

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Influencing factors of community participation in tourism development: A case study of Xingwen world Geopark

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**In order to find out the influencing factors of community participation in the tourism development process, several influencing factors are summed up through field survey, questionnaires of local residents and the logistic regression analysis of the investigation datum gained from Xingwen world Geopark. Results indicated there are several key influencing factors of community participation such as the comparative benefit of tourist industry, participant residents' subjective wishes, preference consciousness of working opportunity obtainment in the tourist enterprise and participant skills. Based on the afore-mentioned, the paper put forward several methods about how to enhance the residents' participant degree: increasing the comparative benefit of tourist industry, enhancing the attraction of tourism for boosting participant wishes, improving the preference consciousness on obtaining working opportunity in tourism industry and cultivating residents' participant skills through training.**

**Key words:** Community participation, influencing factors, logistic regression analysis, Xingwen world Geopark.

## INTRODUCTION

Community, the social living community, is based on the inhabitants in certain region and certain human relations in society (Li, 2000). The notion of community participation in tourism originates from the general concept of community participation in development studies (Tosun, 1999). Public-private sector partnerships in community participation are often one step removed from governments and raise issues about accountability and local democracy (Bahaire and Martin, 1999). Because different public and private groups expected different types of community participation to achieve their own aims that may conflict with each other (Tosun, 2006). In 1985, *Travel: Community Method*, published by Peter E Murphy, first introduced the concept of the community

participation in tourism development (Murphy, 1985). The community participation in tourism was also regarded as one important part of sustainable development in *21st Century Agenda about Tourism* issued by The World Tourism Organization (WTO), World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and Earth Council (Zhang, 1998). It is believed that participatory development approach would facilitate implementation of principles of sustainable tourism development by creating better opportunities for local people to gain larger and more balanced benefits from tourism development taking place in their localities (Tosun, 2000), which may ensure both visitor satisfaction and ongoing benefits for the residents of destinations areas (Simmons, 1994; Tosun, 2000).

Some Chinese scholars make it clear that the community participation in tourism has already become one of important factors and the main insurance in keeping sustainable development of tourism, and has

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already become one important and effective way of the community development in minority region and in west China (Sun, 2005). With the community participation in tourism and the realization of the great community benefits, the potential conflict of stakeholders and the obstacles of tourism development can be eliminated (Inskeep, 1991; Bao and Sun, 2003). By operating the small entity and obtaining some benefits, people would actively protect tourism resources and support the tourism development which promotes directly or accelerate local social culture transition (Li, 2008; Wang and Jian, 2008; Bao and Qiu, 2006). At the same time, owing to the economic development standard, social system, national policy, residents' opinion of value etc, the depth and effect of community participation were restricted (Pang, and Li 2002). Tosun (2000) analyzed and explained the limitations to the participatory tourism development approach in the context of developing countries.

It should be noted that there are a number of differences between China and western societies for community participation of tourism development process (Bao and Sun, 2007). Nowadays, some researches in China lay emphasis on the effect, political environment, manner and coordination of stakeholder's interest in community participation (Fan et al., 2008; Luo, 2006; Bao and Sun, 2007), but have less emphasis on the influencing factors of residents' effective participation. However, as to tourist destination, the community residents' effective participation is a foundation of solving many social problems for sustainable tourism development. Hence, this paper mainly investigated the situation of community participation in the Xingwen world Geopark, including the tourism influence on local residents' profits, the influence of external social condition, subjective consciousness of the participants, participant ability, and then the paper analyzed the positive influencing factors for residents' participation, put forward some advices to improve participation level of community residents.

## DATA SOURCE AND NUMERICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE

### Data source

The datum of the article stemmed from the investigation reports about local community participation of Xingwen world Geopark in July and August in 2008. As for investigation, the questionnaire and the methods of semi-structured interview were used. Of the total 106 questionnaires filled out, 94 questionnaires are effective. The efficiency rate of questionnaires is 88.7%.

The areas of field survey contains Shihaidongxiang scenic area and Bowangshan scenic area in Xingwen world Geopark, including Shilin village, Daqi village, Pingzai village, Bowang village, Nanxing village and

Shihai community, among which the five former is rural community, the last one is laid-off employees' community where the residents were the former workers in an sulfur ore factory. The investigation directly refers to local community residents involved in tourism in order to acquire total tendency of all family members, and the datum were obtained by entering every family as one fundamental unit. Therefore, the collecting data are typically representative.

### Numerical characteristics of sample

Among 94 effective questionnaires, 93.6% of the families include 4 to 7 members, 58.3% has two or less labor force (between 18 and 55 years old) and major workforce get jobs outside of this region, 87.6% has been in the cultural level of junior or middle school. The aforementioned sample numerical characteristics indicate that like other rural communities, the labor force is of shortage and the general cultural level of the residents is low. Of 94 effective questionnaires, only 39 samples occupied 41.5% took part in tourism industry, among which the major participant ways are self-support catering service, selling tourism souvenirs, working in tourism enterprises, providing cicerone service and so on.

## MODELS, VARIABLE AND OPERATION RESULTS

### Theory models and variable

The investigation datum is analyzed by logistic regression model of SPSS software. Supposed that the probability of local residents' participation is  $P$ , the probability of not-participation is  $1-P$ . Based on the hypothesis and logistic regression model, the main influencing factors of local residents' participation were analyzed, including 8 aspects: the comparing benefit of local residents' participation, the trust in the local government, the difficult or easy degree of loan acquirement for the development of tourism relevant industries, the degree of wish in tourism participation, the eagerness degree of tourist service, the preference consciousness (to work in tourist enterprise) and participant abilities and skills.

In this paper, whether a person participates in tourism industry or not (such as offering catering service, working in relevant tourism enterprises, individual cicerone service etc.) is taken as two classification's dependable variable (0,1). As for the influencing factors from  $X_1$  to  $X_8$ , the variable values changed from 1 to 5 (Table 1). So, the logistic regression model in this research could be built as follows:

$$\log \left[ \frac{p}{1-p} \right] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_n X_n$$

**Table 1.** Variable definition in logistic regression model.

Index	Value	Define
Whether participation or not	1~2	1=no; 2=yes
Comparative benefit (X1)	1~5	1= worse; 2= is not as good; 3=more or less; 4=a little better; 5=better
Trust in the government (X2)	1~5	1= mistrust seriously; 2= mistrust; 3=never mind; 4= trust some; 5= trust
Loans (X3)	1~5	1= very difficult; 2=much difficult; 3=normal; 4=easy; 5=very easy
Participant wish(X4)	1~5	1=never wish; 2=not hope; 3=never mind; 4=hope; 5=wish seriously
Service eagerness(X5)	1~5	1= halfhearted seriously; 2 =halfhearted; 3=never mind; 4= enthusiasm a little; 5= enthusiasm
Preference consciousness(X6)	1~2	1=no; 2=yes
Participant energy(X7)	1~2	1=no; 2=yes
Participant skills(X8)	1~3	1=no; 2=yes; 3=yes, doing it now

**Table 2.** Analytic result of logistic regression of the influencing factors on community participation.

Variable	Regression coefficient B	Standard error (SE)	Wald Statistics	Degree of freedom (df)	P-value (sig)	Exp(B)
Comparing benefit	1.494*	0.650	5.277	1	0.022	4.456
Trust in the government	0.178	0.568	0.098	1	0.755	1.194
Loans	-0.615	0.647	0.903	1	0.342	0.541
Participant wish	1.950**	0.664	8.625	1	0.003	7.030
Service eagerness	-1.427	0.847	2.840	1	0.092	0.240
Preference consciousness	3.263**	1.254	6.767	1	0.009	26.122
Participant energy	1.085	1.119	0.941	1	0.332	2.960
Participant skills	1.990*	0.825	5.820	1	0.016	7.319
Constant	-16.341	4.755	11.809	1	0.001	0.000

### The model's operation results

With logistic regression analysis of influencing factors in the Table 1 operated by this first-hand data of questionnaire survey, we can get conclusions as indicated in Table 2.

### ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCING FACTORS ON THE COMMUNITY RESIDENTS' PARTICIPATION

As for  $R^2=0.876$  in the goodness of fit test, this proves that the data fitting of logistic regression model is better. According to the analytic result and examination of all variables' statistic meanings in regression model, it can be seen from every variable p-value that under 0.05 test level, comparing benefit, participant wish, preference consciousness(to work in tourist enterprise) and the participant skills have statistic meaning. And the service eagerness is around the test level while other variables do not have obvious statistic meaning.

#### Comparative benefit of participant tourism

According to logistic regression analysis, the results indicate that the symbol of B-value is positive, P-value is equal to 0.022, and Exp (B) value is equal to 4.456,

which explains that the greater the comparative benefit of participant tourism is, the bigger possibility of community participation is. In other words, 4.456 units of community residents' participation will increase when the comparing benefit increases every unit. So, improving the comparative benefit of tourism participation can have the active influence on the community residents' participation.

#### Subjective wish of residents' participation

As to participant wish, the model's operation results show that the symbol of B-value is positive, P-value is equal to 0.003, and Exp (B) value is equal to 7.030. Based on the analysis result, the factor of subjective participant wish had a positive impact on residents' participation. That is to say, 7.030 units of community residents' participation will increase when the participant wish increases every unit. As a result, we can enhance residents' participant wish through improving the tourism participation benefits so as to improve residents' participant degree.

#### Preference consciousness on obtaining working opportunity in tourism industry

B-value of preference consciousness is equal to 0.009, it

is prominent at the level of 0.01, and Exp (B) value equals 26.122. According to B-value (=3.263), It can be seen that the preference consciousness on obtaining the working opportunity has the greatest influence on the decision-making of residents' participation. At the same time, the participant variable which is caused by the alteration of preference consciousness is the greatest. Hence it is most important for local residents to improve the preference consciousness for getting work opportunities and enhancing residents' participant degree.

### Skills of participating in traveling

Based on B-value of the participant skills (is positive) and Exp (B) value (equals 7.319), these data indicate that improving the participant skills can promote community residents' participation. The influence of participant skills on improving participant degree is only less than cultivating the preference consciousness to get work opportunities. So we should strengthen the skills' cultivation of community participation in order to advance the participant degree.

### Four factors (the trust in the government, loan, service eagerness and participant energy) have no obvious influence on the community residents' participation

The degree of trust in the government and the difficult or easy degree of loan acquirement are the objective social circumstances which influence community residents' participation in tourism. Because the community residents are always suited to the government's activities passively, it has no obvious and only certain influence on the decision-making of community residents' participation.

Although the test level of the service eagerness is about 0.05, the influence is not obvious, because the tradition of hospitality also has certain effects besides economic profits obtained through giving services to external travelers. Furthermore, most of local community participants are in miniature or part-time, so the participant energy has no obvious influence too.

### Conclusion

Community participation is an important method to promote healthy and sustainable development of tourism in tourist destinations. On the basis of a case study of Xingwen world Geopark, we analyze the influencing factors on local residents' participation in tourism by logistic regression analysis, and screen out four major factors that influence residents' participation in decision-making such as the comparative benefit of tourist

industry, participant residents' subjective wishes, preference consciousness of working opportunity obtainment in the tourist enterprise and participant skills.

According to these results analysis, we also discussed some of the means to improve community participant degree and put forward some suggestions to improve community participation as follows: improving the comparative benefit of tourist industry, enhancing the attraction of tourism for boosting participant wishes, improving the preference consciousness on obtaining working opportunity in tourism industry and cultivating residents' participant skills through training.

The research was based on whether to participate in tourism for community residents. So it laid a firm foundation for further research. Meanwhile, as for other correlative tourism researches in rural regions, the methods about how to enhance the participant degree have certain reference value. But there are still some deficiencies as follows: (1) the community participant degree is relatively low, only 41.5% of effective questionnaires are the tourism participants; (2) the total amount of samples is not adequate enough, which may limit the analysis of influencing factors on community participation; (3) this investigation and study is based on a case of Xingwen world Geopark so that its conclusions still should be testified by further study.

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