Qualitative Analysis of Residents' Perceptions of Tourism Impacts on Historic Districts: A Case Study of Nanluoguxiang in Beijing, China

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Abstract

Tourism is becoming a viable and important economic development strategy in the regeneration of historic districts. Nonetheless, tourism may bring negative impacts to the local communities. As a result, local residents' perceptions and attitudes toward tourism development are critical to the sustainable development of tourism. This study follows a qualitative research approach, attempting to examine the relationship between local residents' social-demographic features and their perceptions of tourism development. The framework is applied to the case of Nanluoguxiang in Beijing, China, which is a typical tourism destination benefiting from its traditional urban forms. Data from 24 in-depth interviewees are analyzed using word-frequency analysis through text encoding. The results reveal that the cultural perception of the residents promoted place attachment, which was associated with impact perception, and together, they determined behavioral demand. The stronger the cultural perception of the residents is and the stronger their place attachment is, the more the negative impact of tourism is perceived and the stronger their demand for cultural protection is. Long-term residents, those with occupations unrelated to tourism, and those who live adjacent to the tourism attractions perceived more negative impacts.

Keywords: historic district; residents' perceptions; word-frequency analysis; text encoding; Nanluoguxiang

1. Introduction

With economic development and social transformation, people travel more frequently. The development of tourism improves the living standard of the residents of the tourism destinations but also has numerous negative impacts. For example, the arrival of a large number of tourists affects the peaceful living environment of the local residents, and leads to conflicts between heterogeneity culture and folk customs (Joseph and Maiwa, 2011). These problems are particularly prominent in historic districts.

With the development of tourism, historic districts become tourism destinations. However, a historic district is not a tourism product in the full sense because a considerable number of individuals reside in such district as relatively independent, stable social groups with their own cultural traditions and lifestyles (Anglin, 2015). A long-term foreign cultural invasion may cause changes in social structure and social networks or even the lifestyle of a historic district. The intervention of tourism in a historic district may cause conflicts between the residents as "insiders" and the tourists as "outsiders", which results in a contradiction between the continuation of the traditional lifestyle and the need for social development (Atkočiūnienė, 2009).

Generally, the government's intention, economic development, and industrial prosperity are emphasized in the tourism development of historic districts. However, the perceptions and attitudes of the local residents are typically neglected. While promoting the objective revival of historic districts, tourism development also causes adverse effects, such as spatial homogeneity, commercial modernization, and the dilution of traditional qualities (Shan et al., 2010). In this process, multiple stakeholders, including residents, tourists, governmental agencies, and developers etc., are intertwined. Therefore, in tourism development, coordination and balance regarding the demands of the main objects and subjects of historic districts are

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required. In the planning and development of historic districts, the inheritance and continuation of substance, the historic environment, and tradition and culture should be considered (Maruyama, 2015). In particular, the interference of tourism development with the social environment should receive more attention (Park and Byeong, 2015). Based on a clear analysis of resident perceptions of tourism impact, planning guidance can be provided to develop a strong tourism-community connection.

Currently, the development of a historic district in China often results in the loss of the district's residential function and over-commercialization of traditional folk crafts such that the sense of community identity of the district's residents generally declines. As one of Time's (USA) 2009 "top 25 must-visit attractions in Asia", Nanluoguxiang in Beijing has recently encountered a number of problems. Cultural industries have been replaced by restaurants and entertainment businesses. The "Hutong" culture and old living traditions have increasingly weakened. The daily life of residents is interfered with by tourists, and the indigenous inhabitants have continued to move out. To a significant extent, these issues have affected residents' support for tourism development and the experience of the tourists who visit the area.

In this study, field interviews were conducted in Nanluoguxiang to reveal the conflicts that may exist between the lives of the residents and tourism development and to investigate the expression of emotion by the residents. In this manner, the deeper internal demands of these residents were examined 1) to determine countermeasures and provide suggestions regarding development planning, 2) to maintain the sense of place attachment, 3) to improve the happiness index of the residents, and 4) to promote community-building and sustainable tourism development.

2. Literature

Indigenous people refers to the population that resides in a particular area for generations. Such individuals possess a special cultural and social identity and are most likely to generate a sense of place attachment and belonging with respect to their residential area (Juan and Linda, 2006). Shan et al. (2010) argues that the stronger the place attachment, dependence, and identity of individuals are, the more these individuals will be concerned regarding local development and construction and the more actively they will participate in local social activity. Relevant research can help planners and designers understand the special significance and value of a specific place for its residents, which can guide the planning and development of the tourism destination in a manner that maintains the positive attitude of residents concerning tourism development (Saarinen and Maria, 2010). Yang and Ying (2015) investigated the attitude of the Chinese who live in historic alleys towards tourism development and found that the length of their residence and their perception of tourism's intrusiveness affect their sense of place attachment.

Although tourists generally visit an attraction for a short period, they form a large new social group as an entity and intervene in the life of the residents in various ways that cause their behavior to change. From the perspective of social exchange, this social-space interaction mechanism converts tourism from an embedded space activity into endogenous change in the socio-culture or lifestyle of the historic district (Choi and Murray, 2010). The tourism impact reflects the social interaction of tourists and residents in the spatial environment of the attraction, i.e., the social exchange between the residents and visitors that occurs at the tourism attraction. This exchange process is one of tourism impact or attraction conversion. Because of the asymmetry of the tourism impact, changes to the attraction, which are also changes to the living environment of the residents, typically involve an unmatched public cost and the individual interests of the residents and thus potential social conflicts (Mindy and Edward, 2016).

To a large extent, the perceptions and attitudes of residents towards tourism development represent feedback on the tourism impact. Numerous case studies demonstrate that the perceptions and attitudes of residents towards tourism are highly correlated to development policies, economic efficiency, facility improvements, and environmental damage (Sharma, 2015; Stumpf and Nancy, 2015). The attitudes of the residents also indicate that they are an economic entity. In addition, their attitudes imply underlying behavioral tendencies, which generate a specific intervention in geographical space. Several scholars have proposed that the subjects of tourism development should ensure the democratic right of the residents to freely express their attitudes (Ming, 2016; Won and Shim, 2003). Their views could serve as a reference in tourism planning and decision-making and guide active interventions, including the protection of tourism resources, the promotion of traditional culture, and the management of tourism projects.

Most previous studies are based on large-scale surveys. A programmed questionnaire is not conducive with respect to residents freely expressing their opinions and pays insufficient attention to differences among the identities of residents. In addition, it does not reveal the internal relationships of the characteristics of the residents and their sense of place attachment to the attitude towards tourism development.

To communicate with residents in-depth using semi-open interviews, this study considers the residents to be individuals with differences. The freely expressed perceptions and attitudes of the residents were recorded and converted to text transcripts. Subsequently, the transcripts were examined using
word-frequency analysis and text encoding, as is common in information retrieval, text mining, and thinking comparison. Based on the keyword frequency analysis, the attitude differences and their causes for different residents were directly determined to fully understand the differences among resident perceptions regarding the tourism impact and cultural demands. In this manner, optimized and targeted strategies of tourism development could be provided.

3. Methods

3.1 Study Location

Nanluoguxiang is located in the crossing area east of Beijing’s central axis north of Gulou East Street and south of Green Street. The alley has a width of 8 metres and a length of 787 metres. The north-south main street and eight east-west crossing alleys (Hutong) form a fishbone street pattern. The alleys were constructed during the same period as the establishment of the capital of the Yuan Dynasty, a bustling historical period. The neighborhood is one of Beijing’s oldest and China’s only well-preserved traditional residential area in the form of a chessboard with an alley-courtyard pattern from the Yuan Dynasty (Lu, 2007). It is large and of the highest grade, and represents a rich resource. The area is currently listed among the top 25 areas of the old Beijing city to be protected. In this area, a number of stylish mansions and colourful houses are found. These buildings are massive and deep. They accommodate a total of 19 cultural relic protection units. In addition, more than ten types of intangible cultural heritage with strong ethnic characteristics are found there, including folk instrumental music, arts and crafts.

Regarding the current social characteristics, the community of the crossing area that contains Nanluoguxiang covers approximately 0.7 km², with a registered household population of approximately 40,000 and an actual resident population of approximately 24,000. The immigrant population is approximately 6,000, and the population aged 60 years or older accounts for a quarter of the total.

The buildings in this area are primarily self-managed housing of the organizations and directly managed publically owned housing (Lu, 2013). Although a certain number of the buildings are shops for culture-related businesses, residence remains the main land use. According to estimates, of the over 200 businesses in the area, the food and beverage category accounts for approximately 40%, souvenir and retail sales for 35%, and cultural industries for 25%.

Since the new tourism development plan was promulgated in 2007, the cultural and creative district of Nanluoguxiang has become a must-visit attraction for visitors to Beijing. However, during the past two years, the area has exhibited excessive commercialization, an overload flow of people, the chaotic mixing of residential and tourist areas and other problems, which has caused widespread concern.

3.2 Sampling, Data Collection and Analyzing Methods

This study is based on qualitative analysis and Steiner interview questions (Steinar, 2013). Based on the questionnaire literature, a number of closed questions for scoring and multiple choice were integrated and organized as five dimensions: general information, cultural perception, place attachment, tourism impact perception, and behavior demands of the residents (Table 1.). According to the actual circumstances of Nanluoguxiang, more-detailed interview topics were designed for each of the various dimensions. From November to December 2015, the authors visited Nanluoguxiang three times to conduct open interviews with 24 local residents using a prepared outline (Table 2.). The interviews lasted half an hour or longer on average. During the interviews, the residents were allowed to freely express their thoughts by the guiding questions. The full interviews were recorded and converted to text transcripts, which subsequently served as the basis for word-frequency and text-coding analysis.

In selecting the variables for analysis, in addition to considering whether the occupation of the interviewed residents was related to tourism, based on the development process and cultural history of Nanluoguxiang, three periods with cut-off points of 1949 (the founding of P. R. China) and 1978 (the reform and opening of China) were assigned to group the residents with respect to when their residence in Nanluoguxiang began. Thus, another independent variable was introduced to distinguish the identity of the residents. In addition, considering the unique local fishbone street pattern, the spatial position of each interviewee’s residence was included in the analytical framework to resolve the spatial distribution of the resident perceptions and behavior from a geographical perspective.

Thus, the three analysis variables (occupation, years of residence, and residence location) became the basis for selecting the interviewees. And the number of respondents for each group of individuals should satisfy a sufficiently large sample size. In addition, the demographic profile of the respondents must be consistent with the characteristics of the objective situation. A quarter of respondents have lived here with their families since before 1949; nearly 30% of the others are the latest group. As for their professions, a quarter of respondents are engaged in occupations relevant to tourism. Detailed information on the respondents, the distribution of the residence locations (Fig.1.), the distribution of the number of years of residence, and the occupation distribution are provided below.

In the data processing, first, Rost and Tagxedo software programs were used to perform the segmentation and word-frequency analysis for the manually input text transcript to obtain the lateral
Then, in a longitudinal investigation, text encoding was conducted using Atlas software to investigate the internal mechanism for the differences among the residents with respect to the four dimensions of perception, attachment, attitude, and demand.

### Table 1. Interview Outline

| A. General information          | Education level | Occupation | Native place |
| A. General information          | Period of residence | Why here | Location of residence |
| B. Cultural perception          | Street configuration | Anecdoté | Famous courtyard |
| B. Cultural perception          | Folk culture | Social custom | Historical evolution |
| C. Place attachment            | Convenient to work | Schools nearby | Hospitals nearby |
| C. Place attachment            | Cohesive neighborhood | Feel happy | Feel sense of belonging |
| D. Tourism impact perception    | Congestion | Pollution | Noise |
| D. Tourism impact perception    | Impact on tradition | Insecurity | Better infrastructure |
| E. Behavior demands             | Preserve culture | Share benefits | Control tourists scale |
| E. Behavior demands             | Have a peaceful life | Better facility | Participate in decisions |

### Table 2. Information of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years of family residence</th>
<th>Residence location</th>
<th>Relative location to Nanluoguxiang</th>
<th>Occupation's relevance to tourism</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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</table>

differences among the attitudes of the different groups.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1 Word-frequency Analysis

(1) Years of residence

The core factor of the analysis conducted in this study is the difference in the years of residence. The three groups of residents, i.e., those whose residence began prior to 1949, during the period 1949-1978, and after 1978, were labelled Groups A, B, and C, respectively. The segmentation and word-frequency
statistical analyses were performed based on the text manuscripts of the audio data, and the descriptive terms for the residents were distributed among the four dimensions of cultural perception, place attachment, affection attitude, and behavior demand and represented by different forms, respectively. The five words in each dimension that occurred with the highest frequency were as follows.

For the residents who have lived in this area since before the founding of the P. R. China, words such as "alley", "history", "we", and "here" occurred frequently, which reflects a strong sense of cultural identity and place attachment. Words associated with negative perceptions, such as "crowded", "noisy", "garbage", and "insecurity", occurred frequently, which corresponds to the ideas of control and culture mentioned in the demand dimension. (Fig.2.)

The residents who moved in between 1949 and 1978 directly experienced the demolition that was conducted for street reconstruction and tourism development. A number of individuals originally from other locations were assigned to the area. To varying degrees, they experienced the xenophobia of the local residents and exhibited a relatively weak perception of the local cultural experience. Environmental pollution and increasing prices were the main factors expressed in their impact perception. Additionally, they hoped that the new tourism plan would provide them economic benefits. (Fig.3.)

After reform and opening up, due to convenient transportation and the advantage of the strong cultural environment, many individuals decided to rent and reside in this area. Their perception of cultural protection and community satisfaction was stronger than that of the residents of the previous group. A number of tenants obtained economic benefits by engaging in tourism-related occupations. Accordingly, they expected better planning and management measures to promote this area as a business card for Beijing, thus attracting more visitors. (Fig.4.)

Therefore, the residents with the longest period of residence exhibited a better understanding of the area and a stronger cultural perception. They had strong place attachment, with a strong sense of ownership and belonging. Because they were used to a quiet, relaxed lifestyle, their attitudes towards tourism development were mostly negative, with a strong demand to control
the scale of development and to emphasize culture. The tenants who moved in after reform and opening displayed a more positive attitude regarding cultural protection and tourism development, with a stronger sense of belonging compared with the second group. There were a number of exceptions. One elderly man who worked in the countryside and mountainous areas like other educated urban youth during the Cultural Revolution complained regarding the restricted living area and lacked a strong sense of place attachment, possibly because he lived close to the main street and was more negatively affected.

(2) Occupation
In addition to the impact of the years of residence, whether the residents were engaged in tourism-related occupations and thus could reap the benefits of tourism development had a substantial impact on the resident perception of tourism. Four groups of opposed words were placed on the diagonal of a radar chart, and the frequency of the words mentioned by the residents based on their occupations was analyzed using dichotomy statistics (Fig.5.). The results reveal that the individuals engaged in tourism-related occupations mentioned more positive words, had a welcoming attitude towards visitors, and did not complain regarding the crowds and noise caused by tourism development. Instead, they considered the increased flow of people to be an opportunity to develop their own businesses. The responses of the individuals who were not engaged in the tourism industry were relatively negative. They believed that current tourism development and the number of visitors had exceeded the area’s capacity and adversely affected the cultural heritage and the preservation of the traditional lifestyle. These results suggest that tourism planning for a historic district should take community participation into account, thus enabling local residents to share the benefits of development.

For example, the famous paper-cutting artist Little Chivalrous Expert rented and moved to a location in Chaodou Alley (one of the east-west alleys) shortly after the introduction of his cultural and creative business in Nanluoguxiang. He established a paper-cutting studio, earned an income by his art creation, and hired apprentices. In the Nanluoguxiang setting, his skills became valuable, and he was pleased that many Chinese and foreign tourists were interested in the art of paper-cutting. As a beneficiary of Nanluoguxiang’s tourism development, Little Chivalrous Expert had a strong sense of participation in future tourism planning. He indicated that the proportion of the catering industry in Nanluoguxiang had been increasing in recent years, which seemed to deviate from the original intention of the planning for this historical and cultural district. He also suggested that the alleys on both sides should be appropriately developed in the future, which would not only disperse the crowd on the main street but also provide additional opportunities to the business owners in the side alleys.

(3) Distance
Based on residence location, the residents were divided into three groups: close to the main street, in the middle, and far from the main street. The word-frequency distribution was as follows (Fig.6.).

The frequencies of "noise", "pollution", and "rising prices" exhibited a significant decrease with increasing distance from the main street, which is consistent with the crowded and busy environment of the main street and the slow, quiet character of the side alleys. In addition, all three groups of residents displayed a very strong perception of "congestion". Moreover, the issues of insecurity and improvement in facilities were not correlated with residence location.

Interestingly, there were more overall negative comments by the residents to the west of the main street than by those to the east. Closer investigation found that the mobile vendors distributed among a few streets to the west of the main street occupied the outdoor-activity space of the residents. In addition, the Shichahai Hutong Tour passes through this area, which exacerbates the crowding of the streets. In contrast, the main street's east side is less developed. The alleys are clean with neat intersections, and the lives of those who reside away from the main street are not interfered with in a significant manner.

4.2 Text Encoding
To investigate the internal mechanism of the differences among the four dimensions of cultural perception, place attachment, impact perception, and behavior demand of the residents, text encoding was performed (using Atlas software) based on the word-
frequency analysis. According to the procedures for extracting the key information of the interviews, integrating and re-naming the recurring words, establishing the links between different codes, and constructing a network diagram, the contents on four levels and their interaction were obtained.

According to the resident responses, their perception of local history and culture was focused on familiarity with neighborhood development and changes as well as the local historic home and traditional folk culture. Thus, in tourism development, key buildings and the overall atmosphere should be protected to preserve the authenticity of the historical district. (Fig.7.)

Regarding demands, the residents urgently wished to control the number of tourists and to protect local cultural characteristics. They also expected the government to strengthen the management of public security, environmental remediation, and industrial restructuring, thereby not only improving the living environment but also providing a better tourism experience for visitors. (Fig.8.)

After clarifying the connotations of cultural perception and behavior demands, these dimensions can be combined with place attachment and impact perception to establish the associations among the four dimensions using software-generated coding links. In addition, the constitution of place attachment

and impact perception with their internal logical relationships can be established. (Fig.9.)

Overall, the cultural perception of the residents promoted place attachment, which was associated with impact perception, and together, they determined behavior demands.

Specifically, place attachment resulted from the convenience of medical care, schooling, recreation, and other aspects, including the favouring of traditional culture. In contrast, traffic congestion, environmental pollution, and decreased security constituted the negative impact perception. Subway traffic and that of the main street was heavy, which resulted in congestion and an increase in the number of vehicles. Pollution (garbage and noise) was on an offensive level, and the increasingly diverse population had resulted in decreased security. The negative impact of tourism development perceived by the residents could be summarized as the living space being occupied and the peaceful lifestyle being disrupted. Such problems are common in historic districts and must be resolved by intervention with better planning.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism development. Due to the area's particular historical development and the unique street pattern, the residents were grouped primarily according to their length of residence and occupational characteristics as well as an additional spatial factor: residence location. A text transcript was obtained through in-depth interviews. Different perceptions and attitudes of residents towards tourism development and the associated internal mechanism were investigated using word-frequency analysis based on text coding.

The authors draw four main conclusions. (1) The stronger the cultural perception and the sense of belonging to the area among the local residents were, the more strongly residents expressed the negative impact of tourism and the more strongly they demanded cultural protection. (2) The long-term residents displayed a strong sense of place attachment, with a strongly negative attitude towards tourism development. The residents with a weaker cultural perception and place attachment exhibited less motivation to participate in community activities.

Fig.7. The Contents of Cultural Perception

Fig.8. The Contents of Behavior Demands

Fig.9. The Entire Structural Model
The residents who appreciated history and traditional culture wished that tourism development and cultural preservation could be implemented simultaneously. (3) Residents with tourism-related occupations and who benefited from tourism development presented more positive attitudes and wished to participate in tourism planning and development. (4) The negative perception regarding tourism development was related to the residence location and the specific property ownership. If the living space was occupied by others, a strong negative attitude was expressed by the residents.

Hyun (2010) pointed out that the conservation and commercialization of Nanluoguxiang presented a singular focus on attracting tourists and businesses, while the welfare of the local residents has been largely neglected. The authors' study further verified their finding, with the majority of residents expressing negative attitudes towards tourism development. In fact, the lack of residents' participation in neighborhood planning and decision-making processes may contribute to the incoordination between local communities and tourism development.

Some policy insights can be provided. The local residents should be considered as the area's real owners. Their active participation is important to further improve the local tourism development. The neighborhood's construction should pay more attention to maintain the traditional lifestyle, improve infrastructure, and promote a stronger sense of cultural perception and place attachment among the residents. The local characteristics such as the alley ways and historical buildings should be preserved and strengthened, which in turn would provide a more authentic historical and cultural experience for tourists. The composition of the area's businesses should be actively adjusted with policy guidance to increase the interaction with the local characteristics. To avoid over-commercialization, the number of restaurants and entertainment businesses should be carefully controlled. Local authorities should promote public participation through organizing design charrettes and workshops with the local communities, and the demands of residents should be carefully considered in order to provide actual welfare benefits to residents along with tourism development, such as increasing housing space and enriching their social lives. In addition, management and remediation should be strengthened, and appropriate traveller behavior should be advocated to minimize the negative effects of tourism development and to create a quiet, peaceful living environment for the residents.

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