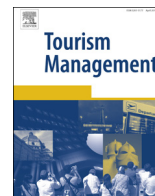




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Tourism Management

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/tourman

The organizational evolution, systematic construction and empowerment of Langde Miao's community tourism[☆]

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H I G H L I G H T S

- Uses Langde Miao Village as an example of Village reconstruction through tourism.
- Indicates the use of culture and its revival through tourism.
- Examines the nature of the “free rider” problem in village social dynamics.
- Indicates nature of social change and village empowerment through tourism.

A R T I C L E I N F O

Article history:

Received 7 March 2016

Accepted 7 March 2016

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Langde Miao village

Community tourism

Organizational evolution

Systematic construction

Empowerment significance

A B S T R A C T

Tourism in the village of Langde Miao is an example of ethnic village tourism in China. Its mode of operation and organization – characterized by community guidance, public participation, and its work point system is known as the “Langde Mode”. Its success, both social and financial, provides an ideal model by which to investigate community empowerment and its role in promoting tourism. To this end, using literature reviews and empirical research, this paper evaluates the Langde Miao people's community participation in its tourism. It is suggested that the evolution of the Lande Miao community's organizational and systematic skills to develop tourism have fostered the local community's economic, social, and political success. This success can then further support community empowerment, requiring limited subsequent intervention by the government. It is suggested that the model can then be expanded to other localities throughout China.

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1. Introduction

With the implementation tourism pro-poor policies in western China, and the growing diversity of tourism consumer demands, the culture of, and pristine landscapes occupied by minority peoples, are attracting greater numbers of tourists, and leading to a boom of tourism development. In addition these policies are being used to implement a scientific concept of development, protection and ‘in-heritage national culture’, to solve rural issues of deprivation, employment creation and outward migration to cities with its

consequent negative impact on village life. However, recent research by the authors in Guiyang City Flower Town Hill Buyi village, Southeast Liping County Zhaoxing, Stealing Xijiang Miao Village, town Tianlongtunbao Pingba County, Guizhou¹ and elsewhere has found that tourism development is not wholly satisfactory. It has been noted that within the villages, an imbalance exists in the villagers' participation rates in tourism development and the distribution of tourism revenues and not only do some residents not only do not benefit, but they also bear the negative impacts of shortages of materials and services, inflation and other results of tourism development. Additionally, due to the intrusive involvement of government and external corporations, several residents have become marginalized and are not involved in decision making. Existing literature and media reports indicate that the

[☆] This paper was originally published in Chinese as: Chen Zhiyong, Li Lejing, and Li Tianyi. (2013). The organizational evolution, systematic construction and empowerment significance of Langde Miao's community tourism. *Tourism Tribune*, 28(6), 75–86.

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¹ 吴昌良、陈志永. 影响民族村寨旅游业持续发展因素综合分析—以黎平肇兴侗寨为例, 贵州教育学院学报, 2008年第3期.

above phenomenon is not unique and similar examples can be found in Yunnan, Guangxi, Sichuan and other places. Under such circumstances, residents will lose enthusiasm for resource protection and further participation in tourism development, which loss is a direct threat to sustainable tourism development. This represents a problem for both research and practical policy implementation.

Langde Miao village in Guizhou Stealing Leishan town has, since the start of 1987, put the core principle that “everyone has contributed to the construction and protection of villages, and everyone should benefit from it”, at the forefront of policy formation. They have sought to ensure that villagers are always the dominant partners in community tourism development, and are the main stakeholders leading tourism development management and decision-making, so ensuring compliance on the part of tour operators and hospitality providers for the maintenance of community cultural resources and environmental protection. Its mode of operation and revenue distribution system – characterized by community guidance, public participation, and its work point system is known as the “Langde Mode” (Li & Xu, 2011). In view of foreign scholars’ call to actively promote community participation in tourism development and community empowerment, it is notable that the Langde people have put this concept into practice for more than 20 years. This provides an ideal “testing ground” with which to analyze tourism community empowerment models and their evolution. In the current state of Chinese community tourism development process, it is worthwhile asking how the ethnic minority villages like Langde have achieved empowerment through reliance on the community’s efforts and to what degree they have been successful? What is the empowerment model and path? What are the typical referent value systems? This paper provides an analysis of Langde Miao village’s community organization evolution and system building process, examining the path of community empowerment and reference value from community empowerment model.

2. Literature review

The term “empowerment” has a very rich content, and different scholars offer different opinions. The basic value is to assist vulnerable groups and their members, through action, social policies and programs, to create a just society, providing equal opportunities for people to fully utilize their capacity and resources (Lee, 1994). Empowerment theory is rooted in Western countries’ social work traditions, maintaining citizens’ rights and women’s movements, as well as the grassroots organizations movement, and came to the fore in the 1960s. With the growing interdisciplinary nature of tourism research, empowerment theory was extended to tourism in the 1980s. Akamal (1996) first proposed the necessity of community empowerment tourism, Scheyvens (1999) built an empowerment framework for community tourism that included political, economic, psychological, and social dimensions, Sofield (2003) further deepened the tourism empowerment’s concepts, theories and methods. Since 2008, Chinese scholars Zuo and Bao (2008a,b), Bao and Sun (2008), Sun (2008) and Zou (2009) introduced tourism empowerment theory to China, based systematic classifications and applications of empowerment theory, proposed a base evolution model of tourism empowerment, and took the Tibetan community of Shangri-La in Yunnan and the Xishuangbanna Dai Park community as examples, and explored approaches by using tourism empowerment theoretical frameworks in Chinese tourism practices. Influenced by this, Chen and Li (2010) and Chen and Yang (2011) took the Guizhou Langde Miao village and Lijiang Miao Village as examples, and conducted statistical analysis of the situation about community residents’ perception on tourism

empowerment respectively. Guo (2010), Guo and Huang, (2010) and Wen and Huang (2010) proposed a rotation system model to analyze empowerment in the Yunnan Shangri-La Tibetan community’s participation in tourism development, employing horizontal comparative analysis of the performance of community empowerment with that of Yunnan Dai Park. Huang Ya (2010) through a discussion of the power relationship among individuals, organizations and communities at the community level, analyzed community empowerment during the development of traditional folk art and architecture. The above results provide an important background to tourism empowerment in China and its research. Despite this however, it was felt that current research left unanswered questions from the organizational and institutional perspectives. Organizations and institutional arrangements are two important inventions of mankind, and are used to run political, economic, and cultural activities. The relationship between the organizational and institutional has also been the focus of social science research. Since 2000 institutional analysis methods have increasingly incorporated economics, and the concepts are widely used in government, enterprises, and social organizations’ system building and innovation (Shi, 2011). In view of this, the current paper is based on organizational and institutional theoretical perspectives, referencing Scheyvens (1999) built tourism empowerment framework model including political, economic, psychological, and social dimensions, through analyzing Guizhou Langde Miao village’s tourism development community and its organizational institutional evolution.

3. The research site and method of research

3.1. Grande Southeast Guizhou Langde Miao village

Grande Southeast Guizhou Langde Miao village is located in the northwest of Leishan in Guizhou Qiongdongnan state, 260 km west of the provincial capital Guiyang, Kaili, 27 km south of the state capital, and 13 km north of the city Leishan. This village has 134 families and a total of 540 residents, and all belong to the Hmong group of people. The village has won a number of honors and titles through its beautiful natural environment, rich ethnic culture and customs and long cultural history, and has long attracted foreign tourists. It is one of the key national tourism villages of the “Barak river rural tourism demonstration project area” in Guizhou Province. In 2006, Langde Miao village was listed as a ‘world-class rural tourism village’ by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and is promoted as a successful case study to the world. Its revenue distribution system and operation model’s typical characteristics are community guidance, public participation, and the work-point system, attracting many scholars long-term attention. Taking Langde Miao village as an example, empirical research about community empowerment in tourism destination is enhanced as the village has become theoretically and practically significant because it represents an extension of western empowerment theory to a Chinese context. However, due to the obvious gaps between China and Western countries in terms of the democratization, the different degrees of the maturation of civil organizations and tourism development stages, and differences in law relating to land ownership and other factors (Bao & Sun, 2006), research specifically located within China’s rural villages is a prerequisite to better understand the issues involved.

3.2. Research methods and processes

This study adopts qualitative research methods. The researcher adopted various modes of data collection ways through interaction with the object of study to obtain an understanding of the behavior

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