

On the Optimization of Ethnic Minority Residents' Recognition of Tourism Empowerment

—An Empirical Study on Maliuxi Village

Juan Huang

Wuhan University of Engineering Sciences, Wuhan, China

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Abstract: An empirical study was conducted in this paper to analyze the tourism empowerment recognition of ethnic minority residents via the data collected from questionnaire investigation in Maliuxi Village. The results show that: (1)The local minority residents are satisfied with the living environment and have a high sense of cultural value identity of traditional ethnic groups. (2)In the development of local tourism, it is not enough to merely consider the interests of villagers without mutual understanding and communication, because residents have no access to decision making. (3) The participation degree of local minority residents in tourism is higher than that of the satisfaction towards tourism development. The findings above show that although the development of tourism has not met the expectation of residents, they still devote themselves actively into the business. Consequently, suggestions on the promotion of ethnic minority residents' empowerment recognition were proposed.

1. Introduction

Ethnic village tourism has become one of the hot spots of tourism development in China. Therefore, for the pavement of the research on tourism empowerment of ethnic residents, an on-line retrieval with the key word “tourism empowerment” was conducted on CNKI, with 207 relevant articles acquired. According to the year of publication and the theme, these papers are divided into three categories. The first stage: The preliminary periods (2001-2009) during which 16 papers were published in total, including 10 in English and 6 in Chinese. Since 2008, Chinese scholars have begun to explore the framework and feasibilities of applying the theory of tourism empowerment to China's tourism in practice^[1]. The second stage: the developing period (2010-2013) during which dozens of papers were published, focusing on the recognition of tourism empowerment^[2], the economy empowerment^[3], the institutional empowerment^[4], and etc.. Furthermore, The research scope also began to expand from the tourism in ethnic villages to that in oceanic islands^[5], ancient villages^[6] and historical blocks^[7]. Obviously, in the second stage the researches were deepened and stretched from practical research to that on theoretical framework arrangement, with diversified research perspectives. The third stage: the maturity period (2014-2019) during which the number of papers published has been on a first-increasing-then-decreasing trend. The relevant themes of the research include: the evaluation of empowerment, the system design, the satisfaction towards empowerment,^[8] the selection of participating mode for females, the psychological empowerment, the targeted poverty alleviation and etc. Those researches are of diversified methods and generalized research content.

2. About the Research and the Methods

2.1 Research Object

The research object of this paper is Maliuxi Village, located in Huangjindong Town, Xianfeng County, Tujia and Miao Autonomous Region, Enshi. There are 8 villager groups under the jurisdiction of the village, with a total of 365 families(1280 residents). The minority ethnic groups are mainly consisted of Tujia, Miao and Qiang, accounting for 98% of the total population of the

village. They live in a valley of 8.5 kilometers long^[9].

The reasons that ethnic minority residents in Maliuxi Village be taken as the research objects are as follows: firstly, the local tourism began to experience its development in 2013. That's the time period local residents knew little about tourism; second, according to relevant investigations, aside from the collective ownership in the early time, the tourism management of local ethnic minority villages was to a large extent at residents' individual disposal, which leads to residents' failure to participate in the process of decision making, exploration, planning, management, and supervision of the local tourism program. This is a typical representative phenomenon of similar ethnic tourism villages in China.

2.2 Research Methods

Great importance to the authenticity of the data is attached to the research in this paper. Therefore interview and questionnaire survey was adopted in the research.

The questionnaire is designed based on Regina Scheyvens Framework of tourism empowerment, with reference to relevant indicators of community residents' perception and attitude on tourism , and puts forward five factors which influence participation willingness, namely, "economic empowerment", "political empowerment", "psychological empowerment", "cultural and environmental empowerment" and "social empowerment", with 43 questions in total.

The questionnaire includes demographic characteristics of residents, community residents to participate in tourism economic empowerment, political empowerment, social empowerment and etc.. Because the permanent ethnic residents in Maliu Village suffer a great loss, the distribution and collection of the questionnaire is difficult. 100 questionnaires were distributed with 90 valid questionnaires returned. The response rate was 90%. The data collected therefrom was analyzed via SPSS v17.0.

3. Results and Analysis

3.1 Economic Empowerment

Table 1 the Indicators of Community Tourism Empowerment

Measurement dimension	Measurement index Average	Dimension mean
Economic empowerment	Positive :ZJ01 The promotion of economic development by tourism (3.714286);ZJ02 The improvement of living standard(3.912088);ZJ03 The increase of personal income(3.21978);ZJ04 The increase of employment opportunities(3.175824)	3.198
	Negative :ZJ05 Rising price(3.483516);ZJ06 The widening gap between the rich and the poor(3.725275)	3.604
Political empowerment	Positive :ZZ07 The management committee representing villagers(2.494505);ZZ08 The authority representing villagers)(2.142857);ZZ09The enterprise representing villagers(1.582418);ZZ10 Villagers participating in decision making(2.791209)	2.253
	Negative :ZZ11 Failing to represent villagers(3.615385);ZZ12 Villagers' insufficient access to decision making(3.384615)	3.5
Social empowerment	Positive :ZS13 The cohesion of villagers enhanced(3.747253);ZS14 The social development of village games promoted(3.857143);ZS15 Infrastructure improved(3.714286);ZS16 The advancement of women(3.538462);ZS17 The maintenance of traditional organizations(3.516484)	3.675
	Negative :ZS18 The deterioration of public order(2.296703);ZS19 Competition among villagers(3.252747)	2.775
Psychological empowerment	Positive :ZX20 The sense of belonging of villagers enhanced(3.659341);ZX21 Villagers' sense of pride improved(3.758242);ZX22 Education and training accepted(3.67033)	3.696
Cultural and environmental empowerment	Positive (Cultural):ZW23 Traditional culture affirmed(3.945055);ZW24 The protection and inheritance of culture(3.769231);ZW25 Sense of pride for culture(3.582418)	3.766
	Positive(Environmental) :ZH26 Tourism improving ecological environment(3.626374);ZH27 Environmental recognition enhanced(3.67033);ZH28 Environment: the foundation of development(3.813187);ZH29 Feeling proud of the environment(3.813187)	3.731

Table 1 indicates that the average value of positive empowerment indicators of economic empowerment is 3.1978, which is not high among the five empowerment dimensions. The recognition degree of improving living standard and tourism promoting economic development is relatively higher, but the recognition degree of increasing employment opportunities and personal income is low.

On the other hand, the average value of negative empowerment of economic empowerment is high, which indicates that the negative impact of tourism development on economy is also significant, which is mainly manifested in the widening gap between the rich and the poor, which is consistent with the description that village cadres only bring tourism groups to their own homes or relatives' homes.

3.2 Political Empowerment

It can be seen from table 1 that the average positive indicator of political empowerment is only 2.2572, which is the lowest among the five dimensions of positive empowerment, indicating that Maliuxi ethnic minority residents in Xianfeng County are not very satisfied with the local tourism management committee and the administration bureau because their interests are not fully realized. At the same time, the identity degree of the negative indicators of political empowerment is relatively high, which indicates that the dimension of political empowerment is likely to be the weakness of village competition tourism empowerment.

3.3 Social Empowerment

Table 1 reveals that the average value of social empowerment (negative empowerment) is 2.774, relatively lower. The average value of five positive empowerment indicators ranks between 3.5 and 3.8, which indicates that villagers have a better recognition of social empowerment.

3.4 Social Empowerment

The average value of psychological empowerment in Table 1 is 3.6959, which is in the middle position in the five dimensions of positive empowerment, indicating that the villagers' recognition of psychological empowerment is in the upper middle level.

3.5 Cultural and Environmental Empowerment

The total average value of cultural empowerment is 3.7556, which is the highest in the dimension of positive empowerment, indicating that the cultural empowerment brought by tourism has been widely recognized by Maliuxi residents. The total average value of environmental empowerment is 3.73076, ranking the second in the dimension of positive empowerment, which shows that Maliuxi residents also recognize the environmental empowerment, among which the two measurement indicators of environment is the basis of tourism development and proud of the environment, and people's environmental recognition has been greatly enhanced.

3.6 The Indicator System of the Willingness of Ethnic residents' Participating in the Development of Tourism

The indicator system of the willingness of ethnic residents' participation in the development of tourism includes the degree of tourism identity and that of participation. The degree of tourism identity is consisted of a measurement indicator whose average is 3.593407, and that of participation is consisted of two indicators whose average is 3.961538.

3.7 Summary

Generally speaking, the satisfaction towards community tourism empowerment is higher than that of environmental empowerment and cultural empowerment, and that of the political empowerment is the lowest. The above data shows that the residents of Maliuxi minority community in Xianfeng County are satisfied with the living environment and have a high sense of identity with the cultural value of the traditional ethnic groups. However, they are unsatisfied with the negative factors that residents' interests are not fully considered and that they have no access to

decision making.

As for the willingness of participation in the development of tourism, the participation degree is higher than the satisfaction towards the development of tourism. It indicates that although the development of tourism has not met the expectation of residents, they still devote themselves actively into the business. Also, it fully represents the passion and expectation towards their homeland.

4. Conclusions

4.1 The “Bottom-Up” Power Framework for the Community

It is necessary to construct the interest guarantee mechanism of community participation and establish the coordination mechanism of government, community and enterprise led by the government. The exploration, development, and protection of tourism largely depends on the joint effort of the three. The government and enterprises should consider the interests of the residents sufficiently. Playing a leading role, the government should also consider the interests of enterprises, give them more preferential policies, encourage them to operate boldly and better, and abolish unfair competitions to achieve better and faster development.

4.2 Cultural Empowerment--the Fundamental Solution to the Inheritance of Traditional Ethnic Culture

The cultural empowerment should be enhanced and unified planned, by which the natural environment and the development of local folk customs be combined. For instance, the entertainment square built in the scenic spot of Nv-er Village is a concentrated reflection of folk cultures consisted of Qiang, Tujia, Miao and etc. due to the ceremonial parties and ridottoes among ethnic minorities held every weekend, with diversified performance forms. This is an effective way to publicize local traditional culture and enhance national value identity. If condition permitted, the local ethnic culture could also be spread and publicized via entertainment programs and even apps, for instance, “Tik Tok”, which is benefited from the highly developed information technology.

4.3 The Guarantee of Local residents’ Interests Via Economic Empowerment

The local government of Maliuxi Village has a low identity of individual economic interests towards its residents, which is closely related to residents’ poor participation in the tourism development due to many negative factors such as their limited capacities, remoteness of their residence, which leads their failure to obtain benefits from the development of local tourism. Therefore, the local ethnic residents should be trained in skills to understand tourism related knowledge so as to be the guides for foreign tourists, get along with tourists in a friendly way, so as to attract a large number of tourists, and learn from the measures taken by the developed areas of ethnic village tourism.

4.4 Environmental Empowerment-- the Protection the Local Natural Environment

The environmental improvement should be implemented to plan tourism development for ethnic villages in accordance with local conditions. Besides, corresponding policies and regulations should be established to recognize the value of resources and environment. Furthermore, the environmental impact assessment system should be established to conduct necessary tourism environmental impact assessment before the tourism exploration of ethnic villages.

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