

On Rural Tourism Resource Development in Guizhou

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Abstract: Rural tourism is a cross industry combined by agriculture. Guizhou Province, China is rich in unique karst landform and mysterious national culture of primitive simplicity, which has become important national resources and belongings. Firstly, this paper defines tourism and rural tourism as well. Secondly, it makes a literature review. Thirdly, using official data, the writers analyze tourist resources and tourism resources of Guizhou Province. Fourthly, the writers discuss models of Guizhou rural tourism. Finally, they suggest some measures to develop rural tourism in Guizhou Province.

Keywords: Guizhou, rural tourism, poverty, minority culture

1. Introduction

Tourism is a systematic project closely related to eating, living, walking, sightseeing, purchasing and entertainment. It has the function of breaking the blockade of backward and poor countryside, bringing in in-flow of people, materials, information and capital. In this way, the economy in remote areas booms a great deal and people's life is much improved. By developing rural tourism to attract people to visit and consume, tourism resources in remote areas become valuable and productive, as a result, tourism promotes the development of industries concerned.

Rural tourism is a new way of visitation. Firstly, it takes villages as its main carrier, and distinctive national culture of villages as its soul; Secondly, rural tourism makes farmers the main part of tourism administration, thus, to represent the feature that "Tourists live in cottages, have meals at farmers' houses and enjoy happiness farmers enjoy"; Thirdly, rural tourism makes urban residents as the main objective of marketing. The key lies in "Keeping away from the hustle and bustle of noisy cities, and plunging into the bosom of nature".

China has been developing at a growth rate of about 10% for the past 30 years. However, the fast economic growth took place mostly in the east coastal district while the west district has been far more left behind. Social scientists and Chinese government have been looking for ways to enhance development in West China. Rural tourism is considered to play an important role in booming rural economy and in economy transit from the primary industry to the tertiary industry. Guizhou Province is a province in West China, where 85% people live in the countryside and where the poor population is relatively large. Can the rural poverty be alleviated, at least partially alleviated, by developing rural tourism in such a province? This paper takes Guizhou Province as a case to discuss the changes.

2. Literature review

Rural tourism has developed quickly worldwide in recent years. In 1998, two thirds of French tourists chose to travel domestically, among which 33% preferred the countryside, while 44% traveled to beaches. French Inns Association reported that in recent years 72% tourists have traveled to the countryside, and 15% have persistently been choosing to travel in the same rural area every year, indicating that rural tourism is thriving. People's preference to rural tourism may lie in their desire of clean space and conventional cultures in the countryside which are vanishing in urban cities. Tourists from cities enjoy the clean air, farming practice, unique cultures, and relieve themselves from the hustle and bustle city life. In the meantime, tourism provides an economic panacea for the development of rural regions. It is commonly agreed that tourism contributes significantly to rural employment, and is a growth sector and a means to diversify rural economies affected by a decline in agriculture and traditional industries.

Rural tourism in less favored regions of the community is a development priority in Europe and US,

because it serves both as an economic activity and as a source to offer perspectives for a healthy and appropriate socio-economic development. In US, rural community leaders are racing to establish tourism in their communities. In Arjeplog, a remote region in northern Sweden, tourism, at various levels, serves as an instrument to enhance rural development, and policy-makers are active in forming a new regional policy to develop a better local tourism.

China is a developing country and its rural tourism is on its initial stage. In comparison with Europe and US, rural tourism in China is young. It began in 1990's. However, evidences show that China's rural tourism has somewhat re-distributed and integrated rural resources, promoted agricultural development and rural environment, increased farmers' income and improved their lives as well.

3. Methods

The data used are collected from official publications of Guizhou Statistical Yearbook from 1996 to 2009, China Statistical Yearbooks from 1998 to 2009, and China Compendium of Statistics 1949-2004 and from the website as well. This paper analyzes China's tourism resources, Guizhou tourism resources, and discusses the impact of the current tourism on local economy so as to elucidate the effects of rural tourism on the economy in Guizhou Province.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Analysis of tourist resources from cities

The total of national holidays and weekends in a year in China is 114 days for all citizens, and 181 days for teachers and students; both are 52 days more than that in 1980s when the six-working-days in one week working system was executed. There are four national holidays, namely, New Year's Day, Spring Festival, Labor's Day and National Day, which are recently extended to 3, 7, 7, and 7 consecutive days, respectively, by borrowing weekends. Teachers and students have extra holidays: 6 weeks for Summer Holiday from July to August, and 4 weeks for Winter Holiday around Spring Festival. Thus, the holidays in China permit people to travel domestically and internationally.

Income of citizens in cities of China has continuously increased steadily from 652 yuan in 1984 to 15,781 yuan in 2008, which indicates that urban people are no longer worried about food, instead they have extra money for tourism.

With economic development and improvement in their life, people in urban areas are getting tired of the pressing atmosphere surrounded by them and are anxious to escape from the noisy and polluted cities for some time to enjoy fresh air, natural beauty and serenity, which are only available in the countryside. On the other hand, tourists are no longer fully satisfied with sightseeing in traditional way; what they want is to experience more different cultures and lives during their visits. This may be the reason why most tourists prefer to experience farmers' daily life, taste distinctive food, and take part in traditional rural festivals other than staying in luxurious hotels and having meals in grand restaurants. People in modern cities desire to plunge themselves back to nature. During National Holiday in 2002 in Sichuan province, for instance, 2 million tourists went to the countryside for visitation. In 2006, national rural tourism demonstration sites amounted to 359, which are located all over 31 provinces and regions in China. As for "The Three Golden Weeks" each year, 70% urban citizens (tourists) experienced rural tourism and the number of tourists reached 300 million.

4.2 Analysis of tourism resources of Guizhou

Guizhou Province, China is located in the South-West of China, to its East is Hunan province, to its West is Yunnan province, to its South is Guangxi province, and to its North are Sichuan province and Chongqing province. The capital of Guizhou Province, Guiyang city, is situated 300 kilometers of the mouth of the Yangtze River of Chongqing and 500 kilometers of the South Sea. Therefore, Guizhou Province is a mountainous regional province near the sea and river. Guizhou is characteristic of karst landform, rich in waterfalls, deep calcareous stone holes, mountains and canyons, which make Guizhou

very plentiful in scenery.

4.2.1 Geology and climate

Rural tourism makes use of the potential of the countryside and wilderness areas. It is based on undisturbed natural resources such as topography, vegetation, wildlife, water features, scenery and climate. Guizhou Province is one of the most karstic regions in the world, with complicated and various features not only on the surface but also underground. It has a lot of waterfalls, deep calcareous stone holes, mountains and canyons, which are all attractive to tourists. It should be noted that Guizhou Province has more than ten rivers and/or canyons that are suitable for drift. The Shanmu River, the Nanjiang Grand Gorge, the Maling River and the Feiyun Grand Gorge have been so far open for tourism, drift and exploration.

The geographically high altitude and low latitude of Guizhou Province result in a highland subtropical monsoon climate which is warm and humid. It is neither cold in winter, nor hot in summer. The annual average temperature ranges from 15 °C to 23 °C, famed as a “natural air-conditioner”. The annual total rainfall is between 1,000 to 1,400 mm, relative humidity 86%, non-frost season 280 days. Most areas in Guizhou Province remain their natural and primary ecological state, with a forestry coverage rate of 35%. Guizhou is regarded as “a harmonious picture between human being and nature” by the World Tourism Organization.

4.2.2 Distinctive and diverse minority cultures

There are 17 ethnic groups in Guizhou Province. Han is the majority, but the population of the other minorities living in 30,000 villages amounts to 40%. Minority areas in the south-east, south-west, north-west and the central part of Guizhou Province have their own cultural uniqueness. And just for its cultural uniqueness, Karst culture of Guizhou Province is diversified and colorful, which is the critical potential in developing rural tourism. Every group has its own unique culture. For example, Miao and Dong, two relatively large minorities, maintain their unique masterpieces of architectural art, ethnic dances and songs with reed-pipe wind instruments, or wood or copper drums as well as live fossil of drama (local play). The minorities relay generation by generation the styles and features of old-fashioned arts, and splendid and gorgeous festival dresses amounted to 80 styles. Embroidery and paper-cut of Miao and Dong’s wax printing are rated as superb in the world. In villages of Miao, winding corridors with wooden-legged storey buildings, drum storey buildings are regarded as precious cultural heritages. All of these differentiate Miao and Dong from each other and from the others, which are appealing to tourists.

There are more than 1000 festivals in a year in Guizhou celebrated by different minority groups, among which 100 festivals are most popular, such as Miao’s Reed-pipe Wind Instrument Festival, Buyi’s Genjin Festival, Yao’s Ancient King Festival, and Li’s Torch Festival. A series of activities are held during each festival. In Miao’s Reed-pipe Wind Instrument Festival, for instance, people in groups compete in dancing and singing with music by reed-pipe wind instrument, racing horses, fighting bulls, etc. It is now upgraded to an international festival. However, most celebrations are unfamiliar either to most Chinese or to foreigners.

Modern life style in cities in China does not weaken or destroy the indigenous rural cultures in Guizhou. Some minorities even fully keep the habits and customs that their ancestors had decades ago. In Tianlongtun village, for example, the habitants, who are descendants of some soldiers in Ming Dynasty (600 years back), still daily wear featured shoes and old-fashioned long gowns as their ancestors in Ming Dynasty did, and keep the habits and customs of Ming Dynasty. Such kinds of old-fashioned life style and culture maintained by various ethnic groups would be of interest to tourists who want to learn how people lived in old days.

The existence of the diverse and less affected ethnic cultures in Guizhou Province may result from its geographical separation by mountains, canyons and rivers. People living in such a separated piece of land have had little communication and interaction with that of the outside, and a culture of a minority develops independently. The diversity of culture in Guizhou Province can be hardly owned in other provinces in China.

4.2.3 Positive role of current rural tourism resources

Rural tourism is a comprehensive and coefficient industry. It will generate and update a related industry

chain, such as hotels, restaurants, transportation and shopping, thus create employment, and transfer surplus rural labors from the primary industry to the tertiary industry. According to the World Tourism Organization (1998) if tourism industry takes in one staff, 5 staffs will be taken in by other related industries. As for rural tourism development in Guizhou before 2008, there were over 800,000 people in Guizhou running Village tour (Nongjiale) program, in which the local people provide logistical service to the tourists. However, there were still 4,100,000 surplus labors in Guizhou waiting for jobs. Individual farmer family can entertain tourists directly. They serve tourists with their own agricultural products, provide visitors with board and lodging as well as farming practices. One example is the farmers in seven villages along the Bala River where tourists enjoy drift. They shift partly their traditional single cultivation to multiple activities such as raising pig, chicken, fish and snail to satisfy tourists' demand for food and farming practice, while accommodating tourists over night in their homes. Since Tianlongtun Village, famous of Ming Dynasty life style, was opened to tourists in 2000, an increasing amount of tourists have rushed to visit. Consequently, the ticket income in a single year amounted to 4,100,000 yuan, and the income per capita of the village increased from 340 yuan in 2002 to 2780 yuan in 2008. Owing to the development of tourism, Guizhou's annual total tourism income increased fromt USD\$419 million in 1997 to USD\$6531 million in 2008(Table shown below). According to statistics of Guizhou Tourism Bureau (2009), up to Year 2008, rural tourism income was 18.4 percent of the total tourism of the province, and the farmers in more than one hundred newly developed "tourism villages" shook off poverty completely, indicating that developing rural tourism can quickly help alleviate poverty and improve people's life in Guizhou Province.

Table Tourism income of Guizhou province from 1997 to 2008

Year	domestic tourism (1 million person-time)	domestic tourism income (USD 1 million)	oversea tourism (1 million person-time)	oversea tourism Income (USD 1 million)	total tourism income (USD 1 million)
1996	18. 0	85. 31	0. 12	38. 12	123. 4
1997	18. 5	301. 0	0. 15	44. 3	419. 3
1998	18. 8	311. 4	0. 15	48. 3	437. 1
1999	19. 1	437. 5	0. 17	55. 0	610. 9
2000	19. 8	579. 5	0. 18	60. 9	785. 3
2001	21. 0	758. 1	0. 21	68. 7	1016. 3
2002	22. 0	99. 86	0. 23	79. 5	1327. 8
2003 ¹	18. 4	1143. 6	0. 08	28. 9	1458. 4
2004	24. 8	1610. 2	0. 23	80. 2	2175. 2
2005	30. 99	2428. 3	0. 27	101. 4	2511. 4
2006	47. 16	3777. 9	0. 32	115. 1	3893. 0
2007	62. 19	5109. 9	0. 43	129. 0	5122. 8
2008	81. 50	6438. 2	0. 39	117. 0	6531. 3

¹. SARS broke out in China in 2003.

source: Guizhou Statistical Yearbooks, 1997-2009

5. Rural tourism models in Guizhou

To further develop rural tourism resources as a tool to improve economy in Guizhou, the following models are highlighted, based on the natural, social and cultural characteristics of Guizhou Province.

5.1 Minority culture tour

Seventeen minorities of Guizhou with diverse and unaffected cultural heritages and life styles are an

important source permitting further development of rural tourism on culture basis. Minority culture tourism model will feature tours of mainly participating minority festivals. The venue where a festival is held should be able to accommodate enough tourists, and to serve them for food, token clothes and souvenirs. Tourists who are interested in experiencing minority daily life should be organized by a local tourism company by consulting and arranging with the villages or farmers on routes.

5.2 Exploring drift tour

More and more urban people are getting interested in drift. Since Guizhou Province has a lot of drift-suitable sources, drift-dominated tours are another important component of tourism. To manage such tours, starting and ending points need to be deliberately considered, and the facilities like boats, rubber rafts, lifebuoys, and food need to be prepared for rent or sales.

5.3 Village tour (Nongjiale)

There is a tendency that a lot of city people in China want to experience a life in the countryside, which is completely different from theirs own. By staying with farmers for some days, they can get close to the nature by visiting natural sceneries, learn farmer's farming practices, enjoy the local fresh food and fruits, sleep in farmer's beds, take a nap in an open bamboo cottage, play local games with farmers, catch fish in farmer's pond, take walks along soil paths to hills and in forest, appreciate flowers, plants and animals. Farmers can get benefit by rendering such services. To develop such a tourism model, farmers near beautiful natural scenery should be encouraged to build necessary facilities to accommodate large amount of tourists, and the security should be guaranteed by the local government and community.

6. Measures to develop rural tourism in Guizhou Province

6.1 To build infrastructure

Rivers, canyons, mountains and caves are important tourism resources. These resources can not be turned into money if there is no necessary infrastructure including roads, hotels and shops. Therefore, these resources requires large investment, and can hardly be exploited and managed by farmers individually, or communities. The government may need to encourage investors from China or foreign countries to go in for this business.

6.2 To protect ethnic culture and architectures

The diverse ethnic cultures are the soul of Guizhou rural tourism. In the process of opening local culture to tourists, foreign cultures and modern city life style may be brought in. Consequently, local culture may gradually lose their characteristics, thus lose their attractive essence. Therefore, the local government needs adjusting the policies to protect the purity of cultures to attract more tourists. In infrastructure construction, natural landscapes and historical cultural heritages must be carefully preserved.

6.3 To protect the environment

Fresh air, clean stream, green wild plants and singing birds are always attractive to urban people. To protect the environment in the rural area is particularly important for tourism. Any activities that pollute the environment should be strictly prohibited all the way through.

7. Conclusion

Rural tourism has been proved to be an effective way to enhance economic development in less favored regions in developed countries as well as in Guizhou Province, the poorest province in China. There is a huge amount of tourism resources in all cities of China. Thanks to the increase in income and in leisure time, urban people have a strong desire to enjoy nature-endowed landscapes, to experience farmer's life,

and to learn colorful rural cultures to relieve their working stress in hustle-and-bustle cities. Guizhou has abundant rural tourism resources of natural landscapes and unaffected ethnic cultures, and is an ideal area for visitation. Therefore, the development of rural tourism will play an important role in developing the economy and alleviating poverty in Guizhou Province, China.

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