

## **Ethnic Tourism and Sustainable Development: An Ethnic Language and Culture Preservation Strategy**

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### SUMMARY

There is linguistic and cultural diversity around the world. Such diversity is under threat and languages are in danger of becoming extinct. Language, however, is getting more and more attention around the world.

My research study focused on the Tai Lue people in the village of Manchunman in Xishuangbanna Dai Park, an ethnic theme park in Southwest China.

The study aimed to explore ethnic tourism as a preservation strategy for ethnic language and culture, including the role of intangible heritage.

What are the impacts of tourism on the Dai people? I researched the history, people and language and carried out in-depth interviews as a method of data collection looking at the language and culture.

There are advantages and disadvantages of having tourism in the village. I sought to find out the people's attitude to their language and culture.

The park was set up in 1998 and there are five villages, with the attractions including the lush scenery and an ancient Buddhist temple. This is a top quality tourist destination and has received an AAAA label from the Chinese tourist board.

The park's motto is "Protection is Development" and they seek to preserve the houses, environment and culture.

Dai is a spoken and written tonal language, part of the Lanna system with influences from Pali and Chinese. Everybody learns it and it is compulsory in schools. The language includes some Chinese loan words and these are increasing.

During the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, the Buddhist faith and local culture were destroyed.

The study looked at the positive and negative attitudes to the Dai language and culture. There were 80 participants aged from 18 to 61. What I found was that the younger generation was unable to speak Dai like the older generation. The ability to write in Mandarin is rising and the younger generation learns in Chinese.

Many people claimed they were proud to be Dai. The majority of people thought tourism can help, that it helps the community and it strengthens the local economy. When it comes to speaking Dai, 50% of those interviewed think tourism helps.

But there were concerns that tourism might negatively affect Dai culture.

Not all park plans were working. There were complaints that the Dai dance had been modified to make it more appealing to tourists and the costumes were revealing.

Ethnic tourism allows the maintaining, preserving and revitalizing of the indigenous community. As long as it is not artificial, as in some other parks in China, such an arrangement helps the community remain sustainable.

To sustain the language and culture needs help from the indigenous people themselves and the government.

## **DISCUSSION**

Question: I am surprised by your conclusion. Is this not a pseudo culture? Like we see in Lijiang with the Napa? Is this not adaption, a new culture?

Answer: Some things are not nice in terms of tourism, but I am focused on language. In other parks in China, the culture is not real. It's a show.

This one is real. This is a closed community. Han Chinese cannot move in and out. Chinese only can move in if they get permission from the park. There are only few Chinese living in the park. The indigenous people still speak a lot of Dai.

Question: What language are the signs in? English?

Answer: Most tourists are Chinese and the signs are in Chinese and English. In China, I didn't go everywhere to make comparisons.

When it comes to their script, they can write in the old Lue script. Most learn this in temples.