

AUTHENTICITY ISSUES OF RURAL COMMUNITY TOURISM CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF BAIYANG LAKE ISLAND VILLAGES

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INTRODUCTION

In 2002 and 2003 two island villages participated in tourism and became popular attractions in Baiyang Lake, Hebei province of China. Their approach draws the authors' attention because both of them adopt a community participation approach. A detailed look into this phenomenon may help to gain some insights. Therefore, on site interviews and investigations were conducted. Specific objectives include: 1. Identify the features of the two approaches of tourism development in the two island villages in Baiyang Lake; 2. Compare the similarity and differences of the two islands, using the concepts of authenticity and Ruality; 3. Identify challenges and opportunities and try to provide some recommendations for Baiyang Lake's island villages.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative field research is employed as the main research method as it is well suited to the study of social process over time (Babbie, 2001, p276; Ying and Zhou, 2007). The field research was generally conducted in the form of non-participation observation and on site interviews in April, 2005. Concerning the challenges and opportunities that the two island villages may confront, several follow-up telephone interviews are conducted in Jan, 2007.

FINDINGS

Community participated approach in island tourism development is an effectively way to increase the local villagers income. The two island villages have the essence of Ruality, and applied the concepts of Objective Authenticity and Built Authenticity. The practices of the two island villages changed the role of villagers from negative participants to actively involved designer, administrator and operator of tourism activities. They provide a new mean to increase local community income and improve living standards of rural area in China.

The differences in investments and the importance of local community needs lead the two villages to different directions. One will become more economical driven, while the other will benefit the whole community needs in the long run. This is further proved by the follow-up telephone interviews. However, the findings show that both of the two villages are facing attractive opportunities and may experience further challenges.

As the 2008 Beijing Olympic Game is coming, Baiyang Lake enjoys the convenient transportation (2 hours from Beijing by highway) from Beijing as well as increase recognition and reputation. Will Baiyang Lake be able to attract more long-haul domestic even international tourists? However, has Baiyang Lake well prepared for that? How about the island villages? The authors believe that they both need more preparation not only in building and operating nice attractions, but also in educating human resources with required skills and attitudes. Baiyang Lake should catch the opportunity brought by 2008 Beijing Olympics, and promote Baiyang Lake and island villages to the

international market.

REFERENCES

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