

CHAPTER I



INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Background to the Question

Tourism, “the largest industry in the world” (Scheyvens, 2002: 4), as an important way to boost economic development, has been widely promoted by governments in most countries. Scheyvens describes tourism as a “key strategy for development” (2002: 3). China is not an exception. Since the establishment of its open-door policy, the Chinese government has been promoting its tourism industry, which is considered to contribute to economic growth together with the development of other industries. Such an approach, however, has been criticized by a great number of development theorists.

This thesis will analyze the impacts brought about by the tourism development in Dali Old Town, in the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province, China, which attracts tourists with its natural beauty, pleasant weather and Bai ethnic culture. There are development researchers who, following the critical perspective, have written about negative impacts that tourism has made especially on local ethnic culture (see Bai, 2001). As outsiders, their points of view have been made based on their interpretations of such influences and impacts. Not many studies have taken a close look at how the local people, especially the grass-root Bai view the influences from tourism.

Tourism has stimulated the local economy for the past 20 years, and by looking at local individuals’ perceptions towards tourism, much positive evidence emerges. Instead of rushing into even more criticism, my research will look at what perceptions local individuals in Dali have concerning tourism development, by focusing on its influence on family economy and

on Bai culture.

Hypothesis

The promotion of tourism development by the government that brings about modernization has both positive and negative impacts on Bai culture in Dali Old Town. However, the individual perceptions by local people are more negative.

Scope of Study

This thesis studies tourism development in remote and less developed regions with a high density of ethnic minority populations. It focuses on the meaning of development to local individuals.

Purpose and Objectives of Study

The meaning of 'development' tends to be perceived differently by different groups of people i.e. the local individuals and by academics, and also perceived differently by the same group at different times. To lay out such an argument, the objectives of the thesis include:

1. Analyze government tourism promotion policy and examine main tourism attractions in Dali, Yunnan, China.
2. Discuss the major 'traditional' Bai culture in Dali Old Town, and analyze the impact from the recent development of tourism.
3. Investigate attitudes/perceptions of local individuals in the Dali Old Town, towards the above-mentioned impact.

Research Questions

1. How has the government been promoting tourism development in Dali?
2. What is Bai culture in Dali Old Town, Yunnan Province, China?
3. What is the impact of tourism development on Bai culture in Dali Old Town?

4. What are the perceptions of local individuals concerning the impact on Bai culture of tourism development?

Research Methodology

Qualitative research method was used. The first step was to do library and Internet research. The Chulalongkorn University Library was mainly used to search literature on development theory, tourism and development/tourism-culture relationships. Government documents on development, particularly on tourism development and promotion were searched in the Yunnan Provincial Library and the Dali Prefecture Library. Documents on Dali Bai history, culture and attractiveness were found in the prefecture library, Dali government divisions, the Dali Travel Group and some local travel agencies.

Face-to-face individual in-depth interviews and focus group interviews were used for the second step. 40 persons were interviewed in Dali Old Town in June 2005, half of them of Bai ethnicity, and the other half of Han background (the majority Chinese). These local interviewees were chosen based on different education level, gender and profession (including manager, government staff, nurse, lawyer, public prosecutor, self-employer, farmer, student, housewife, businessman, worker, teacher etc.). 10 of them were above 50 years old, 10 were between 30 and 50, 10 were young adults between 20 and 29, and 10 were youth aged 9 to 19 years. Interviews were about their individual perceptions on tourism development, its impact and its relation with Bai culture.

Observation was used during the research, to describe changes over time, and to see if local individuals were happy with their lives, and with the changes. Photos were taken to give a concrete image of the place, the culture and some changes as a result of tourism.

Basic Concepts

Development

Development has different meanings and its meaning changes over time as well. In modern economics and development thinking, economic growth is often regarded as the core meaning of development, although development does not simply refer to an economic process. Structural change and living standard improvements are also often emphasized. Chambers' (1997) definition is: "development is a multidimensional process leading to what can be described succinctly as 'good change'" (cited by Scheyvens, 2002: 3). Development should be embracing values of self-sufficiency, self-determination, self-reliance and empowerment, and geared to meeting poor peoples' needs, by understanding the dependency and lack of power of many Third World countries in the world. (Mowforth and Munt, 2003). The Human Development Report of UNDP (2002: 13) contains a broad core definition: "Human development is about people, about expanding their choices to lead lives they value".

Tourism

"Tourism can be defined as the act of travel for the purpose of recreation, and the provision of services for this act. A tourist is someone who travels at least fifty miles from home, as defined by the World Tourism Organization (a United Nations body)."

(Wikipedia, 2005)

"Tourism is a service based industry comprising a number of tangible and intangible components. The tangible elements include transport, foods and beverages, tours, souvenirs and accommodation, while the intangible elements involve education, culture, adventure or simply escape and relaxation."

(Parks Victoria, 2004)

Culture

As quoted by Reisinger and Turner (2003: 5&8), culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 1924: 1), and different cultures can be

referred to as differences between groups of people who do things and perceive the world differently (Potter, 1989). Cultural differences are obvious (Wallerstein, 1990).

Tourism, economic gains, and culture

“Tourism plays a significant role in eleven out of the world’s twelve poorest countries, in half of low-income countries and in almost all middle-income countries. As such it can, under certain conditions, be a useful and effective tool for development and combating poverty, as it can contribute to the ‘redevelopment’ of fragile rural and urban spaces. The economic gains resulting from tourism development have often benefited the cultural and natural heritage by justifying the allocation of significant public resources for enhancement programmes” (UNESCO 2005: 3).

“Tourism has become a major economic activity within developing countries, often contributing more foreign currency than traditional primary commodity exports” (Sinclair 1998: 1). Culture has impacts on tourism policy, planning, development, management and marketing, while tourism has become an important approach to promote cultural relations, international cooperation, and economic sustainability (Reisinger and Turner, 2003: xi).

Time Frame

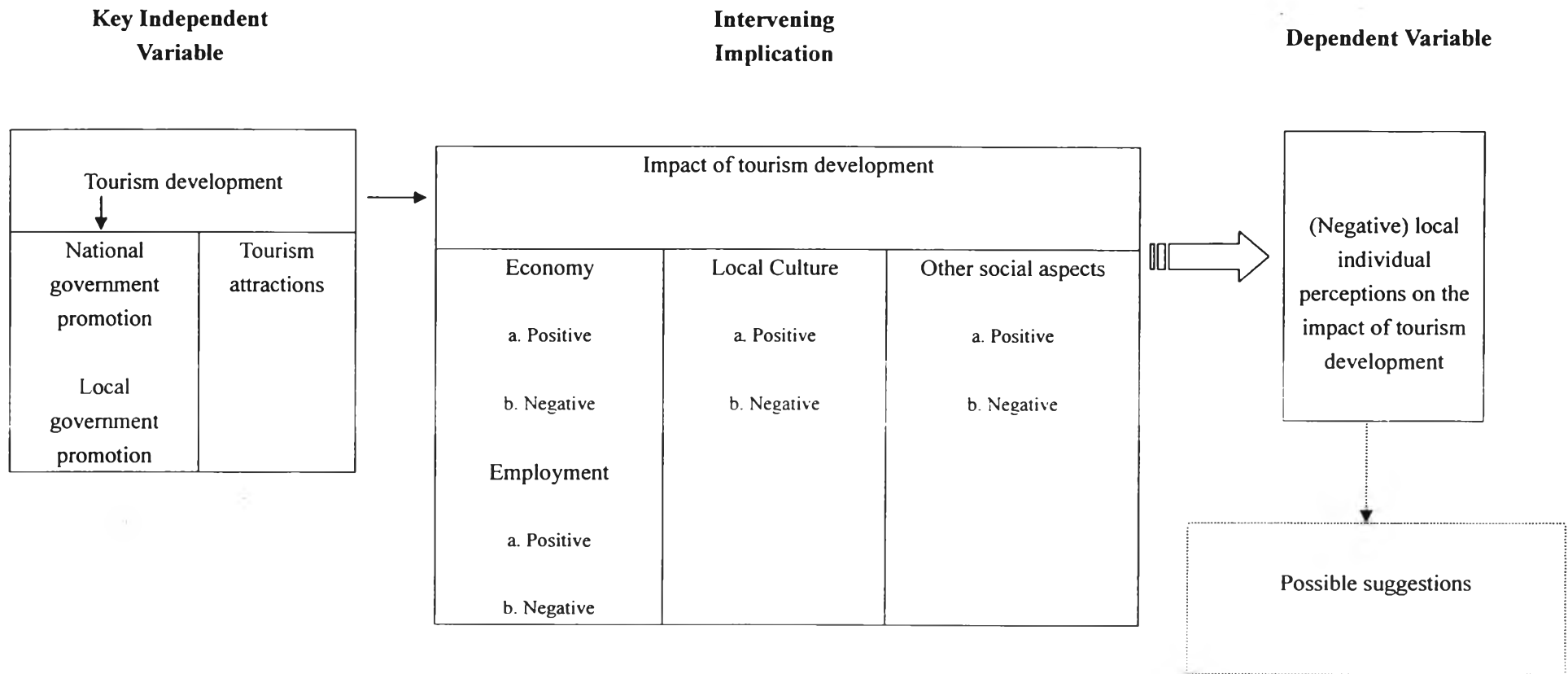
The starting time of Dali tourism promotion was from 1982 after the State Council of China listed the city of Dali in the first group of the National Historical Cultural Heritage Towns.

Conceptual Model, see chart 1.1 on page 6.

Keywords

Tourism and development, government promotion, Bai culture, impact, changes, local perceptions.

1.2 CONCEPTUAL MODEL





1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

We are now in a “traveling age”. “The past few decades have seen a steady expansion of tourism activity throughout the world” (Johnson and Thomas, 1992: 1). People are moving, within and across communities, provinces, and countries. “The growth of tourism demand has been fuelled in part by a combination of growth in income and increase in leisure time permitted by, in the earlier part of the twentieth century, increases in paid holiday time and free weekends” (Ryan, 1991: 14). In recent decades, international tourism has also grown substantially, with technological improvements, rising living standards and broader processes of globalization leading to rapid increases in visitor numbers (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). According to Harrison, international tourism is the third largest sector in world trade, which together with domestic tourism, account for 12 percent of world GNP (Harrison, 1992: 4). Globalization makes mobility easier, increases it and relies on it. Some argue that tourism is now a way of life in a globalized world (Franklin, 2003: 10). Tourism is now increasingly considered to be linked to national and international development.

In the First Meeting of the UNESCO/UNITWIN Network (2005), tourism’s primary objectives and priorities were given as: “in particular in economically fragile zones, creating jobs, increasing financial flows and maintaining or creating services. This mission is enhanced and complemented by the sustainable development strategy, with its focus on the preservation and resuscitation of natural and cultural heritage. Sustainable tourism strategies are in general ones which respect cultural diversity, protect heritage and contribute to local development.”

How are such objectives and such priorities to be achieved? What are the relationships between tourism and various other aspects of development, such as the economy, and culture? These are questions, which have been researched for the last few decades. In the following paragraphs, some of the research literature will be reviewed.

Tourism and Economy

As the “largest industry in the world” (Scheyvens, 2002; Milne and Ateljevic, 2001), “there can be no denying that tourism is a major global economic force. World tourism GDP is forecast to increase in real terms by 3.0 percent per annum in the decade to 2010. As a result, the industry’s share of world GDP will rise from 10.5 percent in 1990 to 11.4 percent by the end of 2005. In the same period, employment is expected to grow at 2.6 percent per annum. This equates to creation of over 5.5 million jobs per year over the first decade of the new century” (WTO, 2000; WTTC, 2000, quoted by Milne and Ateljevic, 2001:371).

Ryan (1991: 65) argues: “tourism has been identified as one of the fastest growing industries in the world”. It has been identified as a means of generating employment and income in the economies both of developed and developing countries. He points out that many developing countries such as Gambia in West Africa have put tourism as a major component of their to the economic strategy. He also mentions that tourism has been seen as an important approach of urban renewal in decaying waterfront and inner city areas in North America and Europe. Scheyvens (2002) supports her argument by saying that tourism is extremely important to the economic development of many Third World countries. The economic benefits generated by tourism include foreign exchange earnings, employment opportunities and external investment. Wen (1998) also supports this by providing examples that by considering both its direct and indirect economic influence, tourism has undoubtedly become a major industry in Chir.a.

Cater (1995: 214) says that tourism can bring definite benefits and help to reduce inequality between rich and poor in Third World countries. Milne and Ateljevic (2001: 374) argue: “indeed, tourism is often seen as a key element that can enable communities devastated by economic restructuring to regain and enhance their economic foothold in regional and national economies.”

Sinclair (1998) mentions that tourism development has created more working opportunities for women. Harrison believes tourism increases employment that can be divided into direct, indirect and induced employment:

Employment arising directly from tourism – for example, in hotels – may be relatively little, and such establishments also cater for at least some local residents, perhaps playing a key role in the country's class structure. Indirect employment will be created in other sectors of the economy which nonetheless do not depend on tourism for their existence. Taxis and other forms of public transport, restaurants, bars and retail outlets, theatres, cinemas and other places of entertainment, as well as a country's arts and crafts, fall into this category... Finally, induced employment is that which arises from an increased general demand for goods and services which has been promoted by an expansion in tourist expenditure.

(Harrison, 1992: 14)

There are also arguments about the negative influences that tourism has on the economy.

Milne and Ateljevic (2001) argue that tourism brings the problem of uneven development. "As visitor numbers rise and incorporation into the global tourism system increases, local industry structures soon become characterized by overseas or local elite ownership." Tourism is also described as consumerism in a globalising modernity (Franklin, 2003: 26; Holden, 2000). Peck and Lepie (1989) argue that tourism has consequences on land and property prices.

Sinclair (1998) argues that much of the tourism employment in the accommodation and catering sectors is on seasonal and/or part-time base. Therefore, the employment opportunity created by tourism is only temporary and sporadic. Gender is another problem in tourism employment both in developing and developed countries, as most of the top jobs go to men while women undertake lower paid, seasonal jobs.

Tourism and Culture

Attitudes towards the relationship between tourism and culture have also been ambivalent. With evidences from numerous assessments, both Fagence (2003) and Harrison (1992) explain that tourism development has positive and negative impact on local communities and their culture. While other studies demonstrate it is potentially harmful by trivializing culture, Fagence (2003) argues that many studies purport that tourism can increase the level of the intrinsic value of the local culture. UNESCO's statement echoes such argument:

Indeed, the tourism economy maintains a direct relationship with the land or territory, the place where culture and cultural diversity are expressed. The various facets of territorial heritage (human, natural, climatic, historical, etc...) constitute the image, attractiveness, positioning and production of the tourism industry. It is through this territory that the tourist travels, produces and consumes. The diverse and multiple territorial actors (public and private, small and large) therefore contribute to the tourism industry. The tourism economy thus raises more acutely than other industries the question of its positive and negative impact on the environment and local populations, as well as its cultural and economic repercussions.

(UNESCO, 2005: 3)

Some have built their arguments based on the positive relationship between tourism and culture.

Tourism is central to modernity, socially, culturally, politically, morally, technologically and economically, and tourism and travel have always been tied into modernity (Harrison, 1992; Franklin, 2003). Franklin also argues that "tourism produces a unique form of social bond between fellow travelers called *communitas* (strangers who happen to have in common the fact that they are in some way traveling or 'on holiday' together); equally, many tourists have stable and long-term relationships with particular places and are less easy to cast as indifferent outsiders; tourism has also had beneficial unintended consequences, on indigenous

cultures and even ‘nature’” (Franklin, 2003: 48).

Quoted by Ateljevic and Doorne (2003: 123), tourism is undoubtedly a powerful agent of economic development driven in part by the search for cultural diversity and the ethnic identity of the “other” (Van der Berge, 1994; Allcock, Bruner and Lanfant, 1995). Tourists come and go, to see what is to be seen in a place and to spread what they have seen about it and its culture. Such activity helps to promote the culture and to strengthen the knowledge of tourists as “clearly, development and opportunity at the personal level have much to do with power-knowledge and the breadth of an individual’s ‘world view’, and the role of tourism engagement in facilitating and informing that view” (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2003). Milne and Ateljevic (2001) believe that tourism promotional material creates and projects powerful social, cultural and psychological meanings of place, and in turn increases and reproduces its value. Tourists collect, read, interpret, compare and communicate these meanings, during this process, the meanings and representations of the place and its culture are produced and increased.

There are also negative views on the relationships between tourism and local culture. Quoting Durrell (1989), Ryan points out that tourism is a “curious modern disease” not only damaging the landscape, but also the way of life, the culture and sets of values (Ryan, 1991). He argues for this by illustrating that tourism may lead to resurgence in local art form but local people may lose the ability to judge good art from bad art, with the strong influence from “outsiders”. The erosion of language is another example as language plays an important role as a way of communication and also an approach of “shaping the perception of the world.” Tourism may change the traditions such as agriculture timetable, affect people’s ability to maintain past patterns of life, change gastronomy with the need of an “international cuisine”, change the art and music style, architecture, affect religion, dress and leisure activities, make the heritage a “frozen picture of the past”, and create crimes. In addition, Harrison (1992) and Smith (2003) point out that the commercial nature of tourism may also have cultural implications in less developed countries such as increased commodification and social structure change. UNESCO (2005) warns that “overexposure”, overuse or hostile

behaviors generated from tourism may lead to the destruction of heritage. Smith (2003) talks about the possibility that the authenticity of indigenous culture gets lost in order to benefit tourists.

Tourism and Other Social Aspects

Some other researchers also write about the influences that tourism has on other social aspects.

Tourism development induces change to the environment that can be positive and negative due to its level of reliance upon the natural and cultural resources (Holden, 2000: 64). Holden further explains that for positive effects, the development of tourism can improve the environment of the destination and attract aid for urban regeneration, as destinations have to maintain a good-quality environment to attract tourists. Such improved environment will not only benefit tourists but also the larger population of locals. In addition, there is a growing interest in the social environmental effects of tourism from all aspects of the society, such as governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academics, individuals etc., which contribute to more activities to protect the environment.

Mason and Cheyne (2000) point out in their research in New Zealand that tourism development brings community facility improvement, job creation, and the promotion of the area for tourism, and residents feel local hospitality has benefited and the area's image has improved as a result of tourism.

There are also negative sides that tourism cause to environment. It has been identified as a threat to the environment (Ryan, 1991; Mowforth and Munt, 2003). Holden (2000) describes the negative aspects as overusing resources, threat to wildlife, water, air, noise, and aesthetic pollution.

Mowforth and Munt summarize that mass tourism has led to problems like:

“Environmental, social and cultural degradation, unequal distribution of financial benefits, the promotion of paternalistic attitudes, and even the spread of disease.” (Mowforth and Munt, 2003: 90) Analyzing situations in New Zealand, Mason and Cheyne (2000) argue that tourism brings problems like drunken driving, traffic problems, and increased noise, in addition to a loss of control over their environment. As described by Mason and Cheyne (2000), a number of studies indicate that the longer residents have experienced tourism in a community, the more negative they are towards tourism development (Allen, Long, Perdue and Kieselbach, 1988; Liu and Var, 1986; Sheldon and Var, 1984; Um and Crompton, 1987).

However, there are arguments saying that a combination of factors including overpopulation, poor resource conservation and inappropriate agricultural practices may result in environmental damage, and it should not be solely attributed to tourism development (Hall and Page, 1999: 134; Ryan, 1991: 101). Holden explains: “It is not always easy to separate out the environmental impacts attributable to tourism from the effects of other economic activities or anthropogenic factors, such as human habitation, and non-anthropogenic causes, such as natural environmental change. It is not always possible to separate the source of impacts upon the environment between local residents and tourists” (Holden, 2000: 69).

Strategic Choice

Tourism is regarded by Franklin (2003: 10) as a “metaphor of everyday life because it is about freedom and democracy, accessibility and choice”. In this sense, the focus should be on its relationship with social development, as a way to improve for example social participation and democracy especially in developing countries.

Harrison thinks that the governments in less developed countries (LDCs) are eager to promote their economic growth and tourism especially international tourism, because “tourism can be seen a form of modernization, transferring capital, technology, expertise, and ‘modern’ values from the West to LDCs” (Harrison, 1992: 10). Scheyvens (2002) also argues

that many communities in the Third World are struggling to find ways to improve their well-being and have identified tourism as a key strategy for development and then seek an appropriate way, particularly from the perspective of Third World people, in which tourism can facilitate development.

Furthermore, some developing countries have received aid for the purpose of physical or human capital formation in tourism from some international organizations such as the World Bank or Asian Development Bank, which has had positive additional effects on their overall development. (Sinclair, 1998)

However, many researchers also raise the question of how problems generated from tourism can be resolved, while its positive effects are encouraged. Sinclair draws our attention to such a dilemma, especially for developing countries, with a critical point of view:

Examination of this issue is complicated by the fact that tourism is a composite product whose components are supplied by firms operating in a variety of generally imperfectly competitive market structures in different countries. Not only is there enormous variation between developing countries in the degree and types of integration between firms in tourism and other sectors of the domestic economy but also between tourism firms across borders.

(Sinclair, 1998: 38)

Sinclair continues to argue that tourism is not really beneficial for developing countries as “a further problem is associated with the expansion of tourist accommodation and transportation and concerns the high level of expenditure on associated infrastructure such as water and energy provision, roads and airports. Much of the additional infrastructure is specific to the tourism sector so that tourism is neither a cheap nor a generally beneficial option for residents of developing countries” (Sinclair, 1998: 40). Tourism has even been viewed as a new form of imperialism (Smith, 2003).

In order to minimize the problems, “green tourism”, “eco-tourism”, “sustainable tourism”, and “community-based tourism” have been proposed and repeatedly discussed in the industry (Holden, 2000; Ryan, 1991; Mowforth and Munt, 2003; UNESCO, 2005; Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). Having reviewed various discussions on the positive and negative impacts of tourism and its relationship with development, it could be concluded that it would never be a ‘yes or no’ question. With a more practical and strategic view, Smith argues that the core question is how we manage tourism (Smith, 2003). It is therefore a strategic choice for governments, local people and all others concerned to make, in order to enhance the positive effects of tourism, while keeping its negative effects to the minimum.