



Research on Community Participation in Environmental Management of Ecotourism

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Abstract

Ecological environment is the material base of the development of ecotourism. The ecotourism cannot develop well without high quality ecotourism environment. The goal of ecotourism development is to protect ecological environment, which is also the essential characteristic of ecotourism different from other kind of tourism. This paper tries to discuss the community participation in environmental management of ecotourism, aims to improve the awareness of participation and environmental protection among community residents and, to establish the mechanism of community participation in environmental management of ecotourism. In this way, can the community residents be benefit from ecotourism; and at the same time, the communities provide strong motive to protect the resources and environment of ecotourism well.

Keywords: Community participatio, Econtourism, Environmental management, Resource protection, Sustainable development

1. Introduction

Ecotourism is sustainable tourism, which is based on the ecological principle and sustainable development theory. Its aim is to conserve resources, especially biological diversity, and maintain sustainable use of resources, which can both bring ecological experience to travelers, conserve the ecological environment and gain economic benefit. Ecotourism establishes a harmonious symbiotic relationship between sightseeing visit and environmental protection, which can make the negative influence of travel to ecological environment be reduced to minimum extent by strict management, so as to ensure the everlasting utilization of resources. Ecotourism is very popular to travelers for its bases that emphasize on natural ecological environment and pay attention to ecological environment protection.

As early as 1982, Zhangjiajie National Forest Park had been built, which is the first forest park in china. Subsequently, the ecotourism activities had begun to appear and develop in China. Especially, depending on natural landscape superiority, the forest parks and nature reserves regard ecotourism as pillar industry of sustainable utilization of resources. However, although the development of ecotourism has brought economic interests to tourism destination, it has caused great influences to local ecological environment, such as too many artificial sceneries, the influx of tourists and tourism transport facilities in short time, more and more waste of water, gas and residue discharged by industry and so on. All of them have exceeded tourist environment capacity, which results in damage and pollution to ecological environment. Furthermore, a high rise of garbage packing has destroyed the natural landscape and illustrated water body in tourist scenes, that is, water eutrophication. According to related organizations investigation on 100 nature reserves above the provincial level, there has been 22 percent of nature reserves causing environment destruction because of ecotourism development, and 11 percent of them appearing tourism resources degradation.

Good ecological environment is not only the premise and basis of ecotourism, but also the important guarantee of state ecological safety. Therefore, in order to develop the ecotourism well, the ecological environment should be depended on, so as to promote the ecotourism development. Well how to promote ecotourism to develop healthy and coordinate is a new subject to us all.

2. The essence and connotation of ecotourism

Strictly speaking, to date, there has not been a uniform final conclusion on the definition of ecotourism among the scholars at home and abroad. The reason is not only that the understanding and comprehension of people toward ecotourism is continuously deepened, but also that many researchers, developers and business administrators artificially take their respective needs and garble a statement. Since 1980s, the studies on ecotourism have been prevailed all over the world.

Ecotourism is the necessary choice of the tourism development in certain phase; it is the best form of sustainable tourism; it is the concrete application of the principle of sustainable tourism in natural areas and certain social cultural regions.

This article argues that the connotation of ecotourism mainly embodies in the following aspects:

First, the destination of ecotourism refers to the natural regions that are subjected less interferences and pollutions.

Second, the progress of ecotourism emphasizes on the principle of ecological protection. Ecotourism pays much attention to the protection during its development and uses development to promote protection, which is the harmony and unification among economic benefit, social benefit and environmental benefit

Third, ecotourism is the green industry of high scientific and technological content, which needs multidisciplinary kinds of guiding and argumentation from ecologist, economist and sociologist, and needs to considerate the enduring ability of ecological environment and tourism resources; it is a kind of unique sustainable tourism and responsible tourism form that pays more attention to the continuity of ecology and cannot result in the environmental destruction or the decrease of the environmental quality.

Fourth, ecotourism pays much attention to the economic development of tourism destinations and the improvement of the living standard of local residents; the income of ecotourism should not only be used to protect the ecological environment but also benefit the local residents.

Fifth, ecotourism gives prominence to the educational function of ecological environment; the life style and environmental view of tourists can be changed through ecotourism activities, and the consciousness of protecting resources and environment can be improved.

In all, ecotourism should regard environmental education, science popularization and spiritual civilization construction as the core content, and really let itself be a grand school of people studying nature, loving nature and protecting nature.

3. Relationship between ecotourism and ecological environment

3.1 Ecological environment is the foundation of ecotourism

Environment is the material base of survival and development of human society. Man's materials production should be based on the exploitation and utilization of the environmental resources. Tourism is a kind of human's higher-level needs that meets individuals' spiritual. It is a wild wish to travel when social productivity is low or material life is not abundant. With the fast developing of economies and the rising standard of living, people began to have a well-off life after solving the food-and-clothing problems. In the premise that the basic survival conditions are satisfied, people have surplus money to pay traveling expenses. Meanwhile, people need novel, rich and enriched spiritual life to meet their enjoyment desire after the material living conditions getting greater improvement. The aim of travel is to add leisurely and carefree mood to human life, such as leisure, entertainment and vacation, thus the environment of tourism scenic spots is very important. Tourism environment is the one on which tourism industry rely for existence; environmental quality is the foundation of the existence of tourism. The development of tourism should be based on graceful sky, water and mountain, as well as environment protection. Only when the environment be protected well and natural landscape and humanities landscape be in a virtuous circle, can the travel desire of people be inspired and changed into real tourism demand.

So is the development of ecotourism. Ecotourism activities, ecotourism resources and ecotourism industry are all based on ecological environment. There is no ecotourism without graceful ecological environment. Graceful ecological environment is the material base of the ecotourism development. Chinese have a saying: "With the skin gone, what can the hair adhere to?" Therefore, the ecological environment can be seen as life source of the ecotourism. There is no ecotourism without high quality ecotourism environment.

3.2 Ecological environment protection is the goal of ecotourism

Ecotourism is the inevitable choice of the tourism development in certain phase. It is a best kind of sustainable tourism. The ecotourism development model is based on the sustainable development view, and its targets are human development and social progress. Meanwhile, the ecotourism development emphasizes on the harmonious development among economy, society, human being and nature, which is completely satisfied the criterion of sustainable development view. Besides, the ecological environment protection is also the essential characteristic of ecotourism different from other kind of tourism. Ecotourism is not only one kind of simple, ecological and natural tourism pattern, but also is the one that increases our responsibly on natural resources protection through tourism activities. Therefore, the connotation of ecotourism puts more emphasis on the conservation of natural landscape. It is one kind of high-grade tourist activity and education activity with sense of responsibility. The responsibilities of ecotourism include the protection of tourism resources, the respect for the economy, society and culture of tourism destination, the promotion of sustainable development of tourism destination and so on. The basic aim of ecotourism is to be close to nature, to protect nature and to maintain the ecological balance. The most important characteristic of the real ecotourism is

protection. By developing ecotourism, we can maximally follow the natural law of biodiversity, and fully embody the harmonies and unified ecological relationship between man and nature, and put an end to short-term economic activities, and seek for the unity coordinated with economics, society and ecology, and at last maintain the sustainable development of the resources and environment of tourism.

4. Environmental management of ecotourism and community participation

4.1 Community participation is the important character of ecotourism

Ecotourism has three typical characteristics by protection, economy and community participation, all of which are related to communities of tourist destination. The protection of ecotourism means protecting the environment and resources of ecotourism destination—including local communities. The economy of ecotourism means developing the economy of local communities of tourist destination. Both the protection and economy are the targets of ecotourism development; well the community participation is the effective method to realize the targets mentioned above. Ecotourism impliedly includes the model of community participation in tourism development, whose aim is to make the tourism development meet the demand of local development, and to make the communities appropriately set and market the norms of tour and industry's operation as well as reasonable financial source acquirement, so as to promote the quality of the resources and environment of communities. According to the ecotourism practice in all countries, community participation is an important part of ecotourism activities both in developed countries and developing countries.

4.2 Community participation provides a powerful motivation for resources protection of tourism areas

Local community is an important tie of binding the protection to the economic income and social benefit, and it is the core of stakeholders of ecotourism. The existence and development of local inhabitants are based on the resources and environment of ecotourism areas. The local inhabitants are both the beneficiaries after environmental optimization and the victims after ecological environment broken by ecotourism development. Community participation in ecotourism can make a positive promotion to the protection of ecotourism environment. For example, it can avoid the neglect of environmental and social benefits, and prevent from such phenomena as acquiring short-term benefit by sacrificing long-term benefit and environmental protection; meanwhile, it can also make the damage caused by tourism development be controlled in the limits of assimilation and self-purification of ecological environment, which keeps the ecosystem stable, so as to resolutely avoid the ecological environment deterioration possibly caused by unplanned predatory management or over-exploitation.

Community participation can mobilize all the social resources to administer the environment of the ecotourism destination. First, community participation itself has the feature by behavior style of internal convergence; all members of the community will construct a whole network of environmental protection construction under organizing coordination, which can closely supervise every community member and community unit. Second, the community can maximally call on the local residents to take part in the environmental protection activities. Besides, if the environmental protection consciousness is changed into social morality, the community members who have destroyed the ecological environment will be disdained by all other members; therefore, it is easy to be recognized that environmental protection regulations of the ecotourism destination is the common behavior criterion.

5. Measures of community participation in environmental management of ecotourism

5.1 Improve the consciousnesses of participation and environmental protection of the community residents

We can develop widespread community education among the community residents, cultivate the community residents' sense and ability of participation, improve their positive cognition of ecotourism development and environmental awareness of rights and obligations. Therefore, we should take some measures. First, we should let the community residents know what local environment and resources mean to them, and how many benefits the ecotourism protection can bring them, so as to stimulate their enthusiasm of participating in the ecotourism protection. Second, we should let them correctly understand the environment problems, and set up good environmental awareness, and keep civilized environmental behavioral habits, so as to devote themselves into controlling environmental pollution and improving the ecological environment.

5.2 Let the community residents share the benefits brought by ecotourism

During developing ecotourism activities, we should not only protect the fragile local ecological environment, but also benefit the local residents, both of them are more and more inseparable. Besides, we should absorb the community residents to take part in the ecotourism operation actively, increase the economic income, improve the living conditions, and share the benefits brought by ecotourism development. Under the driving of economic interests, the local residents participated in ecotourism may recognize that their income stems from the development of tourism industry. Well good natural environment and the continuation of biodiversity are the premise conditions of tourism development; protecting environment is to protect one's own economic interests. Therefore, we should change the habit of the community

residents from living on consuming resources to living on developing, marketing and managing resources, so as to not only relieve the pressure to resources protection, but also form relevant interest groups and resultant forces to biodiversity and ecological environment protection.

5.3 Propose the communities to change to the life style of environmental protection type

Community residents' daily life and work, economic activities, traditional customs and so on are close related to the ecological environment around as well as animal and plant resources in the natural reserve. For a long time, the residents in the ecotourism destination have lived on nature resources consumption; the abundant nature resources in ecotourism area have supplied them material basis for survival. These not only have caused environmental destruction and pollution, but also have been unfavorable to biodiversity protection. Therefore, the government should actively spread and apply new energys of environmental protection type, such as biogas, solar energy, power, briquette and so on, build the wastewater treatment plant for communities etc.; so as to form the life style of environmental protection type and realize the virtuous circle of environmental protection and community development

5.4 Establish decision-making mechanism in planning of ecotourism participated by communities

The community residents, especially those who long engage themselves in tourism activities, have a more intuitional understanding on the needs of tourists, can give some advice to the planners on the development of the ecotourism project and the distribution of facilities; meanwhile, they can offer useful reference to the environmental protection in ecotourism development process according to their long-history fit in the environment and, what's more, if they have participated and accepted the ecotourism project, they will be friendly and provide high quality service, which will improve the tourists' satisfaction to the ecotourism project,so as to achieve a better travel effect. Therefore, the management departments of tourism development should establish full-time branches of community management, and consider fully the interests of inhabitants, and guarantee the participation channel unimpeded, and form bulletin system and consultation system for significant happenings during the development and planning of tourism, and form veto system for improper important decisions in some tourism areas, and at last make sure that every tourism decision is discussed and studied by all parties.

5.5 Innovate the mechanism of the operation and management of ecotourism resources

The kind of internal incentive mechanism, which is able to stimulate the community residents consciously to take part in the protection of ecological resources they live by, is needed to protect the ecotourism environment and make the sustainable development of ecotourism come true. The mechanism should not only have the encouraging function of stimulating the community residents to participate in the ecological protection, but also be available to achieve the optimal management of the resources and the sustainable development of the community. Well the community residents carry out share cooperation of ecotourism with the ecotourism resources and the establishing of labor stock, thus they are both the shareholders and laborers in the development and management of ecotourism. All of them make those come true that the ecotourism resources change from "public"to "common", and the community residents become the real masters and actively participate in the ecotourism decisions and consciously maintain the ecotourism resources they live by. The basic aim of share cooperation of ecotourism is to arouse the enthusiasm of the participation of the community residents, so as to achieve aim to ecological environmental protection.

6. Conclusions

Ecological environment is the necessary condition and foundation of the ecotourism development. Well the community participating in ecotourism is favor of ecotourism environmental protection; the level of community participation in environmental management of ecotourism is based on the self-development of the community. Therefore, effective measures should be carried out. First, the government should supply teaching and training services, so as to improve the sense and ability of the participation of the residents. Second, we should establish the mechanism of community participation in environmental management of ecotourism; let the community residents benefit from ecotourism, so as to arouse their enthusiasm in participating in ecological environmental management and consciously maintain the resources and environment of ecotourism, and at last achieve the aim to ecological environment protection. Third, we should set up laws and regulations, which should be representative enough to influence the decision and to ensure the rights that the community residents participate in ecotourism and community development, so as to realize the legalization and institutionalization of the rights.

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