

Research on Equity in the Development of Tourism in Poor Mountainous Areas

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Abstract

Currently, in the context of rural revitalization in China, a large number of villages are starting to develop tourism. However, different models of tourism development in poor mountainous areas have completely different and inequitable impacts on the development of local communities and local enterprises. In this paper, by comparing the tourism development models of two townships in Wulong District, Chongqing—Fairy Mountain Town and Zhao's Town, we find that the government-controlled tourism development model causes more inequities, while the community-led development model is more equitable, albeit less efficient.

Keywords

Equity, Poverty, Tourism Development, Mountainous Area

1. Introduction

Most of China's poor people are in mountainous areas, and the development of poor mountainous areas is of decisive significance to China's solution to the problem of poverty. Tourism development is a good means of eradicating poverty. Due to the low level of development and the well-preserved original ecological characteristics of poor mountainous areas, they often become excellent original ecological tourism destinations. Therefore, in order to develop regional tourism, governments at all levels have formulated relevant policies to promote the development of tourism in poor mountainous areas. These policies generally include preferential policies for attracting investment and attracting tourists, attracting capital to invest in original ecological tourism in poor mountainous areas through tax reductions, cheap land transfers or rentals, etc.; attracting tourists by improving transportation and improving the level of food and ac-

commodation. These policies play an important role in promoting economic growth and employment in poor mountainous areas (Ashley & Haysom, 2008; Sinclair, Baum, & Mudambi, 1998). However, these policies also have negative implications. In order to attract large-scale tourism development investment, local governments often provide developers with a large number of preferential treatments (such as land supply, and land planning adjustment) to strive for large investors to enter, while investors will often carry out large-scale tourism development and construction according to their own requirements. In many poor mountainous areas where tourism is developed, communities often can no longer maintain the simplicity and friendliness of the past; problems emerged such as the deterioration of the ecological environment, the increase in contradictions between residents, and the increase in antagonism between residents and the government; local tourism enterprises have suffered huge blows and business difficulties. The emergence of these negative factors is largely due to the fact that the government's policies to promote tourism in mountainous areas are often unfair, such as preferential policies for attracting investment and special policies enjoyed by areas with advantageous tourism resources. When formulating policies related to the development of tourism in mountainous areas, local governments may often make sacrifices for the long-term interests of communities, such as ecological balance, ignoring the interests of local enterprises, marginal communities, and the interests of residents of certain types of communities (such as the elderly and women), and ignoring the importance of establishing a fair competitive market. Unfair policies have also led to the actual inequality of development opportunities between foreign capital and local enterprises, between different communities, and between different residents of communities, which has bred problems such as the outflow of tourism revenues, the difficulty of communities to get rid of poverty, ethnic contradictions, the frequent occurrence of group incidents, and the deterioration of social atmosphere.

This paper selects two poverty-stricken mountainous areas in Wulong County, Chongqing (Fairy Mountain Area and Zhao Hometown Area) as the main cases, analyzes the impact of local government policies on foreign capital and local enterprises, different communities, and different residents of communities in the process of developing tourism, and finds the existing unfair problems

This study is divided into five parts, which are research background, research review, research subjects and methods, research results, and research conclusions.

2. Literature Review

Göymen and Ortakoyluoglu (2007) and Simth and Costello (2009) summarized the government's tourism policy model into four models: command-oriented mode, training mode, non-control mode and comprehensive mode. At present, some tourism in China with rich tourism resources and a long history often adopt a command-oriented model, while most of the original ecological tourism in mountainous areas, especially the original ecological tourism development

that does not have outstanding resource advantages, adopts a non-control mode. The government usually makes appropriate policies to encourage tourism development, such as policies for attracting investment and tourists. These policies are very beneficial for the development of mountainous areas (Ashley & Hayson, 2008; Sinclair, Baum, & Mudambi, 1998). However, these policies can also have negative impacts, such as allowing the construction of accommodation and services in tourist sites, which can have an environmental impact (Lea, 1993; Gallagher, Vianna, & Papastamatiou, 2015); government investment incentives of all kinds bring unfair competition, Tourism development is often controlled by large investors, who often undermines local production methods and social relations, or causes local small enterprises to be often marginalized (Freitag, 1994); policies do not necessarily benefit locals and communities (Campbell, 1999; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Walpole & Goodwin, 2001; Nepal, 2000; Slinger, 2000; Foucat, 2002; Akyeampong, 2011; Huang & Shu, 2014). policies do not necessarily result in benefits for locals, and local tourism workers are poorly paid, seasonal, and highly unstable, in contrast to tourism workers in outside firms who are well paid, well placed, and fairly stable (Clancy, 2009; Freitag, 1994; Levy & Lerch, 1991; Piore, 2002). Capital attracted by investment policies is rarely invested in infrastructure and local services; a large amount of local tourism revenue goes to foreign investors, with little or no revenue and profits remaining in local communities; and some researchers have found that women are paid lower wages, are less stable, and have lower jobs than men in some areas where ecotourism has been developed (Chant, 1997; Levy & Lerch, 1991); in addition, different communities do not have equal access to development opportunities within the same tourism policy.

In conclusion, scholars have identified many negative effects of policies that promote tourism development in poor mountainous areas, even when they start from the right place, and these negative effects are mainly reflected in inequity. The issue of fairness is an important factor affecting the harmony and stability of poor mountainous areas; therefore, it is necessary to conduct a systematic study on the issue of fairness and its effects of government policies to promote the development of indigenous tourism in poor mountainous areas in China.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Study Area

The cases selected for this study are located in Wulong District' Zhao Hometown and Fairy Mountain Town. Zhao's town is located on Baima Mountain in Wulong District (about 1000 meters above sea level), and Fairy Mountain Town is located on Fairy Mountain in Wulong District (about 1500 meters above sea level), both of which are once super poor mountainous areas.

After Wulong began to develop tourism in 2004, the Fairy Mountain was selected as the key development area, and the main core attractions were previously operated by private enterprises, and then unified management and oper-

ation by Wulong Karst Group, and unified publicity and marketing, investment and investment by Wulong County. Its development model is typical of government-led model.

There are no foreign enterprises which invest in Zhao's town, so it is a rural tourism development model with farmers' autonomy and farms as the main development force, and it lacks the overall investment in tourism in Wulong County, and its development model belongs to the community-based government service model. Therefore, Fairy Mountain Town and Zhao Hometown belong to two completely different development models and development results.

3.2. Methodology

This study used an in-depth interview method. The first interview was conducted in July to September, 2018, and the director of the Wulong County Development and Reform Commission, the deputy general manager of Wulong Karst Group, the general manager of Changsong Group, the secretary of Fairy Mountain Town, the director of the Investment Department of Fairy Mountain Town, and the specific responsible personnel were interviewed. In this time, we just interviewed the main idea of the tourism development of the leader. The second interview was conducted in July 2019, in which the farm owners, restaurant owners and residents of Fairy Mountain Town were interviewed in depth to understand the development and changes before and after their tourism development, and the corresponding problems. In addition, from April 2015 to October 2020, our group went to Zhao's town more than 20 times, and conducted in-depth interviews with the secretary of Zhao's town, the township mayor, the village chief of Xinhua Village and Xiangfang Village, and the head of the cooperative. Some of the key interviewers are shown in **Table 1** below.

4. Results

4.1. Fairness of Local Enterprise Development

Zhao's town of local micro-enterprises in recent years has grown rapidly, Zhao hometown in 2013 won the best leisure summer resort village and county-level rural tourism micro-enterprise characteristic village in Chongqing, in 2013 was rated as an excellent township, in 2014 was awarded the municipal rural tourism

Table 1. Basic information of interviewers.

Interviewer	Nationality	Age	Socio-economic status	Education level	Gender
Xie Li Li	China	43	Director of Wulong County Development and Reform Commission	Bachelor's degree	Male
Wu Yong	China	48	Deputy General Manager of Wulong Karst Group	Master's degree	Male
Cai Bin	China	44	the secretary of Fairy Mountain Town	Master's degree	Male
Joan Wong	China	40	Director of Investment Promotion Bureau of Fairy Mountain Town	Master's degree	Female
Li Zhi	China	50	Town Administrator	College diploma	Male

micro-enterprise characteristic village. The small and micro enterprises in Zhao's town are basically tourism enterprises, and basically local farmers use their own houses to operate farms. Only three of the farmhouses are non-local owners (basically White Horse Town), and they generally buy and "buy" the land of the locals and then build a farmhouse small to operate.

Compared with other similar villages and towns, the rural small enterprises in Zhao's town are significantly more than other villages and towns. We can find that all the tourists who come to Zhao's town are staying in local farms, and the tourists who go to Fairy Mountain are 10 times or even 20 times more than Zhao's town, but the number of farms is only twice as many as Zhao's town. Only three of the 95 farms in Xinhua Village are not operated by locals, while 10 in Xiangfang Village are all run by locals. Compared with Fairy Mountain Town, first, the number of farms in the villages of Fairy Mountain Town is too small, and the development of rural tourism is severely restricted; second, the small farm in Fairy Mountain Town is mainly concentrated in the Shiliangzi community, who told us when we interviewed "None of the farms are locals", and only one farm in Fairy Village is a small scale run by locals, and the other 8 are located in a street of Fairy Hill Farm, which was taken away by outsiders very early.

4.2. Equity in Community Development

There are two communities in Zhao's town, Xinhua Village and Xiangfang Village. At present, from the perspective of income, the main small farm is located in Xinhua Village, although there are several farms in Xiangfang Village, but there is basically no business (only a few to dozens of people at the end of this summer), and the township is also located in Xinhua Village, so the income of Xinhua Village is significantly higher than that of Xiangfang Village. From the perspective of educational conditions, Zhao's town has a primary school, a hospital, and no middle school. The primary school is located in Xinhua Village, so the conditions for villagers in Xinhua Village to go to school are better than those in Xiangfang Village, but recently the government opened a bus routine from Xiangfang Village to Baima Town, which basically solved the problem of villagers' travel and school transportation. Overall, the community differences are not too great.

The villages in Fairy Mountain Town can be divided into core protected areas, extended development zones, background protection zones, and undevelopment zones according to the distance from the Fairy Mountain Scenic Area. Located in the core protected area, there are Fairy Village (Fairy Mountain Forest Park), part of Shiliangzi Village and Xingxing Village (in the core protected area of Tiansheng Sanqiao), part of Baiguo Village (Longshui Gorge seam landscape), Taoyuan Village (Lower Stone Courtyard landscape). The extended development zone is the new town of Fairy Town, which is currently the main scope of the Shiliangzi community. Third, the background protection area (mainly part of Baiguo Village, Taoyuan Village and part of Xingxing Village). Fourth, the undeveloped area (mainly other villages far from the scenic spot, such as Jingzhu

Village and Longbaotang Village). Although each village is in the same town, its right to subsistence and development is very different.

The residents of the core protected area are located in the scenic spot, and there are two development modes: first, they have just been moved out, and they have moved out of the tourist village settlements, and they can carry out farm operations, such as Star New Village and Baiguo New Village; second, they are reluctant to relocate to unsatisfactory plots, and their living conditions are very difficult, such as Fairy Village. Since the core scenic spots are absolutely not allowed to be built, they do not have the ability to improve their own lives.

The best living conditions are among the residents of the extended development zone. This part of the people who live in the new town, especially there is a house on the first floor and bottom that can be operated by themselves or rented out (some are still relatively large, and some families have several sets), so their lives are basically not worried, and the rent is relatively rich, about 30,000 - 80,000. If you run your own business, you may have an income of about 50,000 - 100,000, and if you operate particularly well, you may even have an income of about 300,000.

As the background of the scenic spot, the residents of the background protected area need to protect the original ecology and are subject to the following restrictions: First, they cannot improve their own houses and improve the quality of life; second, some areas are restricted from basic agricultural cultivation; third, most areas are restricted from commercial development such as services; fourth, all are restricted from industrial development; Fifth, most of the area is not on the prescribed tour route, even on the tour route, tourists can not get off the bus casually, so even the sale of agricultural products, souvenirs, etc. are difficult to find opportunities, and even some residents can not see tourists at all, tourists will not go. Therefore, the basic production and life of the residents living in the background protected area are very restricted, and they cannot carry out other industrial production, lose a lot of opportunity costs, and life is very difficult.

Residents of the Undevelopment Zone have been adversely affected by the development of Fairy Mountain, the infrastructure has been greatly improved, and rural tourism development is underway in Longbaotang Village. Although construction and industrial activities are still not possible, living conditions have improved considerably.

5. Conclusion

5.1. There Are Significant Inequities in the Government-Led Model

The case of Fairy Mountain is a typical government-led tourism development model. Through the establishment of state-owned monopolies, the government formulates relevant policies to integrate ownership, management rights, development rights, and use rights into one. This model has significant advantages: in the short term, for example, a region can develop rapidly, the tourism brand image has been significantly improved, and the tourism-related GDP has increased rapidly. However, there are significant problems in the fairness of this

model: state-owned monopolies have become the spokesmen of the government to manage scenic spots, monopolizing scenic spot resources while participating in the formulation of rules, restricting the development of other enterprises, including individual micro-enterprises of residents, resulting in a seriously unfair market competition environment.

5.2. The Government Service Model Policy Has Obvious Feelings of Fairness, but the Efficiency Is Low

The case of Zhao's town shows that the government's service for tourism development, rather than participating in the development of tourism itself as a subject, can make local residents, and local and foreign enterprises feel fairer. But this model is obviously less efficient than the Fairy Mountain model. The pace of development is relatively slow, and it is difficult to achieve rapid and comprehensive regional improvement.

In fact, although this model is not fast, its development is sustainable. By focusing on enriching the people, the government encourages residents to start businesses and improves the operational level of local enterprises through education, training, demonstration, and other models, and residents and local enterprises are truly benefiting. This model is more conducive to the sustainable development of the economy and society.

5.3. Regional Tourism Planning Is an Important Cause of Inequities in Different Communities

At present, regional tourism planning mainly starts from the perspective of overall regional development, focusing on the design of regional projects and the promotion of regional integration. There is little attention paid to the benefits of different communities and different groups of people in the region.

The process of regional tourism planning is a government-led, expert-led model, with few residents participating in the planning. Such a procedure allows residents and enterprises in the region to have no say in the local tourism development plan, and there is no way to claim their rights.

5.4. A Combination of Bottom-Up and Top-Down Tourism Planning and Development Models Should Be Established

The current tourism planning is top-down, experts and governments according to the characteristics of the plot and the needs of future economic development, without fully considering the stakeholders (the actual interests of the residents of each plot, the actual interests of each enterprise), so even if a new tourist village is established, it is unfair to the residents of different regions, and it is also unfair to different enterprises.

Therefore, tourism planning must be a combination of top-down and bottom-up. When formulating a plan, the community and local enterprises should be involved in the entire process of planning and preparation in an appropriate form. After the completion of the planning, the process of publicity, solicitation

of opinions, and revision should also be improved.

At the same time, the relevant planning and preparation technical standards and procedures of the state should increase the relevant planning content of residents' rights and interest compensation.

5.5. The Functions of Scenic Spot Management Companies Should Be Regulated

The scenic spot management company under the management committee should be a completely independent company, its personnel, and administrative arrangements should not be contained by the management committee, and its financial revenue should not be related to the management committee. The management committee should truly exercise its functions of scenic spot supervision and resource protection. The content of scenic spot development that can operate in a market-oriented manner should follow the laws of the market economy, encourage market competition, and must not artificially set a threshold for other enterprises to enter.

After the separation of government and enterprises, scenic spot management companies cannot have exclusive operating rights, so other private capital should have an equal market position and operate the market under equal conditions.

The main goal of the scenic spot management company should be to improve the maximum welfare of the community, that is, to improve the living standards of the people in the local community. The profits of scenic spots should have a way to feedback residents (at present, only a very small number of scenic spot management companies have a small amount of ticket revenue feedback mechanism), so that local residents can also get rich through the development of scenic spots.

Scenic spot management companies are state-owned enterprises, so they cannot take profit maximization as their business goal, especially these monopolistic tourism resources, resulting in the source of excess profits for scenic spot management companies. Therefore, a series of operations within tourist attractions should be calculated at cost prices to ensure the sustainable development of tourism resources, ensure the preservation and appreciation of scenic assets, ensure the maximum experience of tourists, and maintain the brand of scenic spots.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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