



BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH
TOURISM MANAGEMENT, UTILIZING MALUTANG TOWNSHIP,
LUQUAN COUNTY, CHINA*

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โดยใช้เมืองมาลุ่ทัง มณฑลฉุ่ฉวน ประเทศจีน



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Abstract

The objectives of this qualitative research paper were to analyze the present state of tourist policies in Malutang Township, China, and to investigate the current state of tourism planning in Malutang Township, China. The key informants included 30 individuals: 9 local poor, 6 local government officials, 3 non-governmental organization officers, 6 tourists, and 6 private sectors. For data collection, semi-structured in-depth-interviews script was used.

The results of the research were found that: 1. Based on the policy of targeted poverty alleviation, residents of Malutang Township had been required to eradicate extreme poverty. However, the local population had a relatively low level of education, and the local government lacked expertise in tourist development, which may result in the government prioritizing economic interests when creating and executing tourism policy. 2. Even though there was no tourism in the area now, its abundant natural resources and rich history make it a prime location for tourist development. Due to its lack of expertise, the local government would have the difficulty of guaranteeing adequate resource usage

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and allocation during tourism planning. These findings provided a better understanding of the current situation in China poorest districts, as well as for expanding tourism and reducing poverty.

Keywords: Tourism Poverty Alleviation; Tourism Policy; Tourism Planning

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ 1. วิเคราะห์สถานะปัจจุบันของ นโยบายการท่องเที่ยวในเมือง Malutang ประเทศจีน และ 2. ตรวจสอบสถานะปัจจุบันของการวางแผนการท่องเที่ยวในเมือง Malutang ประเทศจีน โดยเลือกสัมภาษณ์กลุ่มคนที่มีส่วนเกี่ยวข้องในด้านการท่องเที่ยวจำนวน 30 คน ได้แก่ คนจนในพื้นที่ 9 คน ข้าราชการส่วนท้องถิ่น 6 คน เจ้าหน้าที่องค์กรพัฒนาของเอกชน 3 คน นักท่องเที่ยว 6 คน และภาคเอกชน 6 คน สำหรับการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลโดยใช้การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า 1. ตามนโยบายการบรรเทาความยากจนแบบกำหนดเป้าหมาย ทำให้ผู้ที่อยู่อาศัยในเมือง Malutang กำจัดความยากจนขั้นแค้น อย่างไรก็ตาม ประชากรในท้องถิ่นมีระดับ การศึกษาค่อนข้างต่ำ และรัฐบาลท้องถิ่นยังขาดความเชี่ยวชาญในการพัฒนาแหล่งท่องเที่ยว ซึ่งอาจส่งผลให้รัฐบาลต้องให้ความสำคัญกับผลประโยชน์ทางเศรษฐกิจ เมื่อสร้างและดำเนินนโยบายการท่องเที่ยว 2. แม้ว่าในปัจจุบันจะไม่มี การท่องเที่ยวในพื้นที่นี้ ทว่าทรัพยากรธรรมชาติที่อุดมสมบูรณ์และประวัติศาสตร์อันยาวนาน ทำให้พื้นที่นี้เป็นพื้นที่ที่เหมาะสมแก่การพัฒนาแหล่งท่องเที่ยว อีกทั้งประชากรยังขาดความชำนาญ ผลของการวิจัยนี้ช่วยให้มีความเข้าใจมากขึ้นถึงสถานการณ์ปัจจุบันตลอดจนการขยายการท่องเที่ยวและลดความยากจน

คำสำคัญ: การบรรเทาความยากจนด้านการท่องเที่ยว; นโยบายการท่องเที่ยว; การวางแผนการท่องเที่ยว

Introduction

Poverty impacts everyone. Tourism is renowned for its ability to combat poverty. The UNWTO (World Tourism Organization) created the Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) initiative in 2002 in an effort to reduce global poverty through tourism (UNWTO, 2002). China's tourist poverty alleviation grew during the century. In recent years, targeted poverty alleviation has been advocated, and rural tourism in disadvantaged regions has contributed to tourist growth. In 2015, 14.42 million rural poor were lifted out of poverty, including 2.64 million via rural tourism (National Tourism Administration, 2016). Until May 16, 2020, Luquan County will be the only county in China that has not been pulled



out of poverty in the previous 30 years. Where ethnic minorities gather, Malutang Township has a rich ethnic culture and abundant natural resources. The township is also the poorest in Luquan County. It has become very meaningful to see whether it can help the local people alleviate poverty through developing tourism in the poorest areas of China. The background research on poverty alleviation via tourism in Malutang Township from two perspectives of tourism policy and planning will contribute to a better knowledge of the existing situation in China's poorest regions. Additionally, it will provide the groundwork for the region's future tourist growth. The research objectives were proposed as follows: 1. To analyze the current situation of tourism policy in Malutang Township, China. 2. To investigate the current state of tourism planning in Malutang Township, China. 3. To explore the background of poverty alleviation through tourism management in Malutang Township, China.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the present state of tourism policies in Malutang Township, China
2. To investigate the current state of tourism planning in Malutang Township, China

Methodology

A semi-structured interview strategy was less restrictive than an in-depth interview approach in terms of data collecting (Ritchie et al, 2003). This study used a purposive sampling technique to conduct semi-structured interviews with 30 tourism stakeholders. A triangle test can be created using various data to verify the accuracy of the information (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). To gather the relevant information for this inquiry, five different types of stakeholders were questioned: 1. Local poor individuals, 2. local government officials, 3. NGOs, 4. tourists, and 5. the private sector. The interviewees' identities are included in Table 1.

**Table 1** The list of interviewees of the study

Stakeholders	Code of each interviewee
Local poor individuals	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9
Local government officials	S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15
NGOs	S16, S17, S18
Tourists	S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24,
Private sectors	S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30

Nine local poor individuals and six tourists were chosen at random. Six local government officials including the members of the township committee and the head of the anti-poverty. The Yunnan Provincial People's Government's Poverty Alleviation and Development Office temporarily chose and nominated a leader to oversee Targeted Poverty Alleviation. Five members of the township committee were chosen from a range of ages and occupations to represent potential viewpoints. Three officers from vocational skills training schools were picked for NGOs from a diversity of genders and ages. The six small business owners for the private sector were identified from the integration network's multiple industries. Throughout interviews took place in September 2020. All interviews used a semi-structured framework with both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The more than 1-hour interviews were taped, recorded, and then translated for content analysis.

Results

Thirty participants were interviewed in Malutang Township, Lunquan County, Yunnan Province, China, in response to research objectives 1 and 2: to analyze the current situation of tourism policy in Malutang Township, China, and to investigate the current state of tourism planning in Malutang Township, China.

1 The current situation of tourism policies in Malutang Township

Table 2 The current situation of tourism policies in Malutang Township

The current situation of tourism policies	Interviewees
Income from traditional agriculture	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30
Education very low	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30
Provide professional training	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18



Table 2 The current situation of tourism policies in Malutang Township

The current situation of tourism policies	Interviewees
Basic healthcare	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9
Policy of targeted poverty alleviation	S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30
Tax relief for private sectors	S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30

The table 2 revealed the current situation of tourism policies in Malutang Township, which can be described as follows:

1. Income from traditional agriculture. The local economy could be inferred from income distribution. Most interviewees, including impoverished residents and municipal authorities, mentioned revenue difficulties. Local income came from farming and livestock, not tourists, according to interviewees. For instance: I have managed my lands and plant some vegetables, and fruits. About income, I got income unstable, and not too much. There are not have income from tourism at this moment in my community. (S1)

2. Education was very low. From 1986, the Chinese government has been developed a policy mandating nine years of education. According to the interviews, a majority of the local poor have not yet finished the nine-year basic education requirement, and their educational level is quite low. Many local governments officials lack of adequate education.

For instance: I am a peasant, after finishing primary school, I must return home and work on the farm to help my parents. (S3, S4) I think the main cause of poverty might be the low education level of local people. (S18)

3. Provide professional training. The interview showed that the government has partnered with technical education training facilities to offer a free instruction in planting, breeding, cooking, and construction to the underprivileged.

For example: There are different skills training classes in my village. The local government officer will come to the field and collect data from local people before training class is conducted. (S9)

4. Basic healthcare. Interviews showed that underprivileged locals have long cared about health and medical policies. Most disadvantaged people find it difficult to see a doctor, although the issue has been mostly rectified.



For example: Social security has provided a special allowance to my family every month from the government, and health security has provided my family with fundamental health care. (S4, S8)

5. Policy of targeted poverty alleviation. The Chinese central government proposes a targeted poverty alleviation policy that involves defining individuals who need assistance to know who else to help, reinforcing leadership and team-building to understand how and where to offer assistance, implementing targeted measures for various groups to know how to support, adopting rigorous standards to know when and how to deactivate those who have emerged from poverty, and obey tracking to know when and how to Interviews with local government officials, NGOs, and private sector members show that targeted poverty reduction underpins the poor region's tourist program. Tourism development is lacking, hence there is no tourism policy. For example: For poverty-stricken area, the policy of targeted poverty alleviation is the essential guidance of the tourism policymaking. (S6)

6. Tax relief for private sector. Taxes are government revenue. Government funding comes from taxes. Income sources include individuals, public enterprises, trade, natural resource royalties, and overseas aid. The local government offers sufficient tax relief initiatives for impoverished populations, according to interviews. In disadvantaged areas, small business owners are taxpayers.

For example: Tax is going to the government, but the government will give me tax relief because we belong to the poor-stricken areas. (S25)

2. The current state of tourism planning in Malutang Township

Table 3 The current state of tourism planning in Malutang Township

The current situation of tourism planning	Interviewees
No tourism	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30
Hope to open a homestay	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S12, S13, S14, S15, S16, S17, S18, S25, S26, S27, S28, S29, S30
Expect to open a restaurant	S4, S5, S7, S8, S9, S10, S12, S13, S14, S15, S18, S25, S26, S28, S29, S30
Plentiful natural resources	S10, S11, S14, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S24
Willing to open a souvenir shop	S10, S15
Owned rich cultural	S12, S15



Table 3 showed the current state of tourism planning in Malutang Township, which can be discussed as follows:

1. No tourism. The interview revealed that all respondents concur that there is currently no tourism in this area. The local economy is primarily supported by conventional farming. For example: At present, there are not yet any tourism projects introduced by the government in our community (S10, S11)

2. Hope to open a homestay. Travelers often stay with locals in homestays. The interview showed that while tourism had not been pushed locally, all local government officials, most of local poor people, and most private business owners think homestays to be built. For example: If tourism was introduced in this area, I think most of local people would open homestays and become owners of their family businesses. (S16)

3. Expect to open a restaurant. The interview suggests that several local impoverished people, local government officials, and private company owners believe that local restaurants could be established in the future once tourists is brought to the local region. For example: Once tourism runs into my community, most of the local people will apply their own advantages, whatever they open a homestay or an ethnic characteristics restaurant. (S5)

4. Plentiful natural resources. Tourism relies on whether the area had sufficient natural resources. The interview showed that local government authorities and all visitors agree that the area's natural resources are abundant and appropriate for tourism expansion. For example: I came here mainly to feel the natural scenery. (S20)

5. Willing to open a souvenir shop. The interview implies that some few local government officials believe that when tourism is introduced to this area, the local poor are qualified to own souvenir shops. For example: When tourism comes to the community, mostly the local people will open a homestay or a restaurant. They can also open a gifts shop for the sale of ethnically characteristics handmade crafts. (S15)

6. Owned rich cultural. As stated in the interview, certain local government officials recommend that the area's rich and diversified ethnic minority culture can indeed be leveraged in the future to promote tourism. For instance: As we all know, My county has numerous ethnic minorities including Yi, Dai, Miao, and Hani,



therefore each has rich cultural traditions. Tourism will involve all ethnic groups. (S12)

Discussion

When integrating tourism with poverty alleviation, a poor region may face two major obstacles: how to rationally develop and utilize the resources, and how to target the poor as the primary beneficiaries. This paper has explored how the case township met the obstacles, which are based on background investigation through two dimensions, including 1. The current situation of tourism policies, and 2. The current state of tourism planning.

1. This study discovered when it comes to formulation and implementation of tourism policies, attention is paid to income from traditional agriculture, education very low, provide professional training, basic healthcare, tax relief for private sectors, and targeted poverty alleviation policy. As noted, although there is no tourism policy now, but the decision-makers are aware of the contribution tourism development makes to economic expansion. The economic impact of tourism will help increase the incomes of the poor once the formulation and implementation of tourism policies are centered on positive perceptions (Croes, 2014), improve education and health services (Ashley & Roe, 2002) tax relief policy will boost developing businesses (Manyana & Jones, 2007), support relevant industries with the development of vocational skills (Spenceley & Goodwin, 2007), and targeted poverty alleviation policy will provide financial support (Slocum, 2011). This is also true in Malutang Township. It directly makes government officials focus primarily on highlighting the benefits of tourist policy. Poor people who are not involved in tourism may not directly benefit from the policy, hence their opinions of it may not be favorable. Therefore, it is important to consider both benefits and drawbacks while creating a tourist policy, particularly any challenges that may arise during implementation.

2. This study explored the current situation of tourism planning prioritizes homestays, restaurants, natural resources, souvenir shops, and rich culture. Despite decision-makers realize tourism development's contribution to economic growth, they frequently disregard its effects on the impoverished in practice (Christie, 2002). If proper planning and management are not implemented, these



repercussions may undermine local social and cultural traditions (Ashley et al, 2000). Although locals possess enormous resources (natural resources and rich cultural), and strong desire to open such as homestay, restaurant and souvenir shop, and involve in tourism, officials must execute acceptable interventions and tourism development strategies. Furthermore, poverty alleviation will be guided by policy and planning (Slocum, 2011). Before preparing, policymakers should have a comprehensive awareness of the local tourism resources and services. During the planning process for resource development and utilization, it should try to create a fair distribution of interests and reduce potential conflicts.

Body of knowledge

By completing background research on tourist poverty alleviation in Malutang Township, Luquan County, we may get a very intuitive understanding of the condition in China's poorest places and the growth of tourism poverty alleviation. Second, this survey's two perspectives on tourist policy, and planning establish a favorable foundation for tourism poverty reduction and growth in this area and others. Finally, as China aims to eliminate extreme poverty by 2020, rural tourism offers a new way to boost rural income. Tourism and poverty reduction in severe poverty-stricken places may commence with this study. This research, however, examined data from September to December 2020, when COVID-19 broke out in China. Many roads are blocked, and some interviewees back out, making the interview harder. Thus, future study may concentrate on assisting communities with limited tourist resources promote tourism and increase income and alleviate poverty through tourism.



Figure 1 Body of knowledge



Recommendations

Tourism should be managed effectively. Emphasis on cultural tourism of the country in line with the needs of the people.

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