

The Importance of Community Participation on Ancient Village Tourism Development of China

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ABSTRACT

Ancient villages contain rich historical and cultural resources, which plays an important role in promoting the historical and cultural development of a country. The development of ancient village tourism is actually a kind of inheritance of history and culture of China, and also contributes to the local economic development. However, in the process of ancient village tourism development, the conflicts between community residents and tourism development is increasingly prominent. This paper aims to explore the new mode of community participation in ancient village tourism to promote the sustainable development of Ancient village tourism in China.

Keywords: *community participation, ancient village, tourism development, China.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ancient villages contain rich historical, cultural and ecological resources. The protection and development of ancient villages is a complex project integrating space protection, material cultural heritage protection and natural ecological environment. [1] Due to this nature, the conversation and development could be a huge task, which calls for the involvement of all the stakeholders. Obviously, local communities' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism development may have a huge impact on the sustainable tourism development as the ancient villages has a direct link with the livelihood of the local people.[2]However, the rapid development of tourism development already put heavy toll on the local social, economic and environmental development. Mass tourism inevitably bring about irreversible damage to the cultural heritage and ecological environment of the ancient villages.[2] The main cause of this problem is lack the participation of local community in the planning decision-making process. Many scholars already argue that the community empowerment can play a key role in the sustainable tourism development of ancient villages. However, in many developing countries, like China, crafting tourism development policy is largely decided by the government, this top-down approach may have its limits in the long term.[3]Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess how ancient village tourism development under current Chinese national policies. This study may not

focus on solving specific problems and issues that occurred in each tourist attractions. What this study want to do is to integrate the findings of previous scholars and craft a new model that help to achieve a balance between community participation and sustainable tourism development.

2. LITERATURE REIEW

2.1. Community participation in tourism development

Community participation in tourism development can be seemed as process, which enables all the residents in the tourist destination participate in the strategic development and implementation of tourism project .[4]Finding the potential for tourism development always be the top priority for governments at all levels. However, many tourism planners usually in a rush to increase the revenue of the local governments without taking the needs of the residents into consideration. Therefore, this deed inevitably caused the conflicts between tourists and residents of host community.[5]As one of the most important stakeholders of the tourist destination, the attitude and behaviors of local residents can directly and indirectly affect the sustainable development tourist attractions, regardless of positive or negative impact.[6]Through the help of community participation the top-down approach of tourism development largely decided by the

government can incorporate the ideas of residents and narrow the misunderstandings among residents, governments and tourists, which contributing the building of a democratic community.[7]Moreover, if local residents participate in the process of decision making, they may have a more positive attitude towards the tourism development of ancient villages and they may try their best to preserve the traditional way of life.[8]

2.2. The development status of ancient Village tourism in China

Compared with western developed countries, the protection of ancient village developed much later.[9]With the economic and social development and the sustainable development goals proposed by the United nations. Chinese government began to focus more on the development and preservation of the ancient villages, In 2008, The State Council issued the Regulations on the protection of famous historical and cultural cities, towns and villages, and the 13th Five-Year Plan further listed the protection of traditional culture and natural heritage as a major cultural project.[1]At the current stage, the government-led tourism development mode has largely promote the economic development of ancient villages and companies pay more attention to chasing profits rather than shoulder their social responsibility.[10]However, we can't ignore the fact that this top-down approach has its limits, In terms of the tourism development and conservation of ancient villages, there is a general problem of insufficient public participation. The indigenous people of ancient villages rarely have the opportunity to participate in the discussion and implementation of tourism policies, and It's impossible for them to have the right to make decisions on the tourism protection and development. Even if they can take part in, it is often in disguised forms.[11]

3. INIBITORS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE TOUSIM DDEVELOPMENT IN ANCIENT VILLAGES OF CHINA

According to many scholars, community participation can contribute more to the sustainable tourism development of ancient villages. While, when it comes to the implantation stage, the main concern would turn to generating economic benefits rather than promoting sustainable tourism[12]. Actually, the community involvement in tourism only at basic stage in China, the ingenious people can get little real benefits. The reason why community participation can't be effectively used may be conclude by the following reasons:[13]

3.1. The tourism policies of local governments has not fully considered the needs of indigenous people

Currently, in many ancient villages indigenous people only play a passive role in the decision-making process. One main reason for this phenomenon is that many residents in ancient villages are farmers, they tend to have poor educational background and lack stable economic income. Local government think there is no need for them listen to their needs. For example, tourism development may transform lots of farmlands into tourist attractions.The local governments may give economic compensation to the indigenous people as compensation for the acquisition of land for tourism construction. However this measure may have an adverse impact on the livelihood of next generation, because many villagers are farmers, without enough farmland to make a living, the local economy may rely heavily on the tourism, which makes local economic development less resilient.[14]Furthermore, most local governments only focus on promoting ancient villages to tourists without thinking about mass tourism may destroy local culture and traditional way of life. Meanwhile, these measures may break the ecological balance of ancient villages.[15]

3.2. Residents protection awareness is weak and unable to participate in tourism decision-making process

3.2.1. Young people:

With the diversification of income sources, well-educated young labor force choose to work out of town or develop in developed areas. Among them, more people think that the development and protection of ancient villages is only the business of the older generation and has little to do with them.[16]Therefore, the expert knowledge and skills acquired by them for sustainable tourism development has not improved significantly.[17]

3.2.2. Old people:

Since most people who stay in village are elderly people, their educational background are poor, most of the senior are under high school degree. meanwhile, the lack of related professional knowledge training and good tourism development management experience leads to poor tourism service consciousness and attitudes. [18]

3.3. lack the fund from private investors and improvement of tourist infrastructure

Many venture capital investors think that the ancient village tourism development lack clear revenue model. Though with the support of national policy, the local government do not have a clear development schedule

to improve the infrastructure of the local community. For example, during the tourism peak season, such as national holiday, there are not enough star hotels and restaurants to accommodate so many tourists. Meanwhile, this lead to the reduction of employment rate of local people. In the long term, the lack of necessary infrastructure facilities may have a negative impact on the local residents perception of local tourism development, they may unwilling to participate in the tourism planning, also the venture capital investor may see this area not worthy of investing in.[19]

4. SOLUTIONS

4.1. The government discussed appropriate land allocation policies with local residents

In many cases, the most prominent problem exists in community participation would be the lack of land. Therefore, the top priority for the local government is to negotiating with indigenous people about the land distribution policy. This measure can help to promote more sustainable and balanced community.[20]

4.2. Establish a sustainable partnership model

Ancient village sustainable tourism development can be a huge task, which means the problems or crisis we face are too complex for any government, individuals or organizations to tackle alone. Especially when it comes to striking a balance between different stakeholders, partnership becomes all and more important. When the local governments deliver their services, it's important for them to listen to what the local people really need. [14]Thus, the tourism development mechanism can deliver more tangible results to the local community.

4.3. providing local people with educational program not only focused on service training

There is a Chinese proverb that says: teaching one to fish is better than giving him a fish. Apart from teaching local people to deliver better services to tourists, the tourism agency, educational institution or governments could also provide them with tourism entrepreneurial activities, which means the development of ancient villages can not only benefit my own generation, but also for the generations to come. If local people can have this kind of entrepreneurial skill they may rely heavily on the farmland or tourism, when they are provide with more useful knowledge or resources, they may be able to make their own choices about how to improving their living environment.[19]

5. Conclusion

According to the united nation sustainable development goals, tourism development are of great

importance of the wellbeing of people. As a permeant member of the united nations, China has contribute its own wisdom and efforts to the poverty alleviation. Thus, the sustainable development of ancient village tourism can be seemed as an important part of poverty reduction.[21]The year 1980 marks the starting point that Chinese government began to improve the industrial structure in rural areas. Over the past four decades rural tourism development has made huge progress, which not only increase the revenue of local government, reduce the unemployment rate but also lead to the industrial transformation of many ancient villages. Despite the progress we made, we can not ignore the fact that, there still exist a lot of space for improvement. Lack of community participation in the tourism planning and decision-making process would be the most prominent problem. Apart from tourism development, poverty alleviation and agricultural development could also be the task that need to handle in the process of tourism development. Since indigenous people are the core member of the ancient villages, when making development policies, the governments and travel agencies should also take their needs and interests into account. [19] To enhance the level of community participation more effective measures should be taken. For example: more comprehensive and equable income distribution system should be provided for the local residents. The public consultation program on ancient village development should be properly arranged to cater the daily arrangements of residents. Last but not least, suitable training courses should be provide for the indigenous people to improve their awareness of cultural heritage protection and help them to put forward more concrete, useful and tangible suggestions in the decision-making process.[22]

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