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Authenticity in indigenous tourism: the provider's perspective

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Abstract

Although authenticity is frequently debated in the study of the tourism industry, the host's perspective has rarely been discussed. This study of Smangus village, an indigenous tourism site in Taiwan, explores host authenticity, a view of community as distinct and true to a shared sense of self. An ethnographic approach was used for periodic data collection from 2006 to 2015, focusing on the village's tourism initiation and communal tourism activities. The results show that Atayal Gaga, a traditional social norm that stresses communal action toward shared goals, underpins Smangus' tourism industry. Host authenticity is shown in the decision to transform village industry from agriculture to tourism and in tourism programs that stress local people's role as educators. The contribution of this research is to provide an additional perspective for the theoretical discourse of authenticity in tourism studies and to give an empirical example for indigenous communities in future tourism development and management.

Keywords

Indigeneity, host-guest relationship, ecotourism, identity, authenticity, existentialism.

INTRODUCTION

"This story is true, not a myth, the legend of our ancestor is authentic, a true story."
(Guided tour of Smangus village, July 2008)

Smangus is an indigenous village with 170 inhabitants located in the northern portion of Taiwan's Central Mountain Range. The village's tourism industry started in 1995 after the first vehicle-access road opened in the area. In 2008, the government of Taiwan began to promote the area as a youth grand tour destination. Over the past 20 years, a discourse of tourism development at Smangus and, with it, the presentation of indigenous culture on the tourism stage has developed dramatically. Scholars of the tourism industry have criticized the commoditization of cultural forms and practices, and the production and staged performance of presumably inauthentic events.



To date, however, little attention has been paid to the opinions of Smangus villagers. This paper presents the voices of people living in the village and working in tourism regarding the relationship between traditional narratives, local religious beliefs and newer practices brought about by the tourist industry.

The work presented here relates to a long history of debate in tourism studies about definitions and analyses of authenticity. Approaches to authenticity in the literature can be divided into three major strands. One of the earliest discussions of authentic and inauthentic culture is Daniel Boorstin's (1961) discussion of pseudo-events; events or activities that are produced primarily to be seen, photographed and reproduced. Analyses of this tradition define authenticity from a scholastic viewpoint outside of the event or its production. A second tradition comes from Dean MacCannell's (1973) concept of staged authenticity. Building on Erving Goffman's (1959) division of social events into front and back regions, MacCannell argues that tourists seeking authentic experience attempt to enter the 'back' of toured spaces to see behind the facade. Scholarship traditionally generally defines authenticity in terms of tourists' perceptions, including criticism of the effects of 'modern' tourists' gaze on often racialized, stereotyped 'cultures'.

A third approach treats authenticity as a property of objects or activities, which, again, are judged from either analyst or guest points of view. Erik Cohen's (1979) distinction among five types of tourist experience is based on guests' origins and world views. Ning Wang's (1999) existential authenticity breaks with both MacCannell (1973) and Cohen (1979) by centering discussion of authenticity on tourists' senses of self, rather than their evaluation of toured spaces or objects. But like the earlier work, Wang's focus is on tourists'—and not tour providers'—senses of themselves and their relations with others. All of these approaches view authenticity from the perspective of the guest or the analyst. The role of the host is generally under-theorized, with providers viewed as either colonized subjects or rational economic actors catering to guests' demands in exchange for economic benefit.

The tourism industry has been described as a form of imperialism (Nash 1989; Rosaldo 1989; Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy 2015) or colonialism (Gordon 1990) because prevalent forms of tourism consist primarily of relatively wealthy individuals from more highly developed societies traveling to poorer and less developed areas (Cohen and Cooper 1986; Nash 1989). Tourism of this sort often takes place in less developed or peripheral regions, such as indigenous villages. When guests value the authenticity of archaic or 'traditional' practices, destination areas are not able to evolve in response to changing economic or historical situations. Due to their economic dependence on tourists, hosts typically accommodate guests' desires, rather than demanding that guests accommodate themselves to the situation of the tour destination (Cohen and Cooper 1986). Therefore, hosts come to be seen as passive providers unable to exercise free-choice in the provision of tourism activities.

In contrast to analyses that see constraints on tour providers' agency, some studies have pointed to implicit responses from the host side. Jill Sweet (1989) describes Zuni Pueblo Indians' burlesque of various types of tourist as a response to tourists' own stereotyped expectations of plains Indians culture. Daraya Maoz (2006) views Third World locals, not simply as objects of the tourists' gaze (Urry 1990), but as agents resisting or accommodating guests and affecting them in turn through a mutual gaze. Yujie Zhu's (2012) work with an indigenous Dongba wedding officiant in Lijiang, China, reveals how the performer is able to experience his own sense of existential authenticity through performances that visiting tourists see as 'just for fun'.

This study builds on such work that considers tour providers' views of their own existential authenticity. The residents of Smangus village view authenticity, not simply as a collection of individual relationships, but as a property of the village as a community. Authenticity in Smangus village is communally owned. From this perspective, the authenticity of the village is a community practice, rather than a set of individual reflections.

The communal sense of authenticity in Smangus became particularly salient to villagers following a breakdown of social cohesion in the early 1990s. Dissatisfaction with the traditional economy, based on hunting and agriculture, pushed villagers to reconsider the social-religious structure known as Atayal Gaga (see below) as they sought a living in Taiwan's broader capitalist society. Eventually the village's economy was reconfigured around a tourism cooperative, which is seen as a reemergence of Gaga. In Smangus, tourism is not a purely capitalist business, but a cooperative Atayal project. Smangus villagers' senses of authenticity is located within villagers' views of themselves, their interactions and their place.

This paper contributes to the emerging study of authenticity from the perspective of tourism hosts. Authenticity is seen from the perspective of existentialism as a sense of one's self that can be either consistent or in conflict with the positioning prescribed by society. The paper suggests *host authenticity* as an understanding of the host community as distinct from guests' places of origin and true to a shared sense of history, place and self.¹ The tourism providers seen here present village life, not simply as an exotic attraction for visitors, but as practices linking historically-situated social norms with evolving social and economic demands.

METHODOLOGY

The research site, Smangus, is an indigenous village located in the northern portion of Taiwan's Central Range at an altitude of about 1,500 meters. The village has an approximate population of 170 people, known linguistically and ethnically as Atayal (Chen and Sun 1994). Smangus was once known as 'the dark village' because of its geographical remoteness and lack of infrastructure, such as electricity and paved roads. Before the initiation of the tourism industry, the inhabitants subsisted by fishing, hunting, gathering and growing crops on burned-off mountain fields.

The choice of Smangus as study area was based on two conditions. First, the village's tourist programs were initiated by local leaders who attempted to develop them within existing Atayal institutions. This history is not typical of tourist programs in rural Taiwan, which are generally introduced from outside. Village leaders' efforts to respond to social and economic changes arriving with a new road in the 1990s seemed to challenge prior studies concerning asymmetric host-guest relationships and the disempowering effects of indigenous tourism on host communities. Second, unlike cases in which new tourism businesses introduce new spaces and facilities, Smangus's inhabitants and the tourists share a common space. Guided tours, accommodations and other tourist services overlap with the living spaces of villagers who provide these services. Under this condition, Smangus plays a significant role in managing host-guest interaction.

The lead author initiated a field survey in 2006. Additional study, including periodic participant observation, continued from 2006 to 2015. The initial phase of field work was progressive, evolving as the surveyor became more familiar with the residents and was

able to identify the individuals who would become key informants. The later phases of data collection followed a triangulated approach, allowing the checking of data from different sources and the filling of gaps or biases. In addition to participant observation during guided tours and other events, six key informants were interviewed in depth and their responses recorded and transcribed. The secondary data include the minutes of village meetings from 1999 to 2015, tourism information provided on the village website and brochures, and previous studies carried out in the village, including work by Smangus-based Atayal scholar, Lahuy Icyeh (2007).

Some of the discourses analyzed come from guided tours in the village and from a night party during which village leaders address the guests. These events are literally staged by villagers for guests.ⁱⁱ Yet, even in everyday life, social actors may be seen as performing selves (Goffman 1959; Hall 2001; inter alia). This study moves away from a focus on front and back stage (MacCannell 1973) to stress villagers' subjective perspectives about shared narratives.

DISCUSSION

The residents of Smangus village maintain host authenticity while responding to the potential for inauthenticity through two approaches. Firstly, the locals conceptualize the tourism industry, a private business, as a communal industry practiced by the village, rather than individual providers. A traditional cooperative institution was established based on local social norm. Secondly, Smangus village reverses the guest-oriented tourism service into a host-oriented village business. Rather than conceiving tourism as a service catered to the desires of tourists, tourism activities stress education. Visitors are given the opportunity to learn about Atayal culture, while Smangus villagers take on the role of educator. Therefore, the nature of tourism in Smangus has been incorporated into the Atayal culture and developed to suit the local needs.

Gaga and Smangus tourism development

Atayal Gaga (Atayal: *gaga na tayal*) is a set of beliefs that are a foundation of social cohesion in Smangus village. It consists of two parts: *Utux* refers to the realm of gods or spirits, particularly benevolent spirits. *Gaga* refers to a system of shared knowledge and social norms, including knowledge of the local environment, taboos in daily life, and ethical and quasi-legal regulations toward social institutions and world view (Lahuy 2007). Thanks to the strong normative system of Gaga, Atayal people have been viewed as 'unconquerable' and many communities retained local control even during the period of Japanese colonial rule in the first half of the twentieth century (Tang and Tang 2010). Since 1991, the people of Smangus village have pursued collective land and natural resources development as part of Atayal Gaga (Lahuy 2007).

During the 1990s, traditional Gaga practice experienced a period of crisis due to economic difficulties and the transformation of village industry. The vehicle access road to the area of Smangus village was opened in 1995 and, with it, tourism came to the region. During the initial phase of tourism development between 1996 and 1999 village inhabitants competed with one another to attract tourists to individual households. This competition formed a stark contrast with the mutual dependence that had characterized the village's earlier economic system, which was based on exchange of labor for harvesting and communal control of land for hunting (Lahuy 2007). In the second half of 1999, village leaders conducted a series of 'how to cooperate' meetings to try to develop consensus

and to replace competition among inhabitants, with work toward common interests. The notions of cooperation and community are essential elements in Atayal Gaga beliefs. Smangus placed Atayal Gaga as the guiding principle in its tourism development and has enshrined the tradition of communal sharing at the heart of its economic development (Lahuy 2007). The communal sharing of both work duties and the economic benefits from tourism is seen as an expression of Gaga, parallel to the sharing of duties and benefits under earlier arrangements.

In the summer of 2000, Smangus established the village cooperative kitchen, which became a model for the introduction of other cooperative work programs. Hence, the Gaga principle of sharing, underlying the traditional economy of hunting and agriculture, is maintained and practiced in the new tourism industry. In 2001, Smangus expanded the scale of cooperation to include a restaurant, convenience store and lodge. In 2004, the village reached consensus concerning communal land management and established *Tnunan Smangus*, a collective institution of Smangus inhabitants that manages communal tourism facilities. The lodging facilities, the restaurant and the convenience store are collectively owned by the participants, who share the work of running the businesses according to the chief's direction. In return, the participants are paid in accordance with the shares they hold, rather than the actual work they do. Tnunan Smangus is now the main authority controlling the tourism industry in the village.

As a minority indigenous group located in the peripheral region of Taiwan, the inhabitants of Smangus were no longer satisfied with the traditional life, with no roads in or out. One of the villagers said of village life in the late twentieth century, "The life in the past is not for human beings; we also wanted a better life."

A sense of dissatisfaction emerged when the villagers compared their living situation with the nearby villages, where roads led to the city and a higher living standard.

Excerpt I from the authors' translation of a Smangus village brochure produced in 2000 describes the hardship of village life prior to the arrival of the road.

Excerpt I

Located in the mountains of Hsinchu county's Jianshi township at 1,500 meters above sea level, Smangus might be the most remote tribal village in Taiwan. Electricity did not reach the village until 1979, before a road leading outside was finally constructed in 1995. Before the opening of the road, the villagers had to spend several hours crossing the valley on foot to reach the Xinguang tribal village in order to access the outside world and get their daily supplies. While other tribes in Jianshi had roads to access the outside world and enjoy a convenient life, feet were the only transportation in Smangus. (Tnunan Smangus 2000, authors' translation)

The brochure stresses environmental features and compares life in Smangus with that in other villages. In terms of environment, the brochure stresses the village's remoteness and lack of roads. Smangus is "Taiwan's most remote tribal village", distinguished even from "other tribes in Jianshi" by distance and inaccessibility. This sense of remoteness is emphasized through the specific and detailed description of the location in the first sentence: "Smangus [is] located at 1,500 meters above sea level in the mountains of Hsinchu county, Jianshi township". Smangus's remoteness from other villages is described not only in terms of space, but also time. The next village, Xinguang, is "several hours"

away and the late arrival of electricity in 1979 and the road in 1995 evidences separation from “the outside world”.

The brochure’s text suggests a dissatisfaction with the village living standard in the early 1990s. While villages connected by road could “enjoy convenience”, the people of Smangus had to endure hard work and relative poverty. Interviewees likewise recall that period as one of hardship “not for human beings”. Village leaders suggest that young people, at that time, were anxious to leave the village for the relative ease of life in urban Taiwan. Hence, dissatisfaction and anxiety over economic inequality constituted an external pressure to change the village’s economy.

Even in the face of economic hardship, villagers continued to see Smangus as distinct and highly valued. While some of the villagers left Smangus for the city during the early 1990s to escape the hardship of living, the majority of inhabitants chose to stay. They struggled to maintain livelihoods within the system of Atayal Gaga. The excerpt above compares Smangus to Xianguang and other tribal villages in Jianshi. It suggests that dissatisfaction and anxiety produced by relative poverty pushed inhabitants to change the village’s economic base in order to improve the quality of life in the village.

While the coming of the road may have provided external pressure for change, villagers point to internal reasons to explain the change in industry. Internal impetus for the switch from traditional agriculture to tourism came in 1991 as the result of dream divination. Dream divination is part of the Atayal Gaga beliefs in Smangus village. In Atayal culture, sleep is like a temporary death, hence the individual’s spirit can cross the boundary to communicate with his ancestors and get guidance from them (Lahuy 2007). According to the guidance received in the dream, the dreamer is able to decide whether planned future actions are workable or not.

The dream that led a village elder to push for the introduction of tourism is related in Excerpt II. The man who had the dream related its content to the lead author during fieldwork in 2006. One morning when the village leader was sitting in the front yard of his house before the day’s work started, he spontaneously began describing his dream. This dream has become a Smangus tradition; it is described on the village’s website and in travel brochures and is routinely told to tourists. The version in Excerpt II is derived from the Smangus website.

Excerpt II

In the year 1991, a dream (*spi* in Atayal) changed everything. An ancestor told a tribal elder that east of Smangus there is a group of giant trees, and the village will become as lively as Lala Mountain. It sounds unbelievable, but it truly happened in Smangus. Because of our pious minds and serious attitude toward life, our ancestor’s words have come true and the village thrives. (Tnunan Smangus 2000, authors’ translation)

The excerpt begins by placing the dream in the year 1991. During that time, Smangus villagers were seeking to improve the quality of village life. By chance, a group of six Smangus villagers visiting relatives in Balung village, also known as Lala Mountain, arrived during the local peach festival. They saw the tourists flood into Balung village during the festival. Thanks to tourism, the Balung village economy was prospering and the quality of village life was rising. Comparing their lot to their prosperous relatives, residents of Smangus experienced dissatisfaction and anxiety.

According to this excerpt, “a dream changed everything”. The text provided for Chinese-speaking tourists uses the Atayal word ‘*spi*’ to label the life-changing dream. Dream divination is part of Atayal Gaga and this connection to tradition is stressed by including the Atayal word in the telling.

While the dream occurred during a period of economic dissatisfaction, it suggested a more satisfying future in which Smangus “will become as lively as Lala Mountain”. The giant trees foretold in the dream connect Smangus with the cypress forest for which Balung is known.

According to the residents of Smangus, the decision to switch from agriculture to tourism was based on the guidance of dream divination. In this sense, according to the informants, the choice they made is based on tradition, rather than external forces, such as economic incentives. They view the direction of village development as controlled by residents instead of being ruled by the market or the state. Tourism is seen, not as a form of imperialism that erases local control (Nash 1989), but as an expression of villagers’ will consistent with Atayal Gaga. *Gaga* can be translated literally as “words from the ancestors” (Wang 2012). Thus, the coda of the story, which calls the dream ‘our ancestor’s words’, stresses the authenticity of the message by linking to Atayal Gaga.

As the people of Smangus village tell their story, exogenous forces, such as road building, economic hardship and decisions imposed by the Taiwanese state, as well as endogenous factors, such as villagers’ aspirations for economic prosperity, are made coherent through Atayal Gaga. The transition from hunting and communal agriculture to tourism is seen as a way to respond to the dissatisfaction and anxiety experienced in response to the incursion of dominant Taiwanese society. By developing new economic practices in ways that are understood as being consistent with traditional norms and rules, the people of Smangus village construe new practices as an expression of an authentic essence.

The history of tourism development in Smangus village, and the stories that villagers tell about that history, reveal a discourse of host authenticity. By developing new economic practices in a manner consistent with traditional Atayal social norms, villagers authenticate these practices as genuinely Smangus. The next section describes how practices of authentication serve, not only tourists’ desires for new experience, but also villagers’ desires for autonomy and recognition.

The host authenticity in Smangus tourism activities

Smangus village is governed, in part, on the basis of community meetings. Excerpt III consists of portions of the minutes of three such meetings in February 1999, March 1999 and June 2002. The excerpts show that interactions with visitors are of concern to villagers, who developed certain principles governing host-guest interaction in tourism activities. As the discussions show, they position the village and its people as dominant in interactions with visitors.

Excerpt III

Tourism management from now on will be based on traditional scenery and activities, allowing visitors a deeper understanding of Atayal culture, and allowing them to pay greater respect to indigenous people. (Smangus village meeting minutes, February 4th, 1999)

Smangus should educate tourists as a means of community development. (Smangus village meeting minutes, March 8th, 1999)

Friends of the village or villagers' personal friends shall comply with the rules of the community. (Smangus village meeting minutes, June 1st 2002)

Each of the three rulings in Excerpt III seek to put Smangus village in a dominant role relative to outside visitors. At the heart of tourism activities is “respect for indigenous people”. By presenting “traditional scenery” and “[traditional] activities”, tourist programs should instill a “deeper understanding of Atayal culture”. The programs are thus attuned, not only to the demands of visitors, but also to Smangus social norms.

Programs are described, not as attracting or entertaining visitors, but as ‘educating tourists’. By placing tour providers in the role of educator, the minutes envision tourists as learners who are dependent on their hosts. Furthermore, the activities are characterized as ‘community development’, again placing focus on the village itself as part of the tourism industry.

The June 2002 minutes make explicit that outsiders must accommodate themselves to the village standards, rather than vice versa. Friends of the village “shall comply with the rules of the community”. Under this principle, tourists are expected to follow village regulations.

The guided tour in Smangus differs from many tourist-oriented commercial hospitality businesses that aim primarily to maximize tourism revenue. Instead, Smangus guides see their main role as actively expressing the will of the village, rather than fulfilling the demands of tourists (cf Cohen and Cooper 1986; Nash 1989).

In the linguistic interactions between tourists and hosts, there is an asymmetry of power or status such that the hosts are usually at the lower status while the tourists hold the higher status (Cohen and Cooper 1986). Under this condition, the host might have difficulties expressing their will or principle, but, in Smangus village, teaching greeting phrases is seen as a way to show a Smangus principle. The content of Excerpt IV is derived from a Smangus guided tour, during which the local guide teaches a bus load of tourists about greetings in the local Atayal language.

Excerpt IV

First I will teach you a few simple Smangus greetings. For example the first time you see someone, “Nǐ hǎo ma”, we say “Lokah su ga”, “How do you do, how do you do”, *hǎo dǔ yòu dǔ*. We would say, “Lokah su ga”. *Lokah* means good, “Li wu hou mou”. *Su* means you. Lokah su ga, lokah su ga, when you meet people you can say, “Lokah su ga”. We will reply “Lokah lokah”, which means yes, I’m good, I’m healthy, I’m still breathing. (Field notes 24 July 2008ⁱⁱⁱ, authors’ translation)

The comparatively low status of tour hosts relative to guests is often seen in the hosts’ use of higher status language of the tourists. Hosts have an economic incentive to accommodate the tourists. However, in the Smangus village, the host reverses the asymmetric roles by teaching guests to speak the local language. This reversal happens in the guests’ first encounter with the leader of their guided tour, shortly after they arrive in the village. The guide begins his presentation by telling the crowd, “First I will teach you a few simple Smangus greetings”. The verb ‘teach’ implies the role of educator, with

relatively higher situational status. Hence, the host becomes the higher status educator to teach the student-tourists a greeting phrase in the language of the village.

Moreover, the leader of the guided tour demonstrates superior multilingual competence in front of tourists, who are not familiar with the host language. In addition to Atayal and Chinese—the tourist's own language—he demonstrates facility in speaking Taiwanese and English as well. He offers three greeting phrases in Mandarin, Atayal and English: “‘Nǐ hǎo ma’, we say ‘Lokah su ga’, ‘How do you do’”. In addition to introducing the Atayal phrase, his utterance places the language on the same level as the other two languages and demonstrates the host's facility with all three. He further demonstrates linguistic facility by making a trans-lingual joke: “*hǎo dǔ yòu dǔ*”. The phrase makes a pun on the similar sounding English greeting, ‘How do you do?’, while its literal meaning, ‘gambling and betting’, parodies stereotypes of indigenous people's involvement with gambling and other socially marginal activities. By positioning himself as teacher, and weaving multiple languages together with the Chinese message to his guests, the tour guide places Smangus in a dominant position in the host-guest relationship. Language use both constructs the role of host and helps to accomplish the village's goal of educating visitors about Atayal practices.

Use of the Atayal language serves as an ethnic marker, similar to the cultural markers described by MacCannell (1999, 110), while demonstrating the language competence of Smangus villagers, as Excerpt V shows.

Excerpt V

Compared to other tribes, we continue to use our language more actively, and we have these important rituals and so on, especially our language, we use our native language for daily communication in the village, for example [He speaks a series of sentences in Atayal]. If I teach you like this, if I continue like this, in five minutes you'll pass out. (Fieldnotes 24 July 2008, authors' translation)

In Excerpt V, the tour guide repeatedly refers to “our language” and “our native language”. The host language is used as a marker to distinguish Smangus from other indigenous villages in Taiwan. The guide declares, “Compared to other tribes, we continue to use our language more actively”. In this sense, the position of Smangus village is different from the other indigenous villages in Taiwan. This distinction marks the village's value as an ethnic or cultural attraction for tourists, while valuing the villagers' knowledge and behavior in their own right.

Meanwhile, the host role in the touristic situation is also being stressed. After speaking Atayal for a few seconds the guide says, “*If I teach you like this, if I continue like this, in five minutes you will pass out.*” Under this condition, the demonstration of the host language becomes a symbol of Smangus village itself and the host, a mediator between villagers and guests. Language serves as a show of locality and ethnicity to the tourists. Therefore, the host language is not only a tool for achieving the goal of tourist education, but also a means for the host to maintain status in the host-guest relationship.

In the evening, after tour busses arrive, the villagers host a party. The evening party is conducted in Atayal with speeches translated into the tourists' language. As Excerpt VI shows, two senior villagers give a brief presentation in the local language at the beginning of the party.

Excerpt VI

1. A: Good evening everyone, hello.
2. B: (speaking Atayal)
3. A: I am going to help the leader, um, do the translation, so you can understand the chief.
4. B: (speaking Atayal)
5. A: (translating from Atayal to Chinese) First of all, welcome visitors and friends here, and today we are very well aware, we know that today was difficult of all of you, because you sat in the bus most of the time and could not stand, but also some of you were carsick on the way, before reaching our tribe. You are most welcome.
6. B: (speaking Atayal)
7. A: This evening we are pleased to invite you to our village's most sacred space, our church. (tourists take pictures) Seeing all of you here is like seeing our villagers, but our tribe ... the number of adults is less than all of you, our population is not so large.
8. B: (speaking Atayal)
9. A: We are very aware that the journey today was very hard, so if the group just looked at a giant tree and then went back, that would be a great pity, therefore through this party we would like to tell you more, so you can be more aware of Smangus, this place. (Fieldnotes 23 May 2009,^{iv} authors' translation)

The structure of this evening party includes three social roles: Host B is the chief of Smangus who speaks only the native language; host A is a senior villager who is responsible for the interpretation of the chief's presentation; and the tourists are cast as receivers of information.

In the beginning of the party, host A points out his position in the program as an interpreter, as seen in item 3: "I am going to help the leader, um, do the translation, so you can understand the chief." Use of the host language in the presentation in the evening party fully utilizes the multilingual competence advantage. This competence functions as a regulative power that controls the scope of tourism information transmission from the host-side to the tourist-side.

The venue for the evening party is not a space specifically designed for the tourists; it is the Smangus church, where the villagers regularly worship. In other words, the village space overlays the tourist space. As the hosts note, "We are pleased to invite you to our village's most sacred space, our church. Seeing all of you here is like seeing our villagers ..." Putting guests in the villagers' space, both literally and in the welcome speech, implies another meaning—the concept of sharing with the tourists. This sharing concept has a cultural basis from the Atayal Gaga beliefs system, as described earlier.

Smangus controls the number of tourists who arrive in the village and provides the information that they receive about it. As the hosts indicate in Excerpt VI, “Through this party we would like to tell you more, so you can be more aware of Smangus, this place.” The hosts do not provide passive access to the forest, but education about the area and the people who reside there. Therefore, switching between the native language and the tourists’ language serves as a tool through which Smangus’ purpose of tourist education can be achieved.

To sum up, the host language plays an important role in Smangus tourism activities. The host language is utilized in three ways: Greeting phrase teaching, host language as a mark of cultural distinctiveness and translation between the host language and the tourists’ language as a link between the two groups. These three activities help to accomplish Smangus’s purpose, to educate tourists and to maintain a dominant position for hosts in tourism activities.

CONCLUSION

This article has investigated how the people of Smangus deal with the transformation of village industry from communal agriculture and hunting to tourism and how the relationship between tourists and hosts is managed in the Atayal cultural context. The decision to develop the tourism industry, the operation of community facilities and the relationship between host and guests are all viewed as expressions of Atayal Gaga. Smangus’s decisions and actions can, thus, be seen as a means of maintaining and expressing existential authenticity.

This research has two findings. Firstly, although external factors, such as low living standards and the lack of roads, contributed to the development of tourism as an alternative industry, the people of Smangus accentuate the role of Atayal dream divination, rather than the economic and environmental disadvantages, in their decision to transform local industry. Moreover, the content of this dream has become local lore, told to visitors, printed on travel brochures and shared on the village website.

Conflict between a desired ideal and the reality of daily life can lead to anxiety and dissatisfaction. This is true in Smangus, as it is for all human beings. Seeking resolution of this anxiety can be seen as a way of practicing existential authenticity. The people of Smangus village highlight the role of dream divination in their decision to initiate tourism, making the new industry coherent with the tradition and the beliefs of Gaga. Therefore, the authentic Smangus was re-established.

The second major finding of this research is the dominant position of the host over guests in Smangus tourism programs. Unlike mass tourism, which is a revenue-led, consumer-oriented, commercial activity, tourism in Smangus village is a host-led, village-oriented activity. Hence, the Smangus way of managing industry reverses the traditional tourism power roles. Rather than pandering to the tourists’ needs and desires, tour leaders in Smangus ask tourists to accommodate the hosts’ situation. Thereby, they are able to follow their preference to develop a Smangus-led tourism industry.

The concept of host authenticity is intended as an addition to existing theoretical discourse and empirical studies of existential authenticity in tourism fields. The case of Smangus village shows that Atayal Gaga, as a cultural and societal center, gives endogenous support to inhabitants when the village faces external challenges.

Villagers are able to resolve anxiety by understanding new commercial activity as being an authentic expression of traditional spiritual practice. This provides an additional situation to discuss the concept of existential authenticity. Although the Smangus approach cannot be universally applied, the principle of developing tourism practices around traditional beliefs may be utilized by other indigenous communities for future tourism development and management. This makes it possible to give the power in host-guest relations back to the tourism destination and embodies the process of cause and solution toward existential authenticity from the host perspective.

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ⁱ This is not to suggest that host authenticity is necessarily distinct from guests' perceptions. Guests' views of authenticity, central to a range of earlier work, are not specifically considered in this analysis.

ⁱⁱ The authors are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this issue.

ⁱⁱⁱ Smangus guided tour, 24 July 2008.

^{iv} Smangus night party, 23 May 2009.