



Study on the Model of the Community Managing in Tourist Attractions

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Abstract

The tourist attraction is a system comprised of local residents, the developer and the local government. Driven by profits, the three parties wish to realize profit maximization. If each of them emphasizes too much its' own benefit, it tends to cause the decline of the overall image and quality of the tourist attraction and in turn damages their respective benefits. This paper starts with typical cases and gives a contrast study on different types of community managing models and focuses on the research of the roles that developers, community residents and local governments play in the building of harmonious communities. The main points are as follows:

- (1) The community management is a new main element of attraction management. The other is the attraction operation management.
- (2) Different types of attractions adopt different models to manage the communities, which vary from traditional administrative model to modern ones like the separation of communities and attractions model, the integration model, the functional division model owing to the involvement of private sectors in the development of tourist attractions.
- (3) The focus of tourist community management is to unify the development of attractions and communities, balance the benefits of the developer, the local residents and the local government and ensure a harmonious community.
- (4) The developer practices reasonable profit-sharing mechanism to let local people benefit from tourism, which is the key to the realization of a harmonious community.
- (5) Local people's involvement is an approach to effective community management, which requires that locals get professional training so as to guarantee the elevation of locals' awareness of tourism.
- (6) It's important for the local government to invest on the construction of infrastructure shared by residents and tourists and offer favorable policies.

Keywords: Tourist attraction, Community, Managing mode

1. The importance of community management in tourist attractions

The tourist attraction, the key element of tourism industry, is a social system combining community residents, the developer and the local government. It aims to attract visitors by developing tourist resources. Tourist attraction management used to be limited to operation management and ignored the practice of community management. With more and much deeper research on the sustainable development of attractions, tourism sociology and anthropology, the community management of attractions will lead the tourist site management. The community is a relatively independent social unit formed by people sharing specific life style and sense of belonging in a specific region. Peter E. Murphy (1985) introduced the concept of community into tourism research for the first time and attempted to study tourism from a community standpoint. Bao Ji-gang (2002) concludes that community tourism is the combination of a community and tourism. However, the previous studies emphasize how tourism influences community development and how community residents get involved in tourism rather than how to implement community management in tourist

attractions.

Indigenous people and visitors are two major components of community tourism. The former needs survival and development and the latter wants recreation and enjoyment, resulting in inevitable contradictions in terms of resource occupation and space sharing. At the same time, the interests of local people, the attraction developer and the local government sometimes conflict with each other. Driven by profits, all the three parties want to maximize their share. This may lead to the decline of the overall image and quality of the attraction, which in turn damages their respective benefits. To solve this problem, we may give up the conventional way in attraction management and try the tourist community management way.

2. Case studies of community managing models in tourist attractions

The previous research on community managing model is mainly about urban communities. The study shows foreign urban communities often adopt the self-governing type, the government-leading type and the mixed type while Chinese urban communities employ the government-leading type, the market-leading type and the society-leading type (Liu Jian-jun, 2003; Xie Shou-hong, 2004; Yang Su, 2004). There are few about rural communities. China exclusively established official organizations to manage the tourist site and community during its early days of attraction management. With the marketability of attraction investors, different managing modes have appeared.

2.1 The official administrative bureau model

Most of the tourist attractions developed in the early stage is state-owed scenic spots, natural reserves, forest park and so on. The government establishes official organizations to govern the related communities. In order to protect and develop Three Gorges, a national level scenic spot, Yichang Three Gorges administrative bureau was founded at the entrance of Xiling gorge in Hubei province. The bureau comprises office, fiscal section, scenic spot section, agriculture and forestry section, comprehensive administration section, responsible for the management of places of interest and communities. It governs three villages, one community committee, covering an area of 142km² with a total population of 3402. The villages have raised funds and developed nine tourist sites and 45 tourism enterprises offering a variety of services, employing 980 people and receiving one million visitors per year. The bureau is responsible for the macro-management of attractions, leaving the investment, operation to corresponding villages which function as the basic unit of community. The attractions constitute part of the community and are run by village-owned companies under the guidance of the bureau. When the interests of local people and the government conflict with each other, the official organ tends to choose to ensure the benefits of government by damaging the benefits of residents as it implements management on behalf of its senior organ. For instance, the core area of the Gorge's Door scenic spot has been sold to alien financial groups at low prices, resulting in the construction of Longquan hotel and Kangfu villa, which has damaged the appeal of the attraction as well as the long-term benefits of community residents.

2.2 The integration model of attractions and communities

When a community with certain cultural characteristics is developed into a tourist site, tourism activities are dependant on the community, leading to the integration of the community and the attraction. Dai ethnic garden of Xishuangbanna consists of five well-preserved Dai villages. The development of the site is based on the community. On one hand, the community life featuring Dai religion, ethnic culture, customs and architecture has already become the key element of the tourist attractions, on the other hand, the integration has inevitably brought residents involved in tourism business which form part of their daily life. The company running the Dai ethnic garden is owned by a stated-owned farm and a construction company of Kunming. As the director of the project, the company is in charge of the planning, developing, marketing and operating of the site and helps residents participate in tourist reception. As tourism activities have melted into community activities, the community management is of vital importance to the improvement of tourism quality. The management requires the joint efforts of villagers and the developer. The villagers practice self-governing and the developer helps coordinate the relations between villages, residents, attractions and temples, villages and the company. However, the lack of effective management means in the process makes it hard to guarantee the tourism environment and quality in the attraction if local people conflict with the developer. The long-term interests of both parties are likely to be damaged due to fall of visitor flow.

2.3 The functional division model of attractions and communities

The development of rural tourist sites has changed the economic structure of rural communities and tourism has become the major source of rural economy. The reasonable functional division in providing services between the company and local residents is helpful for the healthy development of tourism. Chexi folk village, a national AAAA scenic spot, locates on the southern bank of Xiling Gorge, Yichang city, featuring the agricultural culture of Three Gorges. It is a trial base of Three Gorges folk culture heritage preservation and Chinese folk culture conservation project and receives 300,000 visitors every year. According to the location of tourist resources and indigenous people, the company has undertaken an overall planning and developed seven sites, such as Bachu garden, Three Gorges folk village, farming museum, water mill museum, former site of people' community, Tianlongyunku and Three Gorges fancy stone center.

These spots locate within the community and form an organic whole with the living center and production center of the community. Chexi adopts functional division mode between the community and attraction. The company is responsible for the development, marketing and operation of the attraction and makes profits by charging the entrance fee. Local people get involved in the tourism businesses by running restaurants, selling souvenirs, providing horseback riding and sedan services. Besides, the company guides the residents to build small brewing and pottery workshops, which not only improves the appeal of the attraction, but also benefit local people. The local government, the villagers and the developer form Chexi scenic spot committee which is in charge of solving contradictions in the community in the process of tourism development.

2.4 The relative separation model of attractions and communities

The attraction is separated from the living sector and production sector and becomes an independent or relatively independent area though it locates within the community. Three Gorges Family scenic spot of Yichang just employs this model. The advantageous resources of Shipai village are separated and developed into scenic spots. Apart from managing the spots, the company also provides a variety of services, like food and beverage, accommodation, shopping and recreation. The ancient town of Shipai where local people live is isolated invisibly from those business centers run by the company. The benefiting channels of locals are forcibly occupied and blocked by the developer except small numbers of people's involvement in the business. In this situation, local government still makes every effort to help the company to solve problems without full consideration of locals' benefits, hence it becomes the vassal of the developer. As a result, the relationship between the company and the residents is so tense that locals often destruct the tourism facilities and operation which severely influenced the healthy development of tourism.

2.5 The contrast study of the four managing models

The above-mentioned four models show many differences in terms of property of attractions, relations between attractions and communities, management mechanism and effects. The differences are as follows (table 1):

Table 1 here

3. The innovation of the managing model in tourist attractions

The tendency in current tourism planning is the combination of construction of tourism destinations and communities, which is more acceptable by locals and also makes the destination more appealing. As an important attraction in the destination, the tourist site is a system combining residents, the developer and the local government. The key issue is to achieve the development of communities and attractions as a whole with due consideration for all concerned and ensure the sustainable development of attractions.

3.1 Principles of model innovation

(1) *Community co-management principle.* Community co-management refers to the process that all beneficiaries participate in the decision-making, implementation and assessment of public resources management. Attractions are special public resources requiring the involvement of different interest groups, especially that of local residents.

(2) *Interest-coordination principle.* Owing to different values and interests, the focus of management is the coordination of benefits. The involvement of local residents is the pre-condition of the improvement of the attraction environment and image. More channels should be explored to ensure locals' benefit.

(3) *"Image is all" principle.* The management should highlight the overall image of the attraction. The image is the basis of the sense of recognition and the sign of difference between attractions as well as the driving force generating continuous attractiveness. The favorable image is not only dependant on its charming scenery, environment and facilities, but also its pleasant humane environment. Thus all interest groups should work together to create a favorable image and ensure the sustainable development of the attraction.

3.2 The mechanism of model innovation

The nature of attraction-community management is to balance the interests of all parties and the purpose is to build harmonious tourism community.

(1) *Profit-driven mechanism.* The pre-condition to realize effective management in a community is to promote that the developer gives up part of profits to residents like Chexi. It is not advisable the developer earn all profits. Only by doing so, will the locals be willing to defend the image and environment.

(2) *Community involvement mechanism.* Residents are the real host of the destination. The attraction is doomed to be a failure without the involvement and support of residents. The content of involvement ranges from tourism planning, environmental protection to tourism education and training. The involving mechanism and the profit-driven mechanism are interactive. The former guarantees the interest of local people while the latter promotes the community involvement.

(3) *Government-leading mechanism.* It's necessary for the government to play the role of coordinator when the developer conflicts with the locals. A profit-coordination organ (the attraction management committee) can be founded

to solve various contradictions. Within the organ, the government should play the leading role in the infrastructure construction, like transportation, communication, electricity, sewage system and environmental treatment.

3.3 The new model of community-based attraction management

The innovation of management model highlights the coordination of interests of all parties concerned and aims to build harmonious tourism community. The new model promotes community co-management and functional division and stresses that the government, the developer and local people play different roles in the community-based attraction management.

Figure 1 here

- (1) The local government, the developer and the local residents comprise the attraction administrative committee coordinating the benefits of indigenous people and the developer.
- (2) The basic content of management is to ensure that locals' involvement is beneficial to the overall image, maintain and reinforce the appeal of the attraction.
- (3) Community organizations remain their original social and economic self-governing function.
- (4) Apart from the management of residents via the committee, the developer's management of its staff and the tourists also makes a difference to the image.
- (5) Residents and the developer benefit directly from visitors attracted by favorable image and the company staff and the local government benefit as well in the form of wages and taxes.

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Table 1. The contrast study of the four managing models

Model	The official administrative bureau model	The integration model	The functional division model	The relative separation model
resource property	Most of them are state-owned scenic spots, natural reserves and forest gardens	Most of them are cultural communities like ancient towns and folk villages	Part of the community is developed into tourist sites	Scarcely populated scenic areas or areas that are artificially isolated by the developer
attraction-community relation	The attraction and the community are completely or partly integrated	The community life forms an indispensable part of tourist activities. Completely integrated	The attraction is part of the community. Partly integrated	The community and the attraction are separated or relatively separated
Community managing mechanism	Combination of the official organ and villagers' self-governing	Combination of the developer company and villagers' self-governing	Combination of the government's coordination, the 's company development and villagers self-governing	The company is only in charge of the operation of the attraction, rather than the community management
effect	bad	good	better	worse

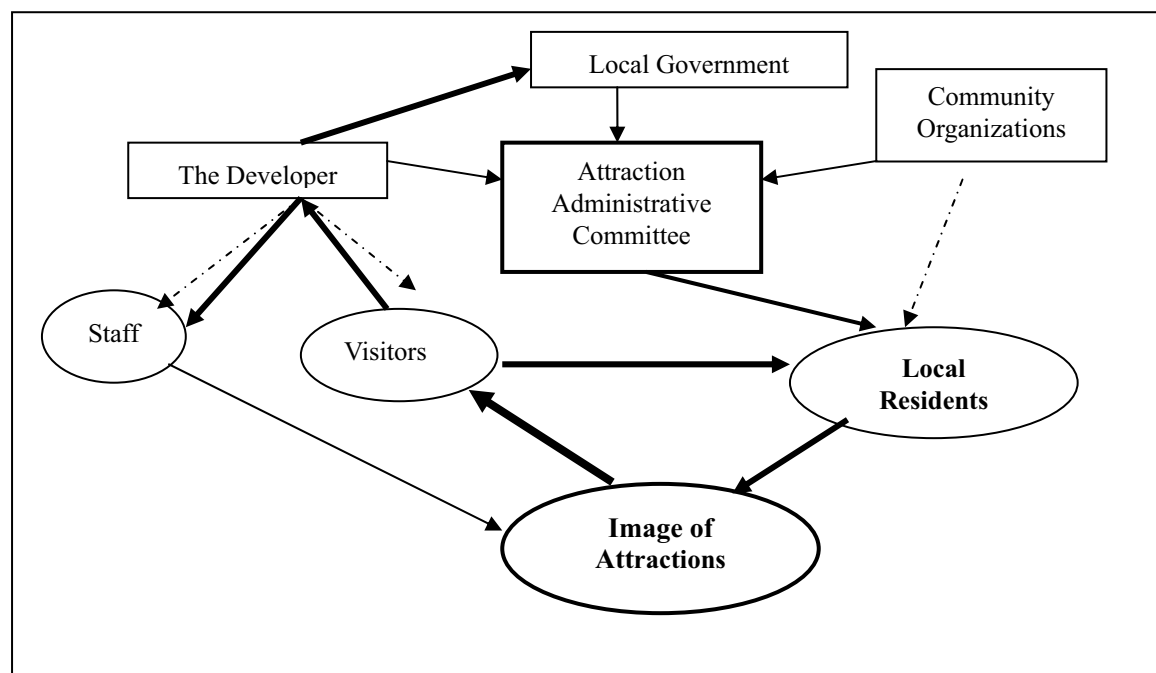


Figure 1. The new model of community-based attraction management