Construction of Support System for the Development of Eco-Tourism Industry

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Abstract Since eco-tourism was introduced in the 1990s, upsurge of its development rises in China. As ecotourism develops rapidly, tourism activities have caused great pollution and damages to resources and environment and influenced healthy development of eco-tourism. This paper constructs support system for development of eco-tourism in our country using oversea development experience of tourism industry for reference in terms of reality of development of tourism industry.

Key words Eco-tourism, Eco-environment, Industry development, Support system

1 Introduction

Eco-tourism is the hotspot for the development of tourism industry in the 21st century. It is the inevitable choice for the economic development of tourism destination and protection of eco-environment and resources. Currently, eco-tourism has been the most driving tourism form of developing trend in the world at a global increase rate up to 20-30%, far more than the 4% average growth rate of the whole tourism industry. As people’s living standard increase, tourism has been daily consumption activity. Due to the charm of returning to nature, embracing nature and appreciate nature, eco-system is much more attractive and appealing. At present, scenic and historic areas, forest parks and geological parks have been open for tourism, most natural reserves has developed or partly developed eco-tourism activities. Eco-tourism is a kind of high grade tourism activity of great content of high-tech and cultural meanings. Real eco-tourism will facilitate protection of ecological environment. However, improper and unscientific developing activities and tourism activities will cause pollution and damage to ecologic environment consequently affecting the thriving development of eco-tourism. According to investigation of 100 provincial levels or above nature reserves made by some organizations, 22% natural reserves have already caused damage to protected objects due to development of eco-tourism and 11% have suffered degradation of tourism resources. How to boost healthy and harmonious development of eco-tourism is one vital new issue in front of us. According to research on oversea development of eco-tourism industry, it is found that complete support system for eco-tourism development is the significant warrant of sustainable development of eco-tourism. Therefore, it has great significance to construct the support system for the development of eco-tourism industry in terms of reality of development of domestic eco-tourism industry.

2 Eco-tourism planning system

2.1 Importance of eco-tourism planning

As a kind of tourism of special feeling and sense of responsibility to ecology and culture, eco-tourism is inevitably to be the strategic choice to promote the sustainable development of tourism. Since places suitable for development of eco-tourism always locate in sensitive regions with fragile ecologic environment, the quality of eco-tourism planning associates directly with protection of tour resources and influences the sustainable development of tourism industry. Only on the premise of scientific planning of eco-tourism, it can bring the function of protecting ecological environment into play and realize the sustainable development of tourism.
2.2 Construction of eco-tourism planning system

Eco-tourism planning aims to construct sustainable eco-tourism, including sustainable construction of eco-environment, economy and society, specifically to improve people’s living standard and quality in community, offer high quality experience for eco-tourists and maintain quality of natural and cultural environment.

It is essential to insist on principle of scientific demonstration and strict review in eco-tourism planning. Any eco-tourism program should be demonstrated comprehensively and scientifically by sociologist, environmentalist, cultural expert, chemist and other experts and can only be executed after approval by related authorities. Eco-tourism planning should stick to eco preferred principle; stress on protection of tourism objects and indicates requirements and responsibility of environment protection clearly. Under emphasis on ecological laws, it is essential to create perfect functioned man-made ecosystem by means of proper use of natural and ecosystem to maintain stability of ecosystem without damage to biological diversity. It is essential to persist in principle of being harmonious and conforming with the nature to maintain originality and truth of eco-tour resources in eco-tourism planning. It is essential to insist on appropriate development in eco-tourism planning to limit intensity of tourism activities and quantity of tourists within ecological loading capacity of resources and environment in case of over-developing tourism facility and over-use of tour resources by tourists to maintain stability of ecosystem, in terms of loading capacity of natural environment and requirements of eco-tourism. It should make functional separation to avoid damages to protected objects in tourism activities and distribute tourists to achieve optimized use of tour resources with ideal protection performance. Insisting on the principle of participation of multiple parties, Eco-tourism planning should take use of multiple forms to collect opinions of related people for broad view of all conditions at the purpose of absorbing their reasonable advices and recommendations for best planning effect. It is essential to develop unique and distinctive eco-tourism product to meet needs of tourists for novelty and diversity thus to be of stronger competitiveness in tight market.

3 Eco-tourism certification system

Eco-tourism certification refers to the process used for measurement and assessment of eco-tourism enterprise, route or product through a series of corresponding regulations and standard system and advance eco-tourism operator to improve its environmental performance for fulfillment of commitment to the nature and society and enhance sustainable development of ecotourism destination by giving some recognition and reward (like eco-mark) to those who complies with standard requirements in certain form.

3.1 Necessity of eco-tourism certification system

As Eco-tourism starts very late in China, many people’s understanding of eco-tourism only covers developing towards the nature and utilizing natural resources due to its short development which causes blindly stress on single responsibility to economic growth as well as ignorance of their obligations to environment. “For some self-proclaimed eco-tourism, they even never take people’s dependence on natural resources into account, so undiscounted eco-tourism mainstream route is hardly to find currently.” In many places, they develop ecosystem for mass consumption of tourism, then proceed various facilities and constructions taking ecotourism development as “creating project and planning layout”; according to statistics, around 82% natural reserves develop eco-tourism activities in buffer even core area against related terms and regulations; there’s even large scare of civil works and constructions of human and natural landscape in some regions. Due to lack of related regulations and standards, the popularization and abuse of eco-tourism has caused environmental damages in many places. In order to regulate development and operation of eco-tourism and make it implement eco protection faithfully, it is essential to make related standard to differentiate it from other tourism forms. Meanwhile, eco-tourism certification can add degree of credit and reputation of certified enterprises and
it is emergent to construct eco-tourism certification system for current tourism industry.

3.2 Construction of eco-tourism certification system in China

Eco-tourism certification system may include three properties—applier, attester and grantor. Among them, applier is the first party referring to eco-tourism enterprises or destination at the intension of making more benefits; the grantor is the send party with right to issue certification; attester is the third party referring to specialized certification organizations, individual certification enterprise or expert without interest relationship with applied enterprise or agency to approve in tour destination which may form eco-tourism certification committee for official certification with general administration of quality supervision and general administration of environment protection or appoint private or foreign enterprise with good qualification and credit for non-official certification. For specific certification system, it can take content of “global world 2.1” and “Australian Sub eco-tourism certification system” as reference to determine eco-tourism certification of scenery area and community as the pivot. As to the content for certification, it can take ISO14000 for reference to include environment protection qualification recognition system and environment influence assessment system, quantified assessment system of general reparation of urban environment and other related contents including environment management system certification and recognition, environment mark certification, environment pollution treatment facility operation qualification acceptance, environment friendly product recognition, special design qualification recognition, inspection and qualification recognition of testing organization of environment pollution prevention project, etc. The certification standard established shall reflect international general standard and also demonstrate concrete condition of eco-tourism area in China; both take generality principle and also set up standard in terms of eco features of difference areas.

4 Community participation eco-tourism system

4.1 Significances of community participation in ecotourism

Community participation refers that communities and residents in ecotourism destination enter the decision-making and execution system of eco-tourism with their various self-owned production factors and earn distribution of interests by extensive participation in eco-tourism activities as well as boost environment protection and complete development of community. Eco-tourism activity is a kind of tourism form to maintain local people’s life under great emphasis on community development of tourism destination. Local community is the important tie between protection and economic income and social benefits, most core related interest party in eco-tourism. Community participation will provide mighty power for protection of resources in tour region. Community participation can make eco-tourism really shoulder responsibility of developing economy and protecting environment. From eco-tourism practices of all countries, no mater in developed countries or developing countries, community participation is the important content of eco-tourism activities. Currently, though people has realized the importance of eco-tourism activity in theory, community and its residents still haven’t been considered as property of development of eco-tourism in practice in all eco-tourism destination. Therefore, to establish a complete and perfect community participation and eco-tourism development system to help community residents participate in eco-tourism has great significance.

4.2 Construction of Community participation ecotourism system

Community participation in eco-tourism shall not only have the characteristics of common community participation but also bear the concern about environment by ecotourism to facilitate eco-tourism more applicable for sustainable development by community participation under the basic principle of following eco-tourism development. Tourism development management department should set up branches of full-time community management to establish good communication channels between community and tourism operating organizations, thus to formulate informing system and negotiation system on important affairs in development and planning of tourism as well as the veto
system on significant decisions in some tour regions under the supervision of comprehensive
demonstration and study on any tourism decision. Residents may join in tourism enterprises to enjoy
eco-tourism interest distribution, and also can benefit from eco-compensation system as well as become
a shareholder in the development of eco-tourism landscape area for interest distribution as a shareholder.
Develop extensive community education in communities to cultivate awareness and capability of
participation of the whole society and reinforce environment protection and legal system education on
community residents to strengthen their environment protection awareness. Construct beneficial
investment and financing system for community residents and expand methods fro community
participation in eco-tourism. Establish index system affecting effects of community participation and
general index assessment coefficient model to assess the participation effects of community in
eco-tourism.

5 Eco-environment education system

5.1 Significance of eco-environment education system
Eco-tourism shall be the tourism form harmonious with natural environment and responsible for
environment without cost of sacrifice of environment. In the whole process of eco-tourism activity, it is
required to minimize environmental effects, no matter tourists, tourism operators or mangers, all are
placed with requirements for high awareness of environment protection. However, social public, no
matter tourism operator or tourist and common citizen, lacks environment protection awareness at
present or just has certain oral understanding which can not be put into practice; therefore, ecotourism is
apt to go out of form. In a sentence, it is really important to reinforce environment education.

5.2 Construction of eco-environment education system
It is essential to consolidate eco and environment protection education to related people in
eco-tourism. First, give training to staffs for development, management, operation and service of
eco-tourism to improve their eco-awareness and environment protection knowledge and make them use
energy-saving, environment friendly new technology in operation and reduce pollution and damage to
the environment due to their operation. Second, boost propaganda and education of ecology and
environment protection knowledge to tourists. Tourists' behavior convention is an important factor for
much unnecessary pollution in eco-tourism activities. In practice, it is requisite to not only exercise
service and management function of guides to educate tourists in eco-tourism, but also consolidate
environment protection facilities in eco-tourism areas. Third, reinforce eco environment education to
local residents. Help local people to know what local environment and resources mean to them and what
benefit they have to protect eco environment thus to be the safeguard to protect local eco environment
consciously to enhance sustainable development of eco-tourism. Offer them necessary production and
living condition to help them establish legal conception of environment protection to change traditional
living and production method gradually and stop hunting, lumbering, reclaiming and other conducts.

6 Legal system for development of eco-tourism industry

6.1 Significance to construct legal system for development of eco-tourism industry
As eco-tourism develops rapidly, there’s extensive phenomenon of unilateral pursuit of economic
benefits, ignorance of protection and damage to eco environment under emphasis on development. It is
mainly because of the lack of legal warrant system taken in the development of eco-tourism in our
country. On the condition of relative blank of eco-tourism legislation, related auxiliary laws fails to
operate efficiently in combination with existing laws. In an ecotourism area, always multiple
independent management agencies coexist with different management jurisdiction and pivot for
different departments. Therefore, it is hard to make systematical management because of separated
management authority as each does things in their own way. Perfect legal system for development of eco-tourism industry will ensure that ecotourism has laws to go by thus to accomplish sustainable development of eco-tourism.

6.2 Construction of legal warrant system for development of eco-tourism industry

For eco-tourism legislation, mainly it is to nurture market system for eco-tourism by constructing eco-tourism market rules and keeping market order and to improve legislation level of eco-tourism through issuing 《Eco-tourism Act》 and 《Rules of development and management of eco-tourism》, resulting in construction of a full set of law system to warrant smooth development of eco-tourism industry. It is required to set up environmental effect assessment system for eco-tourism resource program developed. Prior to development of each ecological resource project, the government and developer must ask some environment assessment agency with legal qualification to make assessment on possible environmental effect. Risk assessment shall contain many aspects including threat to local wild life and life diversity as well as resulted risk of environment damage or loss of ecosystem benefits, etc. It is requisite to establish review and approval system and supervision system on eco-tourism program to take examination & approval of project on ecotourism programs and regular examination of conditions of those eco-tourism resources. To establish strict industry entry system, it shall stipulate that different scale of eco-tourism shall be developed with certified developer and take regular assessment on their developing qualification. Build investigation system of responsibility to run civil, administrative and criminal responsibility of those who causes grave damage to ecological environment due to their blind development. Establish tour environment audit mark system, that is, to review the whole process of tour development and operation from the angle of environment protection to insure sustainable development of tour resources and boost health and orderly development of ecotourism enterprise in our country. Reinforce supervision on execution of environmental laws, to increase strength of execution of laws to facilitate people infringing natural resources illegally to take relative civil, administrative and criminal responsibility under general, associated and strict execution.

7 Conclusion

Eco-tourism is the tourism activity shouldering dual responsibility of protecting natural environment and maintaining local people’s life as well as an approach to sustainable tourism. However, eco-tourism is not the substitute of sustainable tourism development strategy. Therefore, improper planning, development and operation may cause great pollution and damage to eco-tourism resources and environment. Healthy and sustainable development of eco-tourism relies on perfect industry support system. It is essential for our country to construct an eco-tourism planning system to make scientific verification and strict review on eco-tourism programs; it is essential to construct eco-tourism certification system to regulate eco-tourism activities; it is essential to construct eco-tourism system for community participation to help residents in tourism area benefit from eco-tourism and provide drive for resource protection in tourism area; it is essential to construct eco-environment education system to improve sense of responsibility of environment protection of related people in eco-tourism; it is essential to construct perfect eco-tourism legislation system to insure the development of eco-tourism industry has laws to go by and advance sustainable tourism development of eco-tourism and achieve all goals of developing eco-tourism.

Reference