reach [28]. Tourism offers a crucial opportunity for developing countries to combat poverty, diversify their economic infrastructure, and pursue pro-poor policies, such as inclusive growth strategies [6]. Ramzy et al. (2013) argued that tourism development will contribute to poverty alleviation in developing island countries, such as the Comoro Islands of the Indian Ocean, through the accumulation of foreign currency reserves, the reduction in the rate of unemployment of the locals, and the attraction of investors to invest in tourism projects utilizing their abundant natural resources [29]. At the same time, the development of tourism generates social harmony [30] and helps in the preservation of local cultures and the environment [31,32]. In-depth interviews conducted in Lombok, Indonesia also revealed that this sector produces many advantages,

such as enriching residents' understanding of other cultures, strengthening their regional pride, and promoting local environmental protection [33]. That is, the development of tourism broadens residents' knowledge about transnational tourism, foreign countries, and people, thereby instilling a sense of pride in natives associated with their heritage and culture as well as contributing to the rehabilitation of existing buildings and historic sites and the transformation of old buildings to new uses [16,34].

Contrary to these positive effects, the development of tourism may have considerable negative effects on tourist destinations. One quote from the Global South put it the following way: "Tourism is like a plague—it destroys people, culture, heritage, environment" [35]. Telfer and Sharpley (2008) employed the concept of trade-offs to explicate the difficulty for political, sociocultural, economic, and environmental aims to be concurrently achieved through the exploitation of tourism [36]. Akama and Kiet (2007) found that the tourism industry was typified by external control and management of tourism institutions, limited local participation, and high leakage rates, and that consequently it had little effect on indigenous socioeconomic development in Kenya. The natives faced insuperable barriers preventing them from grasping economic opportunities produced by tourism development [37]. It is believed that poor people are particularly susceptible to the costs of developing tourism through lost access to, and exhaustion of, natural resources [38]. Although the size of the tourist sector in developing countries has been recognized, "tourism pessimists" assert that there is a backflow in the vast majority of the potential benefits from developing countries to the developed source countries through the activities of foreign-owned hotels, international tour operators, and high import inclinations of tourism [39–41]. Furthermore, the deterioration of the local environment in developing countries may also be blamed on tourism development. Disturbances in the breeding of birds in the Antarctic, coral reef destruction in the Caribbean, and waste and sewage pollution in popular tourist resorts are just a few examples of tourism's destructive potential [42–45].

2.2. Sociocultural Impact of Tourism Development

Sociocultural impacts are the 'human impacts' of the tourism industry, with an emphasis on changes in the quality of residents' daily life at the tourist destinations and cultural impacts related to transformations in traditional values, norms, and identities arising from tourism [46]. According to Hashimoto (2002), such impacts are complicated to quantify and calculate and emerge slowly over time in an inconspicuous fashion [47,48]. Cooper et al. (2013) argued that changes in the norms and values in the short term are apparent but that there are also longer term and gradual changes in a society's values, beliefs, and cultural practices [49].

Both positive and negative sociocultural impacts of tourism have been documented in a vast literature (see Table 1). On one hand, tourism has an influence on the features of the local social culture, affecting the social habits, customs, values, beliefs, and lifestyles of the residents at a tourist destination [50,51]. Zaei and Zaei (2013) divided the sociocultural impacts of tourism into seven aspects, including the improvement of local facilities and infrastructure, the availability of more events, the conservation of the local cultural heritage, a decrease in the movement of people from rural areas to urban areas, and an increase in youth exchange programmers [5]. Zamani-Farahani and Musa (2012) also noted that tourism has not only ameliorated regional image and infrastructure construction in areas but has also been conducive to the improvement of recreational activities and quality of life among natives [51,52]. For example, for one minority in China, Chen (2014) found that people benefitted from the modernization brought by tourism. Clothes and food became nicer and more varied and transportation became faster than before [53]. Among the studies that have focused on the sociocultural impacts of tourism, Ismail et al. (2011) found that hosts recognized that tourism generates welfare (e.g., more variety in recreational facilities and improved public infrastructure) for their communities [54,55].

Table 1. Positive and negative sociocultural impacts of tourism on different countries/regions.

	Sociocultural Impacts of Tourism	Countries/Regions
Positive	**Living Condition** More variety in recreational activities and facilities; Improved public infrastructure; Nicer and more varied clothes and food; Faster transportation; Higher revenue and more employment opportunities; Improved education quality; A better quality of the urban environment	Iran; Kenya; Malaysia; Portugal; Mainland China; Hong Kong, China
	Local Culture An amelioration of regional image; Revitalized local cultural practices	Iran; Fiji
	Residents' Lifestyle A better quality of life; A decline in the movement of people from rural areas to urban areas; More youth exchange programs; More events and recreational activities available for local people	Iran; America
	Spirit The improvement of people's sense of national and local pride	Israel; Nigeria; Indonesia
Negative	**Living Condition** Increased racial discrimination, crime and prostitution; The resettlement of traditional communities; Traffic congestion; An absence of shopping spaces and establishments; Shortages of goods and services; Difficulties of sustainable development; Sporadic violence	Bostswana; Britain; Tanzania; Hong Kong, China; Mainland China; Cape Verde
	Local Culture Social order being disturbed; Cultural decline; Negative changes in residents' dietary culture, drinking rituals, dress codes and religious values	Hong Kong, China; Tanzania; South Africa; Fiji
	Residents' Lifestyle The breakdown of the conventional family structure and relations; The behavior of young generations becomes worse; Residents facing exploitation; Negative changes in residents' personal relations; Contradictions among a community	Bostswana; Tanzania; Fiji; South Africa
	Spirit The feeling of community and identity; Antipathy between the locals and tourists	South Africa; Japan

On the other hand, the negative impacts of tourism can also be found in previous work. Mbaiwa (2004), who examined the sociocultural impacts of tourism development in the Okavango Delta, Botswana, found that in addition to positive impacts, tourism development had negative sociocultural effects on local communities, posing a threat to the quality of life of locals. These impacts include racial discrimination, enclave tourism, the resettlement of traditional communities, the breakdown of the conventional family structure and relations, and an upsurge in crime and prostitution. Additionally, the young generations have adopted the Western Safari style of dressing and use 'vulgar' language that is traditionally unaccepted [56]. Ramchander (2003) stated that older respondents in South Africa voiced their concern that traditional African culture was being commercialized. The inequality of different dweller groups' income can lead to contradictions among a community and antipathy between the locals and tourists [16]. Sánchez Cañizares et al. (2016) reported that residents were doubtful about official support for future tourism development on the African island of São Vicente, Cape Verde, as they were discontent with the negative effects of tourism (crime, shortages of goods and services, and an absence of shopping spaces and establishments) [57]. For backpacker tourism on the Yasawa Islands in Fiji, a South Pacific island nation, Sroypetch (2016) reported that backpackers brought both active

and passive changes to the sociocultural sphere. On the positive side, the hosts agreed that backpacker tourism helps revitalize local cultural practices. However, backpackers also brought negative changes in residents' dietary culture, drinking rituals, dress codes, religious values, and personal relations (with elders, family, and the community) [12]. Piuchan et al. (2018), who investigated the economic and sociocultural impacts of the increasing number of mainland Chinese tourists on Hong Kong residents, found that the negatively affected sociocultural aspects included culture, transportation, shopping, and dining, but also that conversely tourism had a positive effect on education and infrastructure construction [13].

2.3. Sociocultural Impact of Tourism on World Heritage Sites

It is widely recognized that WHSs constitute a major impetus for tourist arrivals [58]. In turn, tourism is favored by local authorities and communities where WHSs are situated due to their capability to stimulate the economy, generate revenue, and create employment opportunities, which are more important for rural residents than urban citizens [59,60]. Su and Lin (2014) concur and pointed out that a country possessing a WHS is in a win–win situation, not only for the development of the tourism economy but also for sustainable social progress and the conservation of cultural achievements [61]. Tourists and local residents share many heritage sites in different ways and for different purposes [62]. For example, the improvement of infrastructure brought by the development of tourism has substantially reduced traffic congestion and enhanced the quality of the urban environment in some African countries [63]. It also helps local people better understand and inherit the traditional culture and thus raise their sense of national and local pride [64,65].

However, although the fundamental purpose of creating the World Heritage List was to promote the greater sharing of experiences, better understanding among people, and the promotion of heritage conservation [66], the overexploitation of heritage sites has resulted in many consequent problems [67,68], one of which is negative social cultural impacts. Rasoolimanesh (2017) revealed that local people worried about the negative impacts while they were happy about the positive ones [69]. Due to the "tourismification" of heritage sites, local cultural values are faced with commercialization and deterioration [70,71]. An investigation of Ogimachi in Japan indicated that the WHS designation caused the invasion of tourists into natives' lives and weakened the feeling of community and identity, which led to a separation between the WHS and its neighboring areas [72]. Additionally, it was found that in Tanzania, the coexistence of distinctly wealthy travelers (whether international or domestic) and apparently needy locals could give rise to exploitation, cultural decline, and sporadic violence. However, no critical institutional reforms have been implemented to secure the rights of residents and to ensure that they will benefit from tourism [63].

The negative influence of tourism is reflected in obstacles to the sustainable development of WHSs, for instance, the lack of financial assistance and the loss of local governments' subjective status in decision making [73]. As the developing country with the largest amount of WHSs, WHSs in China are under population pressure, which came following tourism development [59]. Moreover, in the UK, Landorf (2009) pointed out that the government of WHSs did not involve active measures in terms of social sustainability dimensions in the same way as for the sustainable development of the environment [74].

3. Method

3.1. Study Site: Kaiping Diaolou and Villages

Kaiping City is located in the South-Central Guangdong Province, China (Figure 1). Kaiping Diaolou and Villages feature multistoreyed defensive tower clusters in several villages. In Kaiping City, several villages have been honored as World Cultural Heritage Sites by UNESCO because of their cluster of late nineteenth-century towers and the historical, social, and cultural traditions they represent [75]. The tower cluster is a complex and well-executed fusion of various architectural

styles from all over the world [76] that is not only used for defending and living but also considered as a carrier of historical, cultural, scientific, and artistic value. It witnessed a special period in the development of overseas Chinese history and is the spiritual link between overseas Chinese people and their homeland. The tower cluster not only embodies a combination of tradition and modernity, and a fusion and collision between Chinese and Western cultures, but it also reflects the way in which people live in harmony with nature (Figure 2).
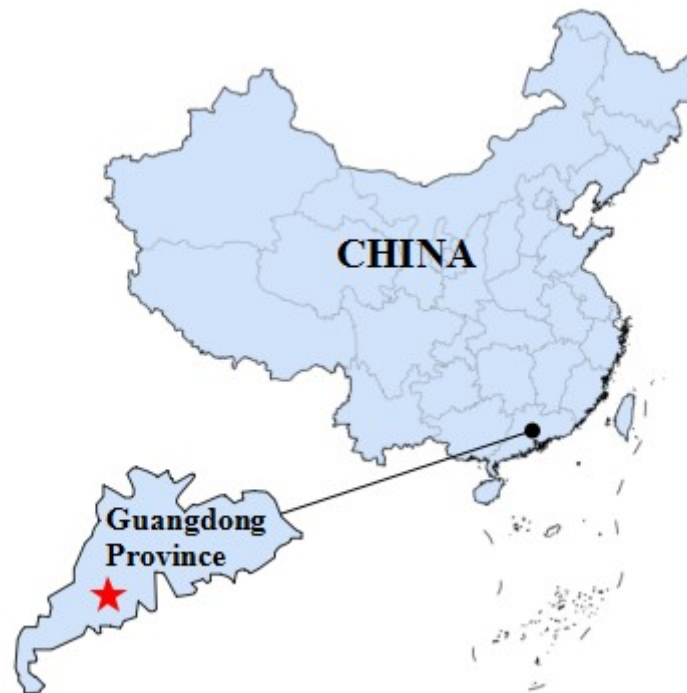

Figure 1. The Location of Kaiping City in China.

Figure 2. The tower cluster in Kaiping.

The study was carried out at three ancient villages (Zili Village, Majianglong Village, and Jinjiangli Village) around the towers, which are adjacent to each other geographically (Figure 3). Zili Village has 15 different styles of architecture with different shapes of elegant roofs, most of which were built in the 1920s to 1930s. The tower cluster in this village is the best preserved, most concentrated, and most aesthetically impressive. Majianglong Village, known as "the most beautiful village in the world", has a total of 13 well preserved towers of a unique style. Jinjiangli Village is a uniformly planned village divided by a crisscross of paths in fields.

Figure 3. The location of three villages.

Although the three ancient villages were inscribed in the list of WHSs at the same time on 28 June 2007 and gained unprecedented chances for developing their tourism industry, the tourism developments in the villages were not synchronized in reality. Zili Village, Majianglong Village and Jinjiangli Village opened up in 2003, 2007, and 2010 respectively, and thus their degrees of tourism development are different. Therefore, it can be perceived that inhabitants of different villages have dissimilarities in value shifts and lifestyle changes.

3.2. Data Collection

In line with the exploratory nature of this research, it employed a mixed methodological approach that mainly included semistructured interviews with natives, participant observation, short informal conversations, and document analysis [63]. Following in-depth interviews and questionnaire surveys in 2013 and 2014, the research work in 2016 and 2017 was mainly conducted in a semi-structured depth interview. At the beginning, specific questions were not asked in the interview. The interviewers focused on local people's daily lives as a starting point to understand their circumstances, behaviors, thoughts, and attitudes. Additionally, this research also attempts to understand the past lifestyle and traditional values of local people by consulting yearbooks and other archive files.

The research work was carried out in batches within four years. In 2013, interviews were conducted in Zili Village and Majianglong Village from February 19 to 25 February; in June 2014, interviewers spent six days in Zili Village and Majianglong Village and one week in October in all the three villages. In 2016, interviews were carried out again in Zili Village, Majianglong Village, and Jinjiangli Village from 20 to 26 July and from 14 April to 2 May in 2017. To gather information on the sociocultural impact of tourism on residents of the three villages in Kaiping City, a total of 117 local residents from the villages were chosen randomly to participate in the interviews (45 from Zili Village, 44 from Majianglong Village, and 28 from Jinjiangli Village, including 53 men and 64 women with an average age of 45). Selected members were engaged both purposefully and by convenience. The interview length for each person varied from half an hour to two hours. Most of the interviews were recorded after obtaining the consent of the interviewee. Three areas were involved in the semistructured interviews: people's different attitudes toward financial rewards, interpersonal

relationships, and work before and after tourism development. All the interviews were conducted in the form of relaxed and pleasant informal conversations so that local residents felt at ease and gradually let their defenses down, enhancing the effectiveness and authenticity of the answers.

4. Results

4.1. Tourism Activities in Tower Cluster Area and Ancient Villages in Kaiping

In order to provide better protection for the WHS, the local government adopts the mode of "trusteeship of property right" [77] to properly develop the tourism resources of the tower cluster and ancient villages, that is, to retain the ownership of the buildings to private proprietors while handing over the management rights to the authorities for centralized management and operation.

Since 2007, the tourism sector has experienced a significant growth in the tower cluster area and three ancient villages in Kaiping. The number of tourism arrivals has generally increased in the past decade, peaking at 325,000 in 2011 (Figure 4). Since applying for world heritage status, the tourism industry in the villages and tower cluster area has evolved over 10 years, which has led to the transformation of daily life for local people. Villagers' values and norms have changed to various degrees in the different villages.
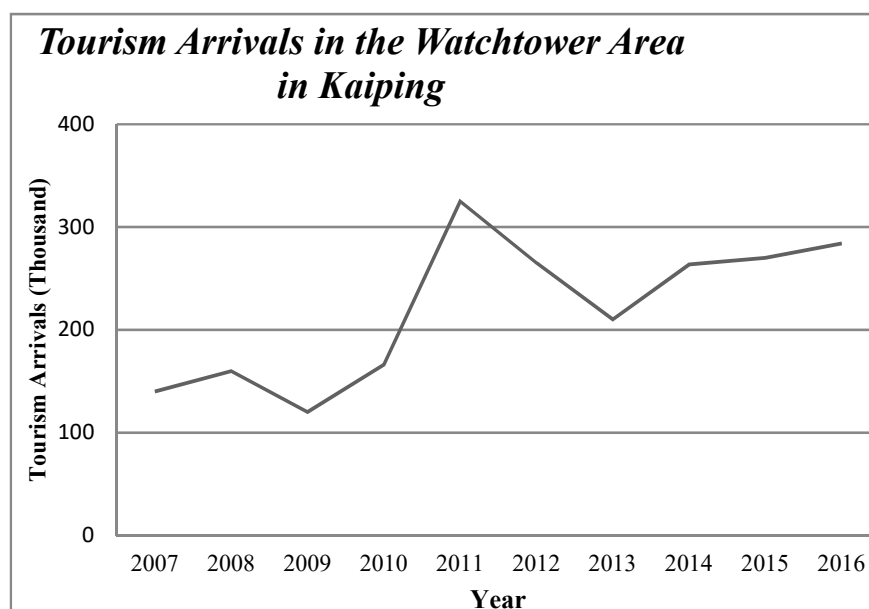

Figure 4. Tourism arrivals in the tower cluster area in Kaiping.

4.2. Income Level

Since tourism became one of the most important components of the economy in the three villages, it has raised residents' revenues. The greater the tourism development, the more pronounced the rise is. From 2008 to 2010, each person in five core villages received a tourism dividend exceeding $85 per year. In 2011, as tourism showed signs of an expansion, the dividend increased to $87 per year. With the growth of income, local residents' lives have greatly improved through the running of restaurants and sale of tickets. The most noticeable change happened in Zili Village, as the village committee began selling tickets to tourists in 2004. Each villager gained a $14 bonus per year, which gradually rose to $160 per year in 2007 and to $1255 per year in 2016 (Figure 5). In 2008, after being added to the World Heritage sites List, Zili Village gained approximately $40,410 in total, including $31,747 in ticket revenue (approximately 78.6% of the total income), $4329 in fishing income, and $2160 in farmland income and other income. In 2011, Zili Village gained $89,470 in total, including $80,811 in ticket sales, $4329 in fishing income, around $2200 in farming income, and another $2130 from other sectors. Ticket

sales, the primary source of tourist revenue, constituted up to 90.3% of the gross income. Before the petition for WHS status, the gross income of Zili Village was only approximately $400 to $600. Zili Village's annual per capita income was only approximately $14 in 2007, rising to $245 one year later and up to $548 in 2011.
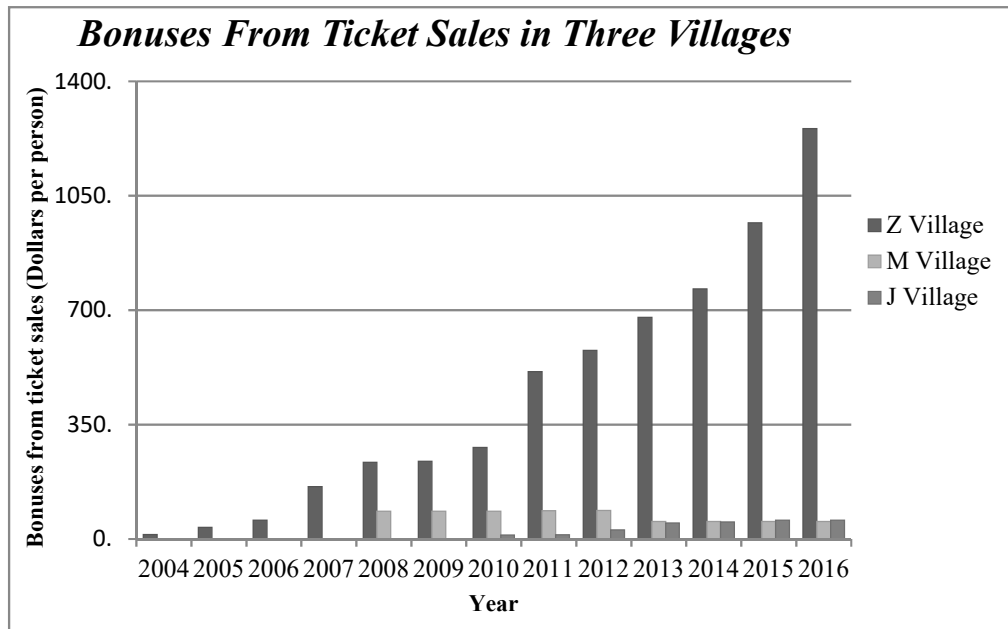

Figure 5. Bonuses from ticket sales in the three villages: Zili (Z), Majianglong (M), and Jinjiangli (J).

In contrast, Jinjiangli Village and Majianglong Village have been far less influenced by the tourism sector than Zili Village. While the five natural villages located in the core area can receive an 8-cent kickback from a ticket, the non-core villages receive no more than 4 cents. Majianglong Village and its tower cluster were added to the World Heritage List on 28 June 2007, after which its ticket price increased from $6 to $7. Even though Jinjiangli Village has experienced several years of tourism exploitation, the revenue from ticket sales is less than ideal. For example, Jinjinagli Village started to sell tickets in 2010. At that time, the natives received only $12 per year. In 2016, the annual per capita income of the village had reached only $58, which represents a large difference from that of Zili Village (Figure 5).

In the non-core region, restricted by the lesser degree of tourism development, villagers still rely on agriculture or working in urban areas. Some arable land is rented out by migrant laborers to avoid vacancy although not for the needs of the tourism industry. Comparing two villages, the tourism revenue of Majianglong Village is more than that of Jinjiangli Village, accounting for 20%–30% of Majianglong Village's general income. For the owners of restaurants, tourism is the major income source for their families. However, the number of tourists traveling to Jinjiangli Village is the smallest among the three villages as there is only one peasant family restaurant in it. These villagers' income structure has remained unchanged, and their earnings have not increased considerably under tourism development, which is very dissimilar from Zili Village.

4.3. Employment Structure

Before heading down the route of tourism exploitation, the three villages' earnings came mainly from farming or working outside. After tourism expansion, the locals saw various opportunities to run a restaurant, start a grocery store, or set up a stall, and these entrepreneurial activities have optimized the employment structure in the ancient villages around the tower cluster. Most of the villagers' land has now been leased to the tourism company to develop the tourism industry. Now, most of the villagers no longer rely on agriculture but rather work for the tourism company. They engage in jobs

such as security guards, cleaners, restaurateurs, and owners of souvenir shops. Therefore, tourism has had an enormous impact on Zili Village's labor market, with many residents gaining over 90% of their income from the industry.

Due to the different scale of tourism in each village, transformations in the employment structure have also been different. For instance, the youths in Zili Village are more willing to stay at home than those in the other two villages since their tourism industry is more prosperous. In Jinjiangli Village, however, many young laborers must leave their hometown to earn a living, leaving behind the elderly. Today, approximately 42% of Zili Village's inhabitants, 23% of Majianglong Village's inhabitants, and less than 8% of Jinjiangli Village's inhabitants work in the tourism industry. Zili Village has a total population of approximately 170 people, with a permanent resident population of slightly more than 70 people. Over half of the population leaves to work, whereas approximately 30 to 40 villagers work in the scenic spots, including working as security guards or cleaners, selling souvenirs and food to tourists, or running a restaurant. The total population of Majianglong Village is more than 1,000, including approximately 500 community-dwelling people, 60 of whom work for the tourism industry. There are two peasant family restaurants, two small shops operated perennially by local families, and another 10 eateries opened seasonally. Additionally, a few dozen villagers have set up stalls to sell local specialties, and some residents are working as security guards or cleaners. The population of Jinjiangli Village is 147, with less than 10 people working in scenic spots. Worse still, the one and only restaurant can hardly remain in business. Furthermore, no residents are selling souvenirs or food to tourists.

4.4. The Sociocultural Impact on Residents of Three Villages

As the economy grows rapidly, the social culture of the three villages around the tower cluster is also undergoing a transformation. The main sociocultural impact of tourism on inhabitants of the three villages in Kaiping is shown in Figure 6.
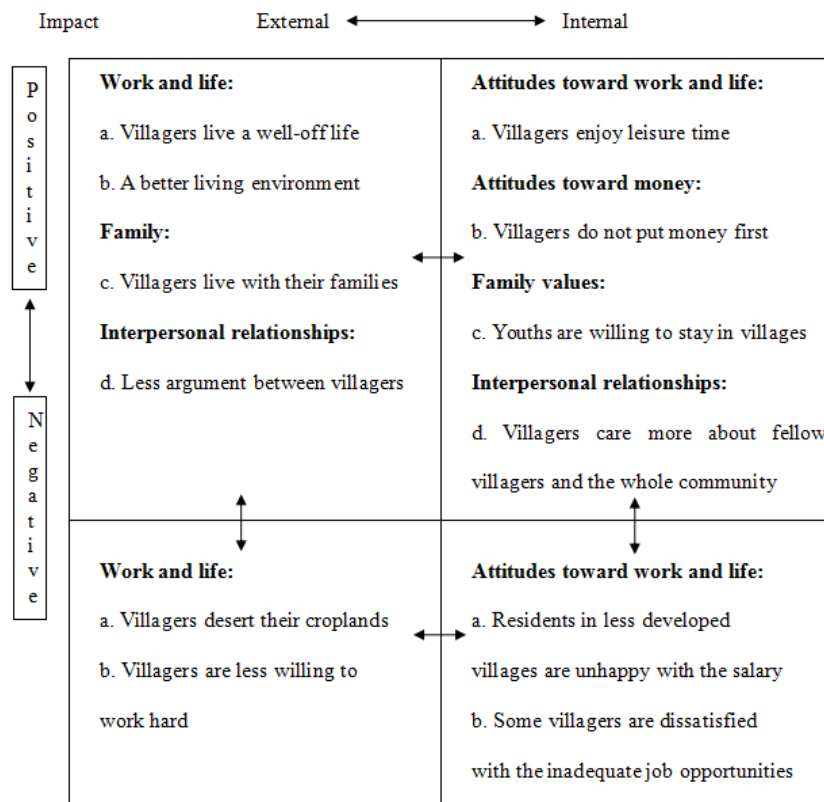

Figure 6. Main sociocultural impact of tourism in the three villages.

4.4.1. Local People's Attitudes toward Money

People leaving Kaiping City to work abroad were hardworking, industrious, and thrifty. They scrimped and saved up money to bring back to their homelands because their relatives at home usually relied on these overseas incomes. During Kangxi's reign, the Kaiping county annals documented the following: "Local people don't waste tillable fields. They also develop industry and commerce to serve agriculture." The habits of diligence and frugality prevailed. However, as their income increased and their living conditions improved, the pursuit of materials became popular among local residents. Those who advocated diligence and thriftiness came to be competitive and valued their reputations. Local people began to be ostentatious and constantly tried to 'keep up with the Joneses'. Xie Qinming, one of the Chinese students who studied in the United States, described the phenomenon as follows:

"Frugality is one of the main characteristics of Kaiping people, but it has faded away since our fellow villagers worked overseas and became prosperous. Today, all people, regardless of age and gender, are suffering from extravagance. In the past, people wore linen garments or cotton clothes and lived in simple, shabby houses, but now they dress in silk and satin and live in tall buildings and great mansions. Women dress in striking, gorgeous clothes. Even the peasants are grazing cattle and farming in expensive clothes, shoes, and socks. Moreover, local people enjoy using foreign products and buying expensive goods. Every morning, people rush to the bazaar to buy fish and meat in case they are sold out . . . In addition, other food on the table has become far more luxurious."

This situation also changed after tourism development. As villagers gained more money, they gradually realized that money is not the most important thing. Instead, they began to give priority to interpersonal relationships. This is not only because Kaiping is still a traditional society consisting of traditions, ritual, and folkways but also because villagers need to gain recognition and reliance in their social circuit. They long for a good reputation and stable social status, with which they can possess authority in their villages.

> It depends, money is not always the most important thing. Human feelings sometimes outweigh wealth, and we may fail to buy a favor with money. As for money, enough is enough. ('Uncle Fang' from Zili Village)

4.4.2. Local People's Attitudes toward Work and Life

The natives have benefited considerably from the successful application for WHS status and the exploitation of tourism, and many villagers' attitudes toward work have changed. The traditional adventurous spirit and business-oriented attitude can be seen in villagers as they boldly attempt to make reforms. Before tourism exploitation, the workforce in the three villages usually left their hometowns to find a job or run small businesses in varied industries from construction to hardware. Mercantilism became prevalent among villagers and was strengthened in the context of the market economy. Almost every family being interviewed had members who left for work or ran a business. People were not shy to speak about the importance of wealth; a sense of commerce seems to be inherent in the locals.

> We were poor in the past, and survival pressure compelled us to struggle to earn a living. Why are people eager to engage in trades? That's because one can only become prosperous by doing business. Have you ever heard of a millionaire who was a poor farmer before?
>
> ('Aunt Fang' (the owner of a restaurant in Zili Village))

Regarding attitudes toward life, a large number of villagers were transformed from being enterprising to enjoying life and being satisfied with being well off, a kind of hedonism. Frugal villagers began caring more about their quality of life once their living standards were raised by tourism. The most significant change has taken place in Zili Village, as it possesses the largest tourism industry among the three villages. The volume of travelers to Zili Village has been particularly large in the past two years, which has brought a bonus of more than $570 to each local person, a decent

income for an ordinary rural family. Furthermore, the government annually distributes $80 of "field subsidies" per family for land expropriations. Currently, Zili villagers no longer need to work as hard as in the past and can play mahjong or chat with their neighbors at leisure, and also have time to drink morning tea with friends. Some people are even addicted to mahjong and spend too much time playing it. Residents are unwilling to do farm work, even if there are adequately fertile paddy fields in these villages. Gradually, they desert their croplands on which they relied for survival before tourism developed. The Zili villagers are pleased with their relaxed and leisurely life today.

> Yes, I feel so happy, and don't need to work anymore. I just spend my day cooking meals, playing mahjong and doing some business. I often go out for breakfast and drink morning tea after getting up. And then I play mahjong for a whole day, sometimes cook a farmhouse meal for the guests at 11 a.m. Some people will go to a teahouse for dinner if they win at mahjong. Things were different in the past. At that time, we needed to work extremely hard to earn a living. But now we are well off and often eat at the restaurant next to the highway intersection. ('Aunt Zhou' from Zili Village)

Even during the tourism off-season, we could see residents in Zili Village relaxing, playing mahjong, or chatting with neighbors at home. A few villagers run a grocery store that opens at approximately 11 a.m. and closes at 4 p.m. Since the exploitation of tourism has led to more business opportunities, many villagers are now able to gain employment and make money more easily. They do not care much about money, which is quite different from the former "industrious and thrifty" lifestyle. Instead, people lead a life of ease; some villagers even claim to be loungers.

> We have become lazier than before, although there are many things we can do. For example, before the villages getting the designation as a World Heritage site, many villagers queued up to haul mud for a little money. But now, people find it too tired from such work, and no one wants the job anymore no matter how high the salary is. ('Uncle Huang' from Zili Village)

> We don't have to work now. The tourism company shares bonuses and pays us enough money to buy food. I'm content and satisfied with my current life. ('Aunt He' from Zili Village)

Changes in the other two villages, Majianglong Village and Jinjiangli Village, are not as significant due to their late start in the tourism industry and the sluggish growth of their economies. When interviewing local villagers, subtle changes could be detected, which will likely become noticeable as tourism expands. Even so, in interviews, people in these two villages also stated that "with lives getting better, people also become indolent and don't want to endure much hardship." The shift in local people's attitudes from the traditional virtues of diligence and frugality to a more modern "hedonism" is due to the transformation of the labor market under tourism development. Under these circumstances, a host of middle-aged people who used to work outside are extremely keen to move back to their hometown and find relatively easy jobs in scenic spots. Not only did tourism resolve food and clothing problems but it also brought a steady income and a fulfilling life to locals. Some people also run and own stores to make more money. Such growth in wages and autonomy affects local people's attitudes toward work and life. In the past, local residents were often worried about food and clothing; however, tourism development has reassured many villagers and improved their lives. At the same time, people unknowingly lost the good traditions of being hardworking and frugal.

4.5. Family Values

In a traditional peasant society, villagers pay attention to their family and ancestors out of the needs of survival and development. In the past, nearly everyone stayed home with their original family until they got married. People worked or went out in teams or groups as families or political units rather than with outsiders. In the Qing dynasty, people wore long gowns, mandarin jackets, and

long pigtails as symbols of China, even when working abroad; they always dreamed of returning to their homeland and cared much about their families. They sent money home and brought back gold and jewelry during holidays. The construction of towers was closely associated with this strong family value. Most were built with the aim of protecting the lives and property of the household. Thus, local families based on blood lineage kept control of the towers before the government's exercise of eminent domain. Moreover, households agreed to vacate the towers only if the government promised that "the tower itself and the portraits of ancestors will be well protected."

> Initially, we contacted the landlords of the towers and declared the government's willingness to rent the buildings. There was no reply until we promised that the worship of ancestors in their towers can be preserved, and they agreed eventually ... An old man who settled abroad kept refusing, so I sent him a box of mooncake at Mid-Autumn Festival. He was touched when receiving the parcel; he cried and said, 'If I can be remembered by the family in this way, then why not?' By this means, he finally agreed to our proposal. ('Uncle Tan', A Kaiping government official)

Before the development of tourism, a great many young adults worked far from the villages and left behind their seniors. Later, with policy changes and surging labor demand, the amount of people deciding to stay in their hometown increased. Currently, a growing number of families live together under one roof since fewer villagers need to work outside. Now, they can more easily care for the elderly and children.

Many Majianglong villagers are ambivalent about the development of tourism. On one hand, they agree that tourism has an obvious beneficial effect on the residential environment, as evidenced by the brand-new houses and cleaner and neater streets. However, on the other hand, locals complain that the tourism company does not offer enough job opportunities. Residents in Jinjiangli Village directly voiced their unhappiness about the tourism company's failure to provide more jobs, such as cleaners and security guards. Actually, the villagers who work close to home are paid less than those who work outside. People prefer to work for the tourism company not out of the expectation of a high salary but for the stability and, more importantly, the convenience when taking care of their families.

> If the tourism company doesn't offer any jobs, I can find a job in urban area. But now I am free to choose the working place; I can take care of my children while working. It's not to say that working for tourism company is excellent, or I can be highly paid, as I could have sought a job in downtown and made much more money; it's just because I am a working parent, and it's more convenient to look after my children here. ('Aunt Fang' from Majianglong Village, a caretaker of the towers)

4.6. Interpersonal Relationships

Affected by a long-standing small-scale peasant economy, local residents used to focus solely on their own family or clan. In the early stage of tourism development, villagers often precluded outsiders from interfering in their affairs, including government officials. At the very beginning, residents in these three villages reacted against the government's proposal to be a WHS and to develop tourism. Local people were afraid that their personal interests would be damaged due to tourism exploitation. Zili villagers refused to cooperate and blocked paths with stones. People in Majianglong Village and Jinjiangli Village also diligently tried to keep government officials and specialists out of the villages in irrational ways. They put clothes around the towers to cover them up, hung banners, smashed foreign vehicles, and even splashed sewage on rural roads. Nevertheless, the villagers gradually recognized the extraordinary opportunities presented by tourism under the government's patient persuasion and they eventually accepted the idea of developing the tourism industry.

However, with the development of tourism, villagers have changed their attitude toward people outside the family. They no longer maintain contact only with their kin. Currently, following the expansion of tourism, people show more concern for fellow villagers and strive to jointly construct

a harmonious residential community, and the larger the scale of tourism development is the more local people become concerned about their contribution to the community. This change occurs mainly because many villagers realize that they must break the family barrier and unite to maximize their income. A thriving and harmonious village leads to a more prosperous tourism industry, and vice versa. This has been made most evident in Zili Village. In 2012, when the tourism company planned a rape-flower-themed activity, people in Zili Village lent 20 acres of fields for free. Everyone wanted to do good deeds for fellow villagers and contribute to the community's success. As for the other two villages, residents also expressed their desire for harmonious community relations despite sluggish tourism development. However, the degree of harmony of interpersonal relationships in Majianglong Village and Jinjiangli Village is obviously less than that in Zili Village.

> The personal relations are definitely much better than before. Nowadays, we all have enough money; we would rather play mahjong than be involved in trouble or a quarrel with someone else. ('Uncle Huang' from Zili Village)

> The community atmosphere is more friendly than previously. In the past, every man skinned his own skunk. Sometimes we may have words with our neighbors, but when something serious happens, we will put our heads together and mutually help each other. ('Uncle Guan' from Majianglong Village)

Over the long term, the development of tourism is concerned not only with personal lives but also with the unity and cooperation of the entire community. It will become stagnant if someone in the village is unwilling to work for the mutual interest. Therefore, tourism is bound to shift villagers' focus from the "nuclear family" to the "joint family" and the village. The story of "The Best Watchtower in Kaiping City—the Ruishi House" reflects this truth. It is one of the major tourist attractions in Jinjiangli Village. The "Ruishi House" is a nine-story building whose current landlord is reluctant to lease the right of use to the tourism company. It is now operated and managed by a few large families in the locality rather than the tourism company, who sell tickets priced at $1.50. As a result, the tourism company slashed their investment in Jinjiangli Village, bringing about a slowdown in the village's economic growth. Additionally, the progress of road reconstruction in Jinjiangli Village lags behind the other two villages. Although based on interviews many villagers around the tower cluster are conscious of the importance of good personal relations, some people remain focused solely on their small family.

> By and large, it's better now (after tourism development). The village councils will call a meeting if they get a plan about tourism. We can discuss it together and give air to our views. As a result, the communication among villagers has increased, and the interpersonal relationship becomes more harmonious. ('Uncle Xie' from Jinjiangli Village)

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Our findings reveal that as one of the most vital economic sectors in Zili, Majianglong, and Jinjiangli villages, tourism exerts a substantial influence on sociocultural transformation. In other words, tourism has played the role of an external force that has changed the traditional values and lifestyles of residents at tourism destinations; this finding is consistent with previous studies [5,6,12,15,50,53,56]. However, these sociocultural changes are unnoticeable until the tourism industry develops to a certain degree. The change in the social culture entails both quantitative and qualitative alterations, which undergo three stages. During the early years of tourism, the traditional socioculture actively influences the progress of development. Once the tourism industry grows to a certain degree, traditional values and lifestyles will 'try' to find an equilibrium point of development. Ultimately, as tourism becomes a mature industry, a brand-new socioculture will appear. All three stages can be seen in the three villages in Kaiping.

In this process, a collision of old and new social culture emerged. This collision was evident in visible changes in residents' perceptions and behavior, and its extent varied from village to village. If we suppose that people's values and lifestyles in the three villages were similar at the beginning, then we find that the intensity of sociocultural changes depended on the extent to which these villages were subject to tourism [69]. For example, people in Zili Village were the first to be aware of the negative impact that resisting tourism development had on their community—that it was a lose–lose situation. After repeated negotiations, residents accepted the proposal of developing tourism and actively cooperated with the local authority's request for reconstruction, maintenance, and the formation of tourism company. In pace with the increasing development of tourism and the increasing amount of tourists, the local people tasted the benefits of economic growth. They awoke to the power and privilege to affect decision-making processes and the compensation system. Villagers united to strive for their common interests and successfully impelled a tourism company to change the contract clauses about bonuses in December 2007. Similarly, residents in Majianglong Village and Jinjiangli Village elected a leader to deal with the tourism company regarding bonuses. The agreement finally pressed onward after repeated bargaining.

The case study indicates that, due to changes in the economy brought by the exploitation of tourism, local people's values and lifestyles have changed significantly. The more tourism developed, the more apparent these changes were. This can be seen in different areas. Tourism adds new dynamics to traditional rural life in villages, broadens villagers' horizons [33], reduces the survival pressure of residents [59], and improves personal relationships between villagers. People place less stress on money and know how to enjoy their lives. Family bonds loosened, and the political and cultural bonds tightened. This transformation is exemplified by villagers' growing solicitude for the tourism company and increased enthusiasm for developing tourism. Villagers came together to build a community characterized by equality, harmony, and amity. They also benefit directly from the improvement of public facilities and equipment brought about by tourism development. For example, the villages are now equipped with cleaners and 24-hour inspection security, which has undoubtedly improved the local security. Additionally, tourism growth endows villagers with modern concepts, a contractual spirit, and law-abiding consciousness. Today, local people are playing a more active role as participants or even decision makers in the tourism industry. They are able to give voice to their own feelings and safeguard their rights and interests in a rational way. For example, when the villagers realized that the original contract they had with the tourism company was unreasonable, they tried to modify the contents through negotiations after the expiration of the contract. The new values and norms were substituted for the conventional ones under the new circumstances. These sociocultural changes in World Heritage sites in China have become increasingly obvious as tourism has developed.

It should be recognized that tourism also has negative sociocultural impacts on the World Heritage sites in China. On one hand, in well-developed villages like Zili Village, tourism induces "hedonism" and "indolence" as people's life stresses lighten and many villagers pursue effortless gains. They will continue enjoying such unearned lives without striving. On the other hand, residents in less developed villages such as Majianglong Village and Jinjiangli Village often suffer from discontent about the labor division and wealth distribution, which may wreck the harmonious relationship between neighbors [16].

Our findings reveal different sociocultural impacts of tourism on various resident groups in the Kaiping Diaolou and Villages World Heritage Site. Elucidating upon differences between villages can assist local authorities develop more rational ways to maintain more sustainable tourism development. Hence, future research can focus on how to maximize the positive effects of tourism and mitigate the negative ones on these three villages in Kaiping or other WHSs to help governments formulate more resident-friendly policies. Local government should be aware of what needs to be done if they want tourism to be sustainable and inhabitants to live better lives.

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