

Research on B&B Development in the Vicinity of Famous Scenic Areas

—A Case Study of Wuyishan City, China

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Abstract—Lodging industry is one of the three major pillars of tourism, of which bed and breakfast (B&B) serves as an important part. This paper proceeded with studies of famous Chinese scenic area Wuyishan City in order to analyze the present development of tourism in Wuyishan, in particular the advantages of B&B development from the perspective of local traffic condition, natural environment and historical background, as well as the actuality of B&B development and existing issues in Wuyishan from the perspective of infrastructure, management and environment, putting forward opinions and suggestions on B&B development in Wuyishan in terms of management, demand, marketing and pricing. The development of B&B tourism in Wuyishan, as part of lodging industry, helps create new tourism products for its tourism development. However, the alternation and development of Wuyishan B&B are still beset with lots of problems, which need to be jointly resolved by the Wuyishan government and B&B operators. As for what does matter to B&B development in Wuyishan, it is imperative to develop a set of B&B management measures and put forward opinions on infrastructure improvement, combine Wuyishan B&B with the local tourism resources and historical cultural characteristics, and develop uniquely attractive high-quality B&B products. Besides, widespread propaganda could be conducted on the strength of new media, to enable Wuyishan B&B, as a highlight of travel in Wuyishan, to help further raise the profile of Wuyishan.

Keywords—Wuyishan city; bed and breakfast; development; countermeasure

I. INTRODUCTION

With economy developing sustainably, China is now working on deepening the reform of the economic system in a bid to raise the ratio of the tertiary industry to national economy. Tourism is an important component of the tertiary industry, of which B&B has gradually grown into an integral part. However at present, B&B development is just in its infancy in China, and there is still big room for improvement in the aspect of planning, infrastructure, management and propaganda. For the development trend and prospect of B&B, characteristic, specialization and quality matter a lot.

Mount Wuyi, as a Chinese AAAAA-class tourist attraction, was put on the World Heritage List by UNESCO in December 1999, becoming one of only five natural and cultural heritage sites in China and common heritage of all mankind. With the rise of global tourism, Wuyishan has also come into public view with each passing day, making it an issue gaining increasing attention from the Chinese government how to work on tourism development, utilization and preservation. Lodging is one of the six essential elements of tourism, whose development relates to the development of tourism in Wuyishan, and influences the local income of tourism economy, as well as the inheritance and protection of the local customs. For Wuyishan B&B, Active promotion of its sound development may help facilitate the healthy development of the national economy and the protection of the social cultural customs. Thus, this paper tried to make an analytical investigation on B&B development in Wuyishan, putting forward relevant suggestions on its development.

II. THE ORIGIN OF AND CONCEPT OF B&B

A. The Origin of B&B

As regards the origin of “B&B”, there are roughly two convincing interpretations: first, the word “B&B” originally meant a Japanese civilian-run inn “Minshuku”, referring to a new way by which urban residents could spend holidays in rural houses in farming and fishing villages built with the approval of the Japanese government in order to get rid of the tourism crisis caused by bubble economy. Another view holds that B&B came into being in Europe, represented by American B&B and Home stay [1]. Comparatively speaking, the first interpretation is more reasonable for the origin of Chinese B&B.

B. The Concept of B&B

In a great many domestic and foreign literatures concerning B&B there are many terms similar to B&B such as “guest house & lodge”, “farm stay”, “home inn” and the like, and there is no accepted consensus as to what exactly the terms

represent. In Japan, “Minshuku” is a general term for “guest house & lodge” and “home inn”, etc. [2]

Taiwanese B&B has a longer history than Mainland China’s, and its concept is an improvement on the European-style B&B’s. It came from Britain, and offers bed and breakfast. There are multiple definitions involving a broad range for B&B in the Taiwanese academic circles. Aside from common restaurants and hotels, all places where travelers can be put up, such as private house, leisure center, farm, farmhouse and pasture, may be put under the category of B&B. As defined in the “B&B Management Measures” formulated by Taiwan, B&B refers to “accommodation for travelers to experience country life that is operated as a household sideline business”. In terms of the scale of B&B operation, it is explicitly stipulated that the number of rooms should be not more than 5, and the total floor space should be less than 150m². Yet for the featured B&B in aboriginal reserves, and recreational farms, recreational agricultural districts, tourist sites and remote areas established with the approval of agricultural authorities, the scale of operation can be appropriately expanded, namely the number of rooms can be less than 15, total floor space less than 20m²[3].

The B&B in Chinese mainland falls broadly into two types: the “home inn” in which accommodation features, and the “farm stay” in which dining features. “Home inn” dates back to the folk “inn” in ancient times, and the tavern came into being in the 1990s to resolve the difficulty of lodging during trips on holidays. “Farm stay” is closely related to the country tourism rising in China in the 1980s, which is famous for “living in a rural house, doing farm work and enjoying pleasure like farmers”. Despite many types of B&B, they cannot be generalized in line with any universal standard, yet every type has general characteristics of B&B.

Based on the above definitions of B&B, we define it as: a generic term for all lodging facilities offered in the form of family sideline business by local residents to provide travelers with accommodation and dining services, meet tourist demands and publicize local cultural characteristics. Its size is specified by reference to the Taiwanese B&B Management Measures.

III. ADVANTAGES OF WUYISHAN B&B

A. Traffic Advantages

With growing investment in tourism development in Wuyishan in recent years, an extremely convenient traffic network consisting of airport, railway and highway has taken shape in Wuyishan. Hefei-Fuzhou High-speed Railway was formally put into operation in July 2015. It has held Central and South China together, further improving China’s railway network. There are stop stations in eastern and northern Wuyishan, which can greatly shorten the time of travel from surrounding provinces and cities to Wuyishan and help arouse tourist motivation. Besides, Provincial Road 303 is available in the scenic area, which connects internal and external traffic together and helps facilitate B&B development in Wuyishan [4].

B. Natural Resource Advantages

Wuyishan features Danxia landform, where there is the best preserved, most typical and largest-area middle subtropical primary forest ecosystem compared with other parts of the world at the same latitude. The extremely abundant species resources and superior air quality provide tourists an area to stay close to nature. As urbanization advances in China, an increasing number of people have moved into high-rise apartments, and therefore created an increasing demand for experience of country accommodation. More and more tourists want to relax themselves in folk houses in places of good quality.

C. Historical Cultural Advantages

B&B development in Wuyishan has longstanding historical cultural advantages. First, the aborigines in Wuyishan started production and living here over 4,000 years ago, who gradually created globally unique “ancient Min Clan” culture and “Min-Yue Clan” culture. The ancient city site located in Cheng Village, Wuyishan City is a historical witness of these cultures. Second, Zhu Xi, a Neo-Confucian of the Southern Song Dynasty and founder of Zhu Xi Culture, wrote and propounded ideas in Wuyishan for nearly fifty years forming Neo-Confucianism, a branch of Confucianism, with influencing spreading as far as many countries in East Asia, Europe and America, contributing a lot to East Asian civilization. Third, Wuyi rock tea features prominently and brilliantly in the history of Chinese tea. By the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Wuyi rock tea had been known to common people, and later, it became a tribute to imperial families and a folk drink. Then, a tea courtesy-based tea culture consisting of tea customs, tea poetry, tea song and dance, tea party, tea-tasting and tea knowledge contest took shape.

IV. REVIEWS ON THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT OF B&B IN WUYISHAN

The accommodation areas in Wuyishan are mainly located inside Wuyishan National Holiday Resort. The Holiday Resort is located in eastern Wuyishan Scenic Area, where there are hotels standing in great numbers, different classes for different levels of tourist demands. However currently, B&Bs are distributed primarily in Nanyuanling Village 3km away from Wuyishan National Holiday Resort, while some are scattered inside the Holiday Resort. Nanyuanling Village, which closely relies on the resources in Wuyishan Scenic Area, is going to be a common exit of Nan-Wu Highway, Nan-Xing Highway and Hengfeng-Nanping Railway. Most villagers of Nanyuanling Village came from Wuyi Scenic Area. This village boasts favorable geological conditions, and has the natural advantage of developing B&B industry under the general context of booming self-driving tourism. Over 200 self-built red-tile-roofed, yellow-wall villa buildings of the same style are located beside Jiuqu River Valley (Fig.1) surrounded by flowers under a pleasant shade made by trees. Many B&B buildings have an elegant name, such as “Lin’s Villa”, “Blue Tea Family”, “Elegant Seclusion”...every house has its unique features, and more than one third of the villagers work on B&B operation. In a manner of speaking, “Nanyuanling” has become a synonym for B&B in Wuyishan. When searching some keywords such

as “B&B in Wuyishan” on the Internet, tourists will see “Nanyuanling” and can book a room quickly on one of the available platforms. Over the years the B&B in Nanyuanling has made contributions to the development of B&B in Wuyishan Scenic Spot.

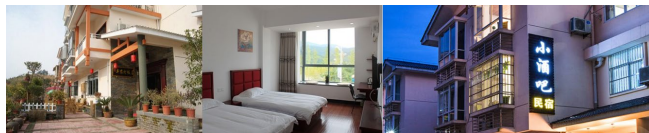


Fig. 1. General View of B&B in Nanyuanling Village

Problems of B&B in Wuyishan

The field survey shows that Wuyishan B&B has achieved certain development, yet there are still lots of problems in it.

1) Imperfect Service Facilities and Unstandardized Management

First, hardware facilities differ in quality since they are developed based on developers' personal preference. Moreover, there is still a lack of professional institutional norms for management, neither has the competent department concerned formulated any industry policy or regulations. So, B&B development is usually subject to arbitrariness, while service quality cannot be guaranteed.

2) Low Distinctiveness and High Homogeneity

The style Wuyishan B&B is similar to that coming into being early in China, particularly it is built by reference to the B&B in Gulangyu Island, Xiamen, as well as in other mature domestic tourist areas. Although such fresh artistic style can give a fresh feeling within a period of time, its low distinctiveness will confront it with an increasingly intense competition on a national scale. Furthermore, it cannot reflect the cultural customs of Wuyishan, and therefore will affect the tourist flow volume. It is a challenge jointly faced the government and operators and the key to B&B development how to develop distinctive B&B houses by combining the style and characteristics of B&B in Mount Wuyi with the local “Min-Yue Culture”, “Zhu Xi Culture” and “tea culture”.

3) Insufficient Capital Input and Inadequate Propaganda

For B&B development in Wuyishan, much capital is required. With market shifting and tourism inclination varying, the current development pattern of B&B in Wuyishan (e.g., most cost of facility upgrading has to be borne by B&B operators, and only a small amount of government subsidies can be granted for a B&B building consisting of over 20 rooms), makes lots of operators feel disinclined for improvement or renovation. This hinders the development of B&B to some extent. Besides, in the present high-speed information era, there is a lack of strong propaganda for B&B in Wuyishan. In particularly, B&B is less competitive compared than Sangu Holiday Resort. Usually, individual operators conduct propaganda independently or resort to word-of-mouth promotion by friends. Despite some propaganda effect, it is too insignificant to improve the visibility of Wuyishan B&B.

4) Intense Competition against the Traditional Hotels in the Holiday Resort

The star-rated hotels and economical hotels in Sangu Holiday Resort, Wuyishan are strong competitors of B&B, for the reason that the lodging facilities in the Holiday Resort can meet basic accommodation requirements in terms of both location and quantity. Currently, Sangu Holiday Resort receives most tourists visiting Wuyishan, and in spite of short supply in busy seasons, the cost of many lodging facilities is hard to recover as a slack season comes in October each year, so some operators have to exit the market. Therefore, For Wuyishan B&B, a way must be thought out to attract tourists and recover the capital input in B&B development.

5) Increasingly Serious Environmental Issues

B&B development necessarily entails the exploitation of local land resources. This means that the local ecological environment may be damaged to same extent, yet a good ecological environment is important to Wuyishan, and that ecological environmental protection is a national requirement for sustainable development. Hence, it is a great challenge faced by Wuyishan B&B how to maintain the sustainable development of the ecological environment during its development. Furthermore, the development of tourism necessarily entails the visit of tourists, and lots of tourists' visit may disturb the local residents' life, thus it may be possible to disrupt the local social cultural environment.

V. COUNTERMEASURES FOR B&B DEVELOPMENT IN WUYISHAN

A. Standardizing Management to Enhance the Brand Quality of B&B

At present, clear B&B management measures haven't been formulated yet in Mainland China, but as B&B becomes increasingly popular with tourists, all parts of China have fallen over each other to develop B&B, making it tricky to guarantee the product quality, without exception of Wuyishan. Hence, a sound standardized management system must be established as an important guarantee for the steady and healthy development of B&B in Wuyishan.

Second, Wuyishan Tourist Administration should set up a specialized B&B management department or management association to organize and guide the development of B&B, offer professional guidance to registered operators, and actively communicate with every department concerned to assist in modifying and perfecting related B&B system regulations and facilitate the legalization of local B&B, and help get marketing resources from the government to create opportunities for Wuyishan B&B to participate in tourism exhibitions, conduct propaganda and gain further studies.

In addition, the Wuyishan government should offer to enhance the quality of B&B service, and guide B&B development, so that operators' management ideas could be geared to international standards, to build a good image for B&B [3].

B. Building Creative Theme Styles to Meet Pluralistic Market Demands

First, B&B should be developed by reference to the legends and customs about Min-Yue culture, to design theme rooms based on Min-Yue culture. For instance, rooms could be furnished and decorated with the legendary stories of Min-Yue clan, the utensils used by the Min-Yue people for daily production and living, the costumes worn by the ancient Min-Yue people and the serpent totem worshiped by them. Second, B&B development can be based on “Neo-Confucianism”, namely something related to “Neo-Confucianism” can be applied to B&B development. For instance, a Zhu Xi statue could be placed in the reception hall, the hall could be designed in the style of the schoolroom where Zhu Xi gave lectures, and Zhu Xi’s classics could be provided for tourists to read; the interior could be designed in the style of the quaint rooms where ancient literati lived, with a screen inscribed with Zhu Xi’s writings placed in the room, so that tourists might feel as if they were in time travel. Third, Wuyishan B&B could be developed based on “Wuyi tea culture”. For combination of “tea culture” with B&B, tea art show could be held regularly in B&B, and operators might as well make and taste tea with guests within a given time to explain guests tea knowledge and the tea culture that guests want to know, so that guests could have their demand for accommodation in B&B met while relaxing themselves in tea aroma.

C. Using Multiple Marketing Strategies to Innovate B&B Marketing Capability

For B&B industry, a great many customers may be attracted from multiple marketing channels by technology information and multiple marketing strategies. These channels include network platform, tourism exhibition, print media and microblog, etc.

The use of the Internet has been increasingly common in China, and many B&B operators sell products on the Internet. Similarly, most of B&B operators in Wuyishan sell their products on ly.com, ctrip.com and other relevant travel platforms, and that they just sell accommodation services, while very few sell accommodation services in combination with other tourism projects. Therefore, for marketing in Wuyishan B&B development, a professional website might as well be established to sell accommodation services with other local tourism projects. Second, the facilities in Wuyishan B&B and the landscape in the scenic area could be put on display on the Internet, or presented to tourists in a video or cartoon, to arouse their consumption motivation.

Third, an integrated platform can be established with the aid of IT professionals to have products sold in more ways. Both Wuyishan government and B&B operators should have an idea of strategic alliance and carry out promotional activities

by cooperating with tourism-related sectors such as travel publishing industry in providing tourists with B&B vouchers or offering a discount to them.

D. Reasonably Pricing to Enhance the Cost Performance of B&B

As shown by the questionnaire data, the maximum acceptable price for most tourists is RMB200 or so, and an exorbitant price will be unacceptable to tourists, while a lower price will not be able to cover the operating cost. So, B&B pricing should not only meet tourists’ requirements for economical efficiency, but also leave room for profit making, or unsatisfactory services or low-quality products may be offered. Since tourists usually pay attention to the cost performance of a product, service quality should be further enhanced in the course of B&B development to improve the cost performance of B&B.

VI. CONCLUSION

The development of B&B tourism in Wuyishan, as part of lodging industry, can not only resolve the local employment issue to a certain extent, but also help create new tourism products for its tourism development to promote the growth of the local tourism economy. However, the alternation and development of Wuyishan B&B are still beset with lots of problems, which need to be jointly resolved by the Wuyishan government and B&B operators. As for what does matter to B&B development in Wuyishan, it is imperative to develop a set of B&B management measures and put forward opinions on infrastructure improvement, combine Wuyishan B&B with the local tourism resources and historical cultural characteristics, and develop uniquely attractive high-quality B&B products. Besides, widespread propaganda could be conducted on the strength of new media, to enable Wuyishan B&B, as a highlight of travel in Wuyishan, to help further raise the profile of Wuyishan.

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