

# A Contrastive Study on the Differences in Community Participation in Tourism Planning Between Baffin Regional Tourism Planning and Yangshuo Yulong River Tourist Attraction Planning

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**Keywords:** Tourism Planning; Community Participation; Contrastive Study

**Abstract.** Community participation in tourism planning is becoming a hot topic in recent years, but few destinations actually succeed. Taking Canada's Baffin Regional Tourism Planning(BRTP) and China's Yangshuo Yulong River Tourist Attraction Planning(YYRTAP) as examples, this paper studies the differences of community participation in tourism planning between China and the west. It turns out that they are different in participation model, the methods that the community take in the participation as well as the community's participatory awareness and abilities. There are many reasons for the differences, of which the democratization processes, stages of tourism development and the concept that guides it as well as the balance of powers of the government, market and community are most important ones.

## 1. Introduction.

With a growing concern about the social and environmental impacts of tourism, it's necessary that the community participates in tourism planning. The western scholars are the first ones who view community participation as a tourism planning approach. They believe that it is important to maximize the participation of local communities in the planning process. After the 1980s, the study of community participation is growing in western countries, along with the in-depth discussions on the impacts of tourism. In 1985, Murphy first introduced the concept of community participation in his book *Tourism: A Community Approach*<sup>[1]</sup>. After the late 1990s, foreign scholars learned from management, sociology, organizational behavior, ecology, anthropology, economics, psychology and then tried to establish a relatively complete theoretical system concerning the stakeholders' participation in tourism planning process. This system includes interactive implementation, monitoring, induction, evaluation, and integration of the participation<sup>[2-4]</sup>.

Study on community participation in tourism planning in foreign countries is early both in theory and practice. In contrast, China's research on this topic is generally based on the western studies. This paper chooses the Canadian Baffin Region and Yangshuo Yulong River Tourist Attraction as cases because of their typical characteristics of participation in tourism planning. We hope to find out the differences on participation in tourism planning between the two cases, and then explore the causes of the differences.

## **2. The Contrastive Study on the Differences in Community Participation in Tourism Planning between BRTP and YYRTAP.**

### **2.1 Background Analysis.**

#### **2.1.1 Baffin Region.**

Baffin region is located in the northwest of Canada with a low population density. Most of the residents are the Inuit. Almost all of them live in one community of the shoreline. In the early 1980s, Baffin region's tourism industry was still in the primary stage of development. There are more and more people getting interested in this area. But the infrastructure and service supply is insufficient, and local residents are lack of the skills and financial support to participate in tourism. Therefore most of the tourism projects at that time were under control of outside entrepreneurs. Because of the low degree of indigenous people's participation, local residents' attitudes towards tourism developers are more or less hostile.

#### **2.1.2 Yulong River Tourist Attraction.**

Yangshuo County is located in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. The Yulong River is the second largest river in Yangshuo County. Yulong River Tourist Attraction includes the Yulong River, villages and mountains on both sides of the river. Most local residents in this area made a living by agriculture, but with the development of tourism, the local communities found a new way to make money. They began operating family hotels, tourist restaurants, rafting projects. However, due to the blind pursuit of economic benefits, the competition of local tourism is out of order. "Farm House", "Farm Stay", and "Farm Holiday Resort" have been everywhere; Yulong river is polluted; landscape quality declines and so does visitors' experience<sup>[5]</sup>.

## **2.2 The Comparative Analysis of Community Participation Model.**

### **2.2.1 Introduction.**

There are different models of community participation in different types of tourism planning. Based on the public consciousness, the degree of democracy and social development, the models of community participation in tourism planning can be divided into five kinds: traditional model, government-oriented model, NGOs and community model, government-community-co-led model and community-oriented model.

The traditional tourism planning rarely involves community participation, most of which are completed by experts and government. In government-oriented planning, government is to establish and improve the main laws and regulations and guide the community participation in tourism planning and management. In NGOs and community model, non-governmental organizations are responsible to organize community tourism development planning, guide and supervise the implementation of the planning. In the government-community-co-led model, community is involved in the preparation, implementation and supervision of the tourism planning process<sup>[6]</sup>. The participation is no longer limited to certain aspects, but the whole process of tourism planning. In community-oriented model, the community deal with problems encountered in tourism development by themselves and participate in the whole process of tourism planning consciously. But this model is only an ideal one, so we can rarely see it in reality right now.

### **2.2.2 The Contrastive Analysis.**

BRTP is authorized by the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism of the Northwest Special Administrative Regional Government, and it maximizes community participation in the whole process of tourism planning. The government takes various methods to seek advice from local residents, which enables the government to understand the expectations and concerns of local

residents and make good use of their rich knowledge of the land and resources. Obviously Baffin Regional Tourism Planning is a government-community-co-led model.

Zhongshan University Tourism Planning and Development Research Center hosted a "Yulong Tourism Master Plan." in 2002. The research shows that a large number of residents live relatively concentrated in this area, which means it's important that communities participate in the planning process<sup>[7]</sup>. It is clearly pointed out in the guiding ideology that the survival and development of local people is one of the main goals of the planning. Residents' views and attitudes towards tourism are respected. Apparently this is also a government-community-co-led model.

Although both of them are the government-community-co-led models, there are differences in the attitude of the government as well as the depth of community participation. Firstly, in terms of the government attitude, the Northwest Special Administrative Regional Government is more active. At the beginning of the planning project, there is no specific tourism development policy, however, to obtain the cooperation of local residents, the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism hopes to develop a set of easy-to-understand tourism policies. Government of the Northwest Special Administrative Region also actively communicates with local resident. The results suggest that local control of the tourism industry, local benefits and local management are the three most important issues that the local communities concern. In addition, the Economic Development and Tourism Ministry announced a policy statement which clearly revealed the government's attitudes toward tourism in 1983:

*"In the planning stage, the responsibility of the government was to provide information consultation, and in the development stage, to provide direct financial support."*

Secondly, in terms of the depth of community participation, planning officers of BRTP take a variety of methods to understand the attitudes of the community residents, rather than simply inform them. All stakeholders are involved in the planning, including local residents, local organizations (such as the local authorities, Hunters Association, etc.), representatives of the government and so on. While in the process of the YYRTAP, the systematic mechanism to collect public opinions has not been established.

### **2.3 The Comparative Analysis of Community Participation Methods.**

The implementation of community participation requires a set of methods and tools. Currently, the main methods of public participation include interaction and communication tools, interviews, active listening, working groups, creative meetings, public hearings, etc.

Methods used in the investigation of BPTP include :

- Show videos to residents to explain the concept of tourism;
- Establish a Tourism Planning Briefing and distribute them to get the most direct views of community residents;
- Organize tourism hotline radio broadcast programs;
- Informal meetings: Invite local residents, planners and members of the local Ministry of Economic Development to attend the informal meetings;
- Group meetings: These groups include Hunting Association, Land Ownership Committee, Education Association, Recreation Commission, etc;
- In-depth interviews: The interviewees include elected officials, village managers, community leaders, hotels owners, etc;

Methods used in YYRTAP include:

- Questionnaire method: The questionnaire focuses on the investigation of community participation in tourism. They investigate 19 villages and complete 96 questionnaires.
- Anthropological fieldwork method: In-depth interviews and participant observation are used in the investigation process to collect suggestions of communities.

Apparently, a set of more diverse and feasible ways are used in BPTP to ensure community participation in tourism planning. Tourism hotline radio broadcast programs are designed because the radio is an important media in this area. Each community has a local radio station run in the Inuit language and most of the residents listen to it usually. The methods that YYRTAP used are mostly conventional survey methods, without considering a more acceptable manner based on local circumstances.

## **2.4 The Comparative Analysis of the Participatory Awareness and Ability of the Community.**

In terms of the participatory awareness of the community, the investigation results show that in Baffin region, the residents' attitudes toward tourism are positive, and they want to control tourism and participate in it. While in the Yulong River communities, the residents' participatory awareness is different. More than half of the residents want to operate tourism businesses, but no one wants to participate in the tourism planning process.

It can be found that communities in Baffin Region concern more about the control of tourism industry, local benefit and local management. Residents here want to participate in tourism planning process. However the participatory awareness of residents of the Yulong River scenic area is relatively weak.

In terms of participatory abilities, both of the two projects are conducted in the remote and undeveloped regions. Because of the lack of formal education and experience, the local residents' training and management skills lags far behind the speed of the money growth, which limits their ability to participate in tourism planning, resulting in problems in local control of tourism industry. The two have a lot in common in this way. Therefore, both the BRTP and YYRATP mention the importance of education and training of residents.

## **3. Reasons for the Differences.**

Because of the political, economic, social, cultural reasons, there are distinct differences in community participation in tourism planning between China and the west. This paper focuses on the following aspects:

### **3.1 The Democratization Processes.**

Western residents grow up in a democratic society, so public awareness of participation in local social and economic development has been gradually enhanced. In Canada, community participation has been an integral part of the development planning process. In order to improve the public participation in planning, community surveys, public hearings, advisory committees, community meetings, environmental impact assessment, advisory committee and other methods are used.

As a developing country, China is in the stage of transition from traditional society to modern society. Citizen consciousness is awakening, but most people have not been aware of participating in tourism planning. The community is still in the stage of passive participation, which leads to its minimal impact on decision-making.

### **3.2 Stages of Tourism Development and the Concepts that Guide the Development.**

After half a century of development of tourism in the West, more mature experience has been achieved in all aspects of tourism development, tourism management, tourism planning, tourism research, etc. The idea of sustainable development is increasingly drawn wide attention in 1990s. Western researchers tend to incorporate the concept of sustainable development of tourism with public participation. It has been 20 years that they start to understand the community participation and community's advisory role. Therefore, whether in theory or in practice they are more advanced.

China's tourism industry started relatively late, and the development mode is different from that of the west. In the west, tourism development is based on domestic tourism demand. In China, the government decide to develop tourism because of the economic benefits that tourism can bring. So the tourism development concept that our government adopted is economy-driven. The economy-driven tourism development concept will inevitably lead to the low level of community participation. This kind of development concept greatly limits community participation to economic level and makes it difficult to expand to decision-making, execution, evaluation and other aspects of the tourism planning.

### **3.3 The Balance of Powers of the Government, Market and Community.**

With the full development of non-governmental organizations and non-profit organizations, the "small government , big civil society" pattern has been a long time in the west. In tourism communities, civil society organizations have an obvious restraining effect on developers from outside. So the government, market, community are interacting, and the powers of the three parts are balanced. In Baffin Region, diverse associations have played a "consultant" role. They are formulated to provide professional advice to the government, including the social and economic services the government should provide, the protection of renewable resource, etc. The community organization is a force that cannot be ignored in the maintenance of community interests.

The Chinese government and the market are still not perfect, which affects the development of non-governmental organizations. In the "strong government, weak folk" pattern, the powers of the government, market and community are unbalanced. As the administrative department, the government monopolize power of decision-making. Businesses become a strong group because of its capital and resource advantages. However community is relatively vulnerable. Autonomous organizations are undeveloped except for the residents' committee and the village committee, which makes it difficult for community to participate in tourism planning.

## **4. Conclusions.**

There are very distinct differences in community participation in tourism planning between BRTP and YYRTAP. Although both of the two cases are the government and community co-led model, the BRTP is more advanced in terms of method ,depth, and the consciousness of participation. In terms of ability to participate, because the two cases are in relatively remote areas, the education level of local residents and access to financial support are comparatively backward. So the ability to participate is not high.

There are many reasons for the differences, of which the democratization processes, stages of tourism development and the concepts that guide tourism development as well as the balance of powers of the government, market and community are most important ones. The social background of community participation in the west is a civil society with a high degree of democratization. However, China is a developing country with a low degree of democratization, which leads to differences in the awareness of community participation in tourism planning. There is a long history of tourism development in western countries, and they've been aware of the importance of sustainable tourism development. They tend to advocate community participation in tourism

planning to achieve the sustainable goal. China is more concerned about the economic benefits of tourism. The tourism development concept that our government adopted is economy-driven, which limits the depth of community participation. In western countries the government, market, community are interacting, and the powers of the three parts are balanced. However, the pattern of "strong government, weak civil society," in China limits the communities' ability to participate in the decision-making process in tourism planning.

It should be noted that it's impossible for China to catch up with western countries in the process of democratization and tourism development stage immediately, but the consciousness of community participation can be improved and the level of community involvement can be extended by strengthening government guidance. Moreover the ability of community participation is not unchangeable. With the development of the whole society and the tourism industry, the community is bound to become masters of itself. The roles of communities in the future will be decision makers in tourism planning, executives of implementation of the planning as well as supervisors of tourism impact.

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