

Innovation of Tourism Poverty Alleviation Model: Stakeholder Perspective

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Abstract

The research has included the stakeholder theory in regional tourism poverty alleviation study and emphasized the significance of community residents' involvement in tourism managing process as a core stakeholder and their equal chance of the shared interests. In addition, to construct a new model of tourism poverty alleviation and clarify its mechanism through the comprehensive analysis of other stakeholders' interest appeals.

Key words: Poverty alleviation; Community residents; Interest coordination; Tourism stakeholders

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INTRODUCTION

Li Song, Xinhua reporter has published the “*Poverty Alleviation: For Rich or Poor?*” Special report on *China Comment* in February, 2013 through spot investigation in chongqing, Yunnan, and other provinces. According to the report that “the government in the three gorges reservoir areas in Chongqing, especially in Wulin mountain areas promote rural tourism positively and give financially supporting policies, while most of the poor said they didn't benefit from it”. The “outsider” has become the largest beneficiaries (Li, Zhou, Ji, & Lian,

2013). As the core tourism stakeholder, community residents should enjoy the greatest benefits from tourism development, but their interests are neglected and deprivation of other stakeholders in practice.

This paper comprehensive analysis various stakeholders' interest appeals, interest conflicts and coordination, then construct a new model of tourism poverty alleviation has great realistic meaning on sustainable tourism poverty alleviation work, social harmony and stability.

1. CONCEPT AND CATEGORIES ABOUT STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder is a management concept. In 1984, Freeman defined it in his book *The Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Analysis Method* as “those who can influence the realization of business objective or affected by corporate goals of individuals or groups” (Sun, 2005). Subsequently, stakeholder theory is introduced into tourism, and applied to tourism development, planning, operation and management fields, focuses on community residents as a core stakeholder should be involved in the management process, interest distribution and environmental protection, and share the benefits fairly.

Mendelow used interest matrix model analysis method to define the main stakeholders in the tourism development, and set up criterion of identification stakeholders through the connection degree of tourism and the interests of the stakeholders, and stakeholders can exert its influence (Zhang & Wu, 2002). According to this criterion, tourism stakeholders can be divided into five categories: community, tourists, local government, tourism enterprises and pressure groups (Liu, 2010).

Each country has its own political system, social structure, tourism development in stages, meanwhile relevant stakeholder participate in tourism, the participation ways, participation degrees, and participation motivations are also different (Tong, 2005). This paper combined with the reality of tourism

development in poor areas, analyzed tourism stakeholders and structural between them, and confirmed that the main tourism stakeholders include: community residents, local government, tourism operators and tourists.

2. THE MAIN CHARACTERS AND INTERESTS OF TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS

The interests of different stakeholders have different needs, and the interaction and coordinating of these interests are related to the degree of tourist destination interests to create, are related to regional tourism sustainable development.

2.1 Local Government

With the gradual transformation of the social system in China, the central government devolved the state-owned control right to local government. The local government gradually strengthens the regional economic activities and becomes the leader of the tourism scenic spots development. Its role behavior includes to make the tourism development policy, formulate the overall tourism development planning, and strengthen the management of community residents, tourists and tourism operators. Through the play multiple roles in regional tourism development, several big demands will be realized: Increase financial income through investment promotion and propaganda to attract more tourist; provide more jobs, alleviate the pressure of the local employment, increase the residents income and share the benefits of tourism development to realize the coordinated of regional economy and tourism development.

2.2 Tourism Enterprises

In order to obtain tourism management remuneration, many investors inject capital to tourism scenic spots and play a dual role in recent years: On the one hand they has become pushers in regional tourism development through injection visitor flow, logistics, cash flow, information flow to poor areas; on the other hand, it is the core interests for investors to pursuit of economic efficiency maximization. For the excellent returns, they often excessively pursuit short-term economic interests and damage the environment and resources, leading to environmental protection and development separation in operation period; meanwhile they are playing a mercenary saboteur role through deprivation resident's survivable resources and stimulation the contradiction between community residents and tourism operators (Pleumarom, 2012).

2.3 Local Residents

Community residents are not only the master of tourism destination, and the important link to connection economic benefit, social benefit and environmental

benefit during regional tourism development, but also the core stakeholders in tourism development. They played a special role in the tourism development. They are the main interest body, the component of the social environment, tourism operators and community environmental supervisors which have the dynamics and multiplicity role in the community. Acquire tourism revenues are the core for community residents to participate in tourism.

Their fundamental interest demands are as follows: Increase the employment opportunities and commercial opportunities; Ensure that local residents are employed priority; use local raw materials to process tourism commodities as far as possible; open service facilities and environmental protection facilities to local residents; maintain the local cultural tradition, understand and respect each other.

2.4 Tourists

The role of tourists is tourism experience, propagandist and donors. Pursuit high quality tourism experience is the core interests of tourists. They hope to meet their compensation and relief, get rid of the pressure from work and life, experience close feel the life and production of local residents, get an excellent tourism experience; They also like to having fresh food, tasting green vegetables, experiencing traditional courtyard living, doing hard farming work, entertaining farmers' plays, and purchasing indigenous products from farm families. For them, as far as possible consume local raw materials and services, increase knowledge, rich cultural experience at the same time also realizes the support and charitable donation in poor areas.

3. INTERESTS CONFLICT AND COORDINATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS

Community residents, the local government, tourism operators and tourists the four types of stakeholders in the process of tourism development, are in pursuit of self-interest maximization as the goal, and the scarcity of available resources, which determine the inevitable interest conflict between the four types of stakeholders.

Local people who participate in the tourism industry, will surely hurt the vested interests of other stakeholders. In order to balance the interests between community residents and other stakeholders, the best way is to seek common interests in conflict, guarantee under the premise of mutual interest to achieve and realize its own optimization interests.

3.1 Local Government and Community Residents

According to the *Land Management Law of the People's Republic of China* regulation, land can be divided into

state-owned land and the farmer collective land on the basis of ownership nature and use right. The ownership of natural resources such as rivers, forests, lakes which can be used as tourism development are owned by the state, while local government on behalf of the state to control of the state-owned land and play the state-owned assets agent role.

Firstly, land circulation and the compensation system are not sound in china, the local government (mainly the land administrative departments) directly transfer the state-owned land and collective land, the benefits which community collective organizations gain from land use and land compensation are often lower than the market value, while the local government has sold land to tourism developers and gained profit higher than the market price, it's early unfair distribution between local government and community collective organizations;

Secondly, the local government officials because of lagging notion, they take leading attitude and unilaterally decide the tourism development policies, while ignoring the community resident interest;

Thirdly, local people because of the limitation of their own quality, capital and participation ability, they seldom participate in tourism management, while had to bear the negative effects of tourism development;

Lastly, with the tourism development benefits increasing year by year, local government administrative often take privilege of absolute authority way to share the benefits of tourism development such as the formation of local enterprises to participate in tourism management, improve tax ratio and charging standards, monopoly restriction business scope, thus may cause the conflicts between local government and local community.

Despite there are interest distribution conflicts between local government and community, local government take fully into account work performance and livelihood of people, they provide more jobs for local people, alleviate the pressure of the local employment, increase their income, and share the tourism development dividends through the scenic spots development leading to the development of related industries, and finally realize the coordination between regional economy and tourism development. Local government and local people have the same interest demand on this point.

Therefore the local government should actively guide, encourage and support local residents to participate in the tourism development, and provide preferential policies, strengthen education training to community residents, and ensure that the subject status of the residents to participate in the tourism industry. Only pay attention to the interests of the community, local government can obtain the understand and support, and promote the harmonious development of tourism destination.

3.2 Tourism Enterprise and Local People

Tourism enterprise as an independent legal person, they make great profits from the development of the scenic

spot through rent-seeking behavior, prompt local government to make compromises on tourist destination tax, land requisition, subsequent basic living, infrastructure construction and so on. So they will become the biggest beneficiary; while community residents as prime creator and successor of folk culture tourism resources, they should become the direct beneficiaries of tourism development, due to the limitation of participation ability, but have to bear the negative effects of tourism development. With the enlargement of interests distribution gap between tourism enterprise and local people, the conflicts are inevitable.

Although there are interest conflicts both sides, they also have common interests: Hospitality local residents and the exquisite tourism environment are also important cultural tourism resources to attract tourists. In order to share the tourism resources value, tourism enterprise may take measures as follows: Firstly, tourism enterprise provide employment or job creation, help residents to build travel small micro enterprise, provide tourism training and related technology transfer, increase the supply of tourism product factors, and improve the ability of community residents to participate in tourism. Secondly, in order to prevent tourism revenue leakage, tourism enterprise purchase tourism commodities such as tourism souvenirs, scenic transportation, entertainment service elements and so on should take priority to community residents and use local raw materials as far as possible, and earnestly guarantee distribution interests of community participate in tourism. Finally, tourism enterprise should take out a part of tourism profits for the improvement the community environment, building the public entertainment facilities and the traffic accessibility, setting up the enterprise image in the eyes of the public, making the balance between social benefit and economic benefit, and reducing the both sides conflicts.

3.3 Community Residents

Depending on the degree of close relationship with the tourism, local people can be roughly divided into four categories: the first one is directly involved in tourism accommodation, restaurant, tourism commodity management, special local product sales, tourist traffic service, the second one is employed by the tourism enterprises engaging in tourism business management staff, the third one is the tourism business elites—community committee cadres, and the last one is ordinary residents who seldom directly involved in tourism activities. The top three kinds of people belong to the “tourism residents”, the fourth class belongs to “the common residents”. Due to the different residents have different interests, so the conflict has become increasing year by year.

In the process of community participation in tourism development, local people are the community of interest

and have the common interests such as the community environment, residents living standards and community harmonious development. In order to maintain peace and harmony in the community, community residents should pay attention to the interests balance and coordination: (a) Make general equilibrium between the tour operator and the tourism business elites (village committee cadres), (b) Make general equilibrium between the tour operators, (c) Make interest coordination between directly engaged in tourism business people and does not directly engaged in tourism business people.

3.4 Tourists and Local People

With the development of tourism, more and more tourists flow into tourism destination and take destructive effects on the local tourism resources, the environment and local traditional culture. Despite the conflicts between tourists and community residents exists, they also have common interests on the tourism products and services to provide. Tourists get the perfect travel experience through consumption products and services, community residents

as the successors and creators of cultural tourism resources, they know how to show the tourism resources to attractive most tourists. Therefore, community residents participate in tourism product design, development, show its production, life, performance and service to tourists, and help them to get high quality tourism experience.

4. CONSTRUCT TOURISM POVERTY ALLEVIATION MODEL

Researchers use system theory to construct the tourism poverty alleviation model from stakeholder perspective. In this model, Community residents as the core, through interaction system with relevant three important stakeholders (local government, tour operators and tourists), then realize community residents to participate in decision, management, profit distribution, and environmental protection, enhance the self-development ability, and finally realize the sustainable development of

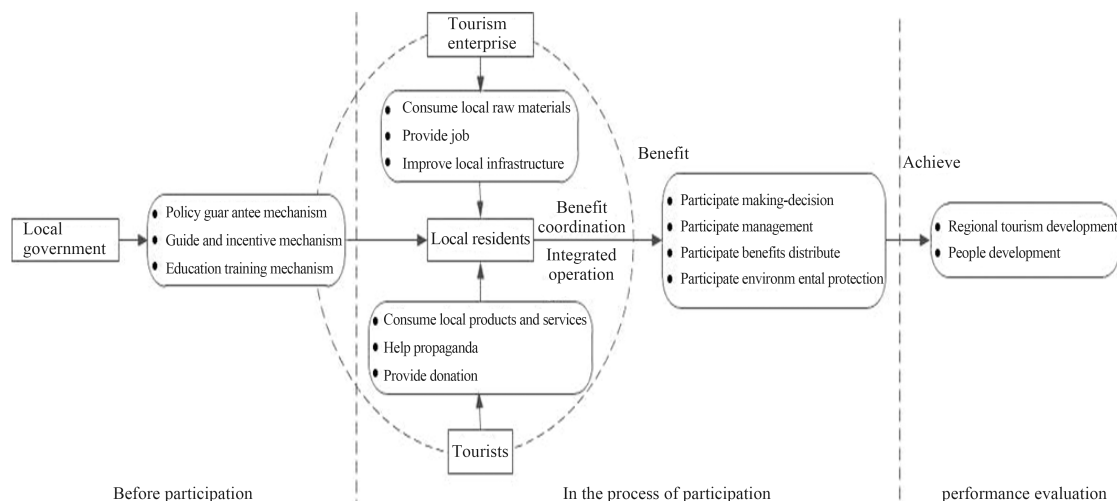


Figure 1
Innovation of Tourism Poverty Alleviation Model

regional tourism industry. It has some characteristics as follows:

4.1 Characteristics of Model

4.1.1 Goal Systematization

It is necessary to establish local people-dominant sustainable development of tourism poverty alleviation model, make people enjoy tourism dividend fairly, get opportunity through the interactions and interest coordination between community residents and tourism stakeholders. At the same time, it put the emphasis on poverty reduction goals systematically, realize economic, social and environmental comprehensive effect and promote the tourism sustainable development through the government's macro guidance and strong support.

4.1.2 Smart Objective

The core of tourism poverty alleviation is how to make the poor benefit from tourism and increase the chance of development. Tourism poverty alleviation model based on the stakeholder perspective establishes the main status of the local residents, encourages people to participate in tourism as an important means to prevent the disparity between the rich and the poor.

4.1.3 Diversification of the Main Part

Tourism poverty alleviation based on stakeholder perspective which biggest advantage is that the government in tourism development can fully mobilize tourism administrative departments, news media, travel agencies, scenic spots, tourist traffic and community

residents to participate in tourism, increase the operability and improve the efficiency of the tourism poverty alleviation project.

4.2 Operation Mechanism of Model

4.2.1 Interest Expression Mechanism

Interest expression is an action which stakeholder take to realize their interests (Hou, 2006, p.18). It is a precondition for making a profit.

Firstly, improve community residents' ability of participation. Through the education to promote the cultural level, increase legal awareness, and rationally express their rights and interests.

Secondly, improve the system of villagers' autonomy. Villager committee implements democratic rights, carry out democratic Elections, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic supervision.

Again, widen the channels of the villagers' political participation, encourage the establishment of various civil organizations and improve their ability to negotiate with the local government.

4.2.2 Interest Distribution Mechanism

Community participation in benefit distribution mechanism, is refers to the tourism stakeholders formed a series of rules which ensure the stakeholders gain relatively balanced revenues, and achieve sustainable development at the economic level (Pleumarom, 2012).

In regard to share of economic benefits, we should give full consideration to the residents around scenic areas who lost the basic survivability resources—land, and bear the negative effects of tourism development, they should enjoy tourism resources usufruct which attachments to land.

In regard to share of non-economic interests, managers should give priority to hire local residents as the same condition; strengthen training to make people grasp the basic service consciousness and service skills; provide technical support and encourage residents to open small micro enterprises; use of local goods and services as far as possible, and reduce the leakage of tourism.

4.2.3 Interest Compensation Mechanism

Firstly, reasonable land compensation for residents. Local government may adopt the way of land investment at a discount to obtain profits; provide employment position and give grants to land-lost residents to operate tourism enterprises.

Secondly, give fair compensation for the residents who not engaged in tourism. They are committed to preserving traditional village landscape, heritage cultural and rural life, so they are consisted of rural cultural tourism resources and have the right to earn profits from tourism development. Local village committee should give them the corresponding tourism economic benefits through collective funding or tourism interest secondary distribution.

4.2.4 Interest Incentive Mechanism

Incentive mechanism is the way to mobilize enthusiasm and initiative of residents to participate in tourism.

First of all, Local government guide residents engaged in special service which large tourism enterprises can't afford; provide local regional characteristics of tourism products and services.

Secondly, guide the residents involved in tourism through the investment such as the land, labor, tourism resources, individual capital and technology shares to participate in enterprise management. The profit allocation proportion according to their cost and the scenic operation performance to ensure that residents' income in tourism.

CONCLUSION

As the stakeholder, Community residents should share the dividend of tourism development. However, their legal rights are always ignored, deprived and being pushed in a marginalized status of the interest distribution. It is mainly owing to the benefit pursuits of the other stakeholders. This research introduces the stakeholder theories to the investigation of regional tourism poverty alleviation, it stresses on the importance of community residents' role as the main stakeholder. In addition, they should take part in the tourism managing process and evenly share the benefits generated from the management. The investigation also further confirms findings in Scholar Tosun's (2005) research: "The involvement of the community residents in tourism industry can better develop the regional tourism and raise the poverty level of community residents as well as individual ability development of these residents."

Based on the identification of the stakeholders, to analyze the roles and interest appeals to the four relevant stakeholders. Moreover, through the residents' involvement in the tourism alleviation mode construction, to ensure that every stakeholder can optimize the individual profits in the premise of assuring the sharing benefits.

To build up the tourism alleviation model, the participation of the community is significant. Firstly the researcher began with the system theory by considering the community residents as a core part. Secondly is to produce the participation system of poverty alleviation by interacting with the other three relevant stakeholders (local government, tourism managers, tourists). Thirdly is to build up a government lead model of tourism alleviation through interest coordination and community interest integration. Finally to achieve the goal of community residents' involvement in tourism decision-making, tourism managing, interest distributing and environment protecting. Besides, ensure the benefits of community residents in the regional tourism development

and enhance their abilities of self-development. Therefore, to better accomplish the sustainable development of regional tourism.

The operational mechanism is of the essence in the model establishment of tourism poverty alleviation. Furthermore, the core of establishing the operational mechanism is to set up a balanced interest mechanism among the local government, foreign tourism enterprises and the community residents when developing tourism. It is also important to coordinate the rights relationship among the stakeholders by using interest expression mechanism, benefit distribution mechanism, benefit compensation mechanism and interest incentive mechanism. More importantly, to feasibly enhance the dividend sharing ability of community residents and to balance the internal force of the community with the external force is the bases in terms of ensuring the community rights.

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