A study on rural low-carbon tourism development in Jiangxi

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Abstract. Jiangxi features rich tourism resources in rural areas and favorable eco-environment, and it’s worth in-depth exploration how to develop rural tourism while protecting the beautiful rural environment in Jiangxi. Therefore, the new perspective of developing rural low-carbon tourism in Jiangxi was proposed in the paper to revisit rural tourism. Starting with the ecological concerns for rural tourism in Jiangxi, the paper probes into the necessity of rural low-carbon tourism development in the province and the path of rural low-carbon tourism development in the province on the basis of analyzing the principles to follow in developing the tourism, in anticipation of serving as reference for the theories and practices of sustainable development of rural low-carbon tourism in Jiangxi Province.

1. Introduction

With fast growth of Chinese economy, people’s living standard keeps rising and tourism has become a lifestyle for people to approach nature and release their pressures. And with further industrialization worldwide, consumption of fuels like coal, natural and oil is increasing to lead to continuing lift of worldwide temperatures, exacerbation of the environment and threat to eco-safety. Low carbon is now a global hot topic and rural tourism is also widely discussed these years. During the development of low-carbon economy and modern agriculture, how to develop rural tourism has become a common concern for everyone.

Low-carbon tourism advocates diminishing carbon footprints and carbon emissions to minimum while travelling, making it an in-depth manifestation of environment-friendly tourism, an eco-friendly, high-efficiency and sustainable way of tourism product production and consumption, and a lifestyle healthy and civilized oriented to the future; it’s also an industry to harvest greater economic, social and environment benefits from tourism by less carbon emissions during tourism development, and to make tourism truly low-carbon, environment-friendly and resource-saving.

Gao Wenling et al. proposed that rural low-carbon tourism is a new-type tourism that is materially based on the natural environment and ultimately oriented to economic growth and integrates the development of rural areas and environmental protection[2]. Ma Dongyue believed that rural low-carbon tourism must be a compound low-carbon tourism pattern that combines the local natural and cultural environments and integrates natural ecology, economic development and social progress in rural areas, so that it should boast functions for production, living and education[3].

Jiangxi features rich tourist resources and beautiful eco-environment, and it’s worth in-depth exploration how to develop rural tourism while protecting the beautiful rural environment in Jiangxi. Therefore, the new perspective of developing rural low-carbon tourism in Jiangxi was proposed in the paper to revisit rural tourism. Starting with the ecological concerns for rural tourism in Jiangxi, the paper probes into the necessity of rural low-carbon tourism development in the province and the path of rural low-carbon tourism development in the province on the basis of analyzing the principles to follow in developing the tourism, in anticipation of serving as reference for the theories and practices...
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2. Existing Ecological Concerns for Jiangxi’s Rural Tourism

2.1 Low-carbon infrastructures lag behind and hazards of environmental safety stand out
First, as tourism operators keep seeking economic benefits but ignore damages to environmental resources, rural tourism lacks effective management mechanism and the eco-environment is easily disrupted; second, some tourists have no clear low-carbon idea of rural travels and insufficient knowledge of the eco-environment, so that they litter around to cause outstanding phenomena of waste pollution in tourist areas; third, due to unreasonable tourism development, the surplus of tourists and vehicles for some tourism destinations has caused undercapacity of rural tourism; fourth, due to weak infrastructures for rural tourism, there’re few garbage disposal and sewage disposal systems, causing great damages to the environment. With all these factors, there’re clear safety hazards for eco-environment in rural areas.

2.2 Rural cultural and natural landscapes in Jiangxi have been destroyed
During rural tourism development, as many tourism operators are local farmers not well educated, they don’t have a clear idea of the position and value of rural resources and rural environment in rural tourism development and have no scientific and reasonable planning and management; they blindly seek urbanization by using urbanized buildings and facilities for tourism service, which not only discord with the surrounding environment but the neighboring rural natural views, thus gradually eroding the primitive rural air of rural tourism. Besides, the urban culture that urban tourists take to their rural travels also has certain impact on rural culture; some rural culture has been assimilated by urban culture, affecting the lifestyle of rural residents and the true rural colors. The most essential rural flavor of rural tourism has thus vanished. However, for those living in the city, if rural tourism loses its features different from urban tourism and the local uniqueness, rural tourism will lose its charm and attraction, thus dragging rural tourism development in Jiangxi.

3. Necessity of Rural Low-carbon Tourism Development in Jiangxi Province

3.1 Conducive to protection of rural eco-environment in Jiangxi
Jiangxi features nice rural eco-environment with the strengths of development rural tourism. The fast development of rural tourism in Jiangxi has contributed greatly to getting the local people rid of poverty and becoming better off. Some rural tourism operators, driven by the want of economic benefits, pursue short-term profits without regard to damages to tourist environment; some tourists don’t harbor strong awareness of environmental protection for rural travels; and rural tourism is usually void of efficient management: all these factors cause environmental pollutions to rural tourism. Therefore, rural tourism in Jiangxi must follow the idea of low-carbon development, paying equal attention to rural tourism development and environmental protection. The tourism development must sufficiently and sustainably protect the eco-environment of Jiangxi, guard the brand of rural ecology of Jiangxi and fully exert the rural ecological uniqueness of Jiangxi, so as to avoid turning the rural strengths into weaknesses and fulfill positive cyclic development of rural tourism in the province, ultimately achieving sustainable development of Jiangxi’s rural tourism.

3.2 Conducive to rural tourism development and brand building in Jiangxi
With the deterioration of the air environment, the idea of low carbon and environmental protection becomes gradually accepted, and low-carbon tourism has thus been accepted by tourist destinations and tourists. Low-carbon tourism is to conduct tourist activities on the basis of preserving the ecological environment; if low-carbon economy is a trend of future economic development, then low-carbon tourism must be the future direction of tourism development. We should stick to rural tourism development with low-carbon idea as it’s an idea of sustainable development and foresight. Amid fierce rural tourism competitions, sticking to rural low-carbon tourism development will help
protect the rural eco-environment, firmly build beautiful villages and continue to exert the ecological strengths of rural areas in Jiangxi, thus making the rural tourism of Jiangxi stand out amid fierce market competition and establish a unique rural tourism brand of Jiangxi, thus winning the approval of tourists and guiding tourists’ consumption. Rural low-carbon tourism not only accords with the idea of “basing development on ecological harmony” of Jiangxi Province but meets its anticipation of building a beautiful Jiangxi, and complies with the directions of rural tourism and eco-tourism set by China National Tourism Administration, thus a major trend of tourism development. Also, this allows for new development opportunities for Jiangxi with the advantage of favorable rural ecology.

3.3 Conducive to rural appearance improvement in Jiangxi
As a major agricultural province, Jiangxi has a rural population taking up more than half of its total population, and the areas of its rural land cover over half of the total land area of Jiangxi. For these years, Jiangxi has been troubled by a large population and insufficient resources, which doesn’t allow it to keep to the development path of “modification after pollution”. The development of rural tourism in Jiangxi must be a major factor for New Countryside Construction in Jiangxi Province instead of being the chief cause of damages to rural environment in Jiangxi. Rural tourism is primarily based on a favorable eco-environment, in which tourists make rural production and living, folk customs and cultural relics the tourist attractions. Without the beautiful natural environment, rural tourism competitiveness will be greatly reduced. Low-carbon tourism is a necessary choice for rural tourism to comply with the development of the times and an imperative path for new countryside building in Jiangxi Province. The objective of new countryside building in Jiangxi is to transform the new countryside into one of neat appearance, developed production, high rural culture and well-off living. New countryside building in Jiangxi requires improvements in the eco-environment, living environment and people’s life. Rural tourism development will contribute to production growth in the countryside and farmers’ affluence, and rural tourism shall stick to protection of eco-environment with low-carbon idea. Therefore, rural low-carbon tourism will be favorable for new countryside building in Jiangxi, making it a trend to accord with the actual situation of the province and the development of the times.

4. Principles to be Observed for Rural Low-carbon Tourism Development in Jiangxi

4.1 The principle of respecting nature and protecting natural environment
Rural low-carbon tourism development must stress the primitive flavor of rural Jiangxi, guard the natural landscapes there and protect the local eco-environment. The rural environment in Jiangxi should be made the foundation for transforming the production and living views in rural Jiangxi into rural tourism scenery, and attention should be paid to protecting agricultural land and forest land, with building land under control. Rural low-carbon tourism must have countryside images and landscapes in Jiangxi protected. Unlike urban landscapes in Jiangxi, the rural landscapes there are of profound connotations, making a complex of natural landscapes, settlement landscapes and cultural landscapes. The rural images in Jiangxi refer to impressions left on people through material and materialized Jiangxi rural culture like rural buildings and rural environment in the province. The rural images in Jiangxi make a natural atmosphere without artificial making, which contributes to the liberty and vitality sought after by tourists and makes the purpose for tourists to travel there. Therefore, rural low-carbon tourism development in Jiangxi must have natural landscapes and images protected and respect and protect the nature, which should be made the principle of rural low-carbon tourism development there.

4.2 The principle of creating rural air
Rural low-carbon tourism development in Jiangxi must avoid urbanization and protect the features of rural tourism, or rather, the rural flavor, as it’s the uniqueness of rural tourism. Landscape design for rural tourism in Jiangxi must stress scientific use of local materials and species, which will not only help reduce the amount of traffic and carbon emissions, but harmonize the rural tourism landscapes in
Jiangxi with the formerly preserved environment. In selecting trees for tourism landscape, those of local characteristics must be chosen to both strengthen the local flavor while maintaining the local ecosystem. Rural low-carbon tourism development in Jiangxi must make full use to local features and create thick rural flavor, with resources consumption reduced, so that rural tourism can be of real rural flavor for achieving sustainable development of rural low-carbon tourism in Jiangxi.

5. **Paths of Rural Low-carbon Tourism Development in Jiangxi**

5.1 **To build low-carbon rural tourism infrastructures to achieve low-carbon conducts during travels**

In order to achieve the goal of low-carbon tourism in rural Jiangxi, low-carbon tourism infrastructures should be first in place. Low-carbon technologies and devices should be applied to achieve tourists’ low-carbon travels during the whole process so that they will minimize the emissions of carbon dioxide while travelling. Low-carbon tourism infrastructures in rural Jiangxi include low-carbon traffic facilities, low-carbon environmental health facilities, low-carbon energy facilities, low-carbon entertainment facilities, low-carbon lodging facilities and low-carbon dining facilities. Traffic vehicles of fewer emissions of carbon dioxide should be chosen; public transport means should be the priority; carpool for self-driving travel should be encouraged; hiking and cycling at tourist destinations in rural areas should be promoted; environment-friendly luggage can be carried by tourists, and more favor can be given to environment-friendly hotels, BNBs or camps; hotels should have wider use of energy-saving, water-conserving and emission-reducing technologies and clean energies of solar energy, biological energy and organic energy, and build up green hotels with every effort; hotel rooms may not have bed linens changed every day, with no disposable goods provided; restaurants should not provide disposable tableware and should purchase and take locally seasonable vegetables and fruits[4]. Environment-friendly mobile toilets can be built; eco-friendly trash can should be used; pipelines of distribution of rain and sewage should be promoted; garbage should be classified before treated; low-carbon environmental health facilities should be developed; by using renewable energy technologies like solar energy, wind energy, hydroenergy and marsh gas, new-type low-carbon rural tourism energy supply system can be built; the “Zero Carbon Emission” standard for residence building issued by the UK in December 2006 should be observed to build low-carbon rural tourism lodging and dining facilities, including low-carbon hotels and low-carbon rural tourism resorts; by using low-carbon entertainment facilities, such as fishing, fruit picking, sightseeing boat, bicycles, animal-drawn vehicles and sedans to develop low-carbon sightseeing facilities[5].

5.2 **To strengthen publicities and education about low carbon and environmental protection and boost tourists’ awareness and behaviors of low carbon**

Low carbon education will enhance and change tourists’ view of environment and their ways of consumption and living; it’s workable to make low-carbon tourism a way of publicizing low carbon development philosophy, enhancing all people’s awareness and practices of low carbon, environmental protection and energy conservation and fostering low-carbon ways of production and living, so that everyone can take an active part in activities of energy conservation and emission reduction and of environmental protection in order to tackle the common crises of survival, resources and environment that confront the humankind[6]. All media available should be utilized to strengthen publicities so that the idea of rural tourism and low-carbon lifestyle can be deeply rooted in people’s hearts. Means of advertising video, exhibition panel and paper pamphlet must be applied to publicities and education to strengthen the awareness and behaviors of low carbon among tourists and local residents, so that low-carbon lifestyle will be made an everyday habit of people and tourists and local residents will try to minimize carbon emissions during travels and living to protect the rural eco-environment. For instance, tourists may choose to rent bicycles or hike at rural scenic spots, not litter around, not use disposable tableware for dining, carry their own bottles instead of having bottled water and try not to take out-of-season fruits and vegetables.
5.3 To develop rural low carbon tourist products

Developing rural low-carbon tourist products in Jiangxi must be based on the rural characteristics of the province, fully exert resource superiority of the countryside and integrate rural resources in order to upgrade and alter current landscape resources, seek connotations of rural culture and combine rural folk custom and natural beauties into rural low-carbon tourist products of local characteristics. We should also make full use of low-carbon tourism resources, stick to the idea of low-carbon development, observe the principle of building a resource-saving and environment-friendly society, cooperate with the need of new countryside building, and build up a system of low-carbon tourist products that include cycling, drifting, forest relaxation, geological exploration, hot spring health keeping, rural sightseeing, mountain hiking and outdoor training at tourist destinations [7].

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