

The Prospects of Agritourism Development in China

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Abstract

Agritourism is a potent economical element that has been extensively used in developing countries to escalate the financial growth of the national income. In China, it is a major corporate zone which is elevating the socio-economic progression by playing its significant role in expanding country's economic growth and development. It plays a substantial part in activating the ruler areas and reveals number of obstacles related. The main objective of this paper is to disclose the prospects of agritourism development in China that can be a key factor in sustaining progressive national economy. The current studies concluded that agritourism can be a drive for sustainable development of local community. An important feature is to fortify attentiveness of local communities regarding welfares resulting from the development of this non-agricultural source of income at various striking tourism sites. It will eventually lead to lessening of redundancy, job creation in sectors serving agritourism, revenue growth, alleviating poverty and will improve living standards of population vigorously involved. Therefore, agritourism in China has the prospects to nurture the perception of the particular community concerning sustainable development.

Keywords: agritourism, socioeconomic prospects, rural development, revenue, sustainability

1. Introduction

Agritourism is generally defined as visiting a working agricultural setting (usually a farm or ranch) for leisure, recreation or educational purposes. These are usually included farm based recreational activities (Santeramo and Barbieri, 2015; Barbieri, 2014; Gil Arroyo et al. 2013; Tew and Barbieri, 2013). In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in agritourism as a vehicle by both developed or developing countries. Agritourism was initially established from environmental program concepts and apprehension of societies where mass tourism was established (Bramwell, 1994). Agritourism can be defined as: "Activities that go within the property, creating professions that complement the agricultural activities that continue to make part of daily life on the property with the greater access or lesser intensity. These activities should be understood as a part of a process of adding services to the agriculture products and non-materials value existing on rural properties (landscape and fresh air, etc) using the free time of farm families and sometimes using hired labor (Hamzah, 2012)."

Agritourism is a part of tourism activities. It consents visitors to advance the knowledge of agriculture and escalate the exclusive rural lands (Hall and Jenkins, 1998), and can be seldom liked as rural or farm tourism (Fleischer and Tchetchik, 2006). At existing, agritourism is indorsed generally in terms of a policy for the protection of agricultural capitals (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996), and the provision of economic and social benefits (Hron and Srnec, 2004). For example, agritourism in Italy showing the agricultural and ecological education events has aided the protected areas from agricultural development (Scialabba and Williamson, 2004). In short, the perception of agritourism advancement covers the prospects of tourists' intensification of awareness and understanding on environmental protection and agricultural occupants' quality of life enhancement particularly in developing countries which agriculture is still an important tactic in rural development (Akpinar *et al.* 2005). China reports to currently cater millions of visitors on an annual basis in Shanghai during the nineties (Liu, 2006; Ma *et al.* 2011; People, 2010)

Some example of events accompanying with agritourism are farm alternatives, leisure fishing, hunting grounds, country accommodation, country restaurants, farmers' marketplaces, local handicrafts, home businesses and other leisure accomplishments devoted to the renewal of the native residents life-style" (Graziano Da Silva *et al.* 1998).

Agritourism is a significant part of sustainable expansion and country revolution. As a result of decline in productivity of agricultural production and decline of living standards of rural occupants, these activities – as stated in many countries, accompanied opinions of the economic activity of farming families in the field of tourism – is generally a concern of pursuing supplementary or unconventional revenues in many areas related to agriculture. A specific need to develop farming situation happens in Poland. Market economy have postured difficulties of rural populations in the condition significantly decrease the opportunity of positioning of agricultural production at low and unbalanced prices, increasing production expenditures, comparatively extraordinary idleness, diminish the chances of progression in life of rural youth and lower living standards (Gurgul, 2005). The phenomenon of non-agricultural accomplishments on the farm happens in all countries of the world, even the richest, where income per capita is much higher than in Poland, the manufacture expenditures and food prices are lower than ours, prosperous village and highly resourceful agriculture (Zelazna and Popielarska, 2001, Mysiak, 2000).

Tourism signifies, for many countries, a dominant tool for social and economic growth and reduction of

poverty, through the providing of jobs and enterprises, structure expansion and transfer incomes. Well-designed and accomplished tourism can not only make a substantial impact to the three dimension of sustainable development, but also has adjacent connections to other areas and can create decent jobs and produce employment chances (Gutierrez, 2012).

The rural poor an unconventional to traditional income sources, major business for instance, by concentrating on indigenous industry or on ways of living that depend less on misuse and demolition of local natural properties. Therefore, agritourism is measured an integral sustainable expansion instrument that governments should follow. Therefore, scholars and researchers have overestimated agritourism. This study aims to extend the understandings of the different prospects of agritourism from a wider perception and sustainable agritourism growth.

2. Sustainable agritourism development

In 1987 Brundtland defined sustainable expansion as “progress that meets the desires of the current without cooperating the aptitude of upcoming generations to meet their own needs” (Li, 2001; Mowforth and Munt, 1998). With human civilizations moving into the 21st century, sustainability and sustainable expansion have become progressively significant, and the perception of sustainable expansion has been broadly used as an establishing framework in political plans (Dymond, 1997). The word ‘(Sustainability)’ became a slogan, clearly passionately discussed, and part of a main dissertation connecting to environmental safety and ‘balanced’ progress (Becker and Jahn, 1999). In fact, sustainable expansion is a energetic but not still procedure, of which people’s understanding changes along with the development of our society. In its early stage, people focused more on environmental and economic issues. With time, collective numbers of researchers renowned that equivalence, fairness, poverty improvement, and local community empowerment should be the fundamental of sustainable growth (Ahn *et al.*, 2002; Dymond, 1997; Khanna *et al.*, 1999; McCool and Moisey, 2001).

The idea of maintainable tourism growth began to be discussed with different terminology in the 1970s, as ‘new tourism’, ‘Destination Life Cycle Model’ and ‘carrying capacity’ as examples (Hardy *et al.*, 2002). Firstly, the idea of sustainable tourism endured at a theoretic level, and did not come into practice until the late 1980s with the fast spread of the concept of sustainable development hurled by the Brundtland report (Lane, 2001). However, tourism was given little attention in its role for sustainable progress at the Rio Earth Summit. Only ecotourism as a method to improve sustainable forestry was denoted to in Chapter 11 of Agenda 21, and governments were suggested to indorse ecotourism (Hardy *et al.*, 2002). In response to this, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the World Tourism Organization and the Earth Council together launched Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry in 1996. This was the first step to attain a balance between sustainable expansion and economic growth for travel and tourism. It was the only industry-specific edition of Agenda 21 (WTTC, IFTO, IH&RA and ICCL, 2002).

In 1993, the Council of Agriculture, the highest management authority in charge of making and applying agricultural policies in the ROC, encouraged the “Leisure Farm Development and Management Program” in order to support those farmers who were interested in expanding their farm management policies. In 1996, the “Leisure Farm Guiding Regulations” was framed and approved by the ROC government. The rules not only applied the purposes of the “Leisure Farm Development and Management Program” of 1993, but also “stimulated farm owners to participate local cultural activities into their management policies for the purpose of being able to expand the local industry’s cultural individuality and to increase the resident economy” (Hsu, 2002).

The tourism area, as with several others, has also observed the explosion of the submissions of the idea of sustainability. Consistently, many definitions, opinions and forms of sustainable tourism have been recognized as the model form of what is required (Mowforth and Munt, 1998; Hardy *et al.* 2002; Sharpley, 2000). As a particular tourism association, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) set forth the concept of sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism should make ideal use of environmental properties, respect the socio-cultural validity of host populations, and provide socio-economic welfares to all shareholders (UNWTO, 2005). For the determination of sustainable growth, sustainable tourism calls for the informed involvement of all related shareholders, as well as strong political control. UNWTO also known that accomplishing sustainable tourism is a constant progression and it requires constant observing of impressions. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist gratification (UNWTO, 2005).

These descriptions initiated from the general thoughts and matters adjacent sustainable growth as discussed earlier. Thus, tourism is only part of the perception of sustainable development, so tourism development should pursue to confirm that nature, scale, position, and method of development are suitable and ecological over time, and that the environment’s capabilities to provision other events and developments are not reduced, since tourism cannot be inaccessible from other resource-use activities. The effort to control essentials of tourism invention and consumption to keep tourism sustainable has led to the implementation of substitute tourism forms that supposedly follow to the integrities of responsible and involuntary processes. Several tourism products categorized named variably under the perception of sustainability have occurred, for example, green tourism, farm

tourism, adventure tourism, rural tourism, and ecotourism (Mowforth and Munt, 1998). These new forms of tourism are supposed to support endure the tourism industry. ‘Agritourism’ is one recognized as an unconventional tourism invention. Though, a known description does not occur, and it has been the subject of much debate as philosophers, researchers, and practitioners struggle to describe it (Roberts and Hall, 2004). In this paper, agritourism was observed as a form of rural tourism, which is rooted in rural areas with rurality as the central desirability.

Due to the being acknowledged as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the government of the Republic of China (ROC) has tackled several contests. Since the agricultural sector is the first to tolerate the impact of competition in both market and price, the government of the ROC has struggled to indorse agricultural expansion for the determination of reducing the long-term negative impressions of newly created competition within the agricultural industry. The improvement of agritourism industries is one of the main steps to follow the goal of agricultural expansion (Chiou, 2000).

Similar to the development of sustainability, sustainable tourism development also practiced a change from the stress on governments and enterprises, to local populations; from focus on economic growth and environmental protection to poverty improvement and local resident empowerment (Fallon and Kriwoken, 2003; Hardy *et al.* 2002; Mitchell and Reid, 2001; Sofield, 2003). Consequently, the impression of sustainable tourism progress is also a dynamic process. Apprehending the core of sustainable tourism development and evaluating agritourism sustainability are foremost encounters.

2.1 Prism of sustainability

Sustainable tourism can play a significant role in communal progress, particularly in areas abundant in natural capital, however lacking financial resources or ability to follow other ways of growth. Any tourism marketing determination, however, can have positive and negative *environmental, economic, and socio-cultural* significances. Accomplishing a balance among these three classic dimensions of sustainable tourism is difficult to comprehend, but, without an *institutional* perception to manage, mediate and facilitate growth (Eden *et al.* 2000; Spangenberg, 2002; Spangenberg and Valentin, 1999). This fourth institutional dimension stresses involved decision-making progressions such as public contribution and involvement. The German Wuppertal Institute combined these four dimensions into a single context called the “prism of sustainability (Figure 1) with clearly defined links among the dimensions (Spangenberg and Valentin, 1999). This study observed the construct power of these four indicators of sustainability on local residents’ satisfaction with tourism in communities bordering Hoge Veluwe National Park in Holland and Chongdugou Village in China.

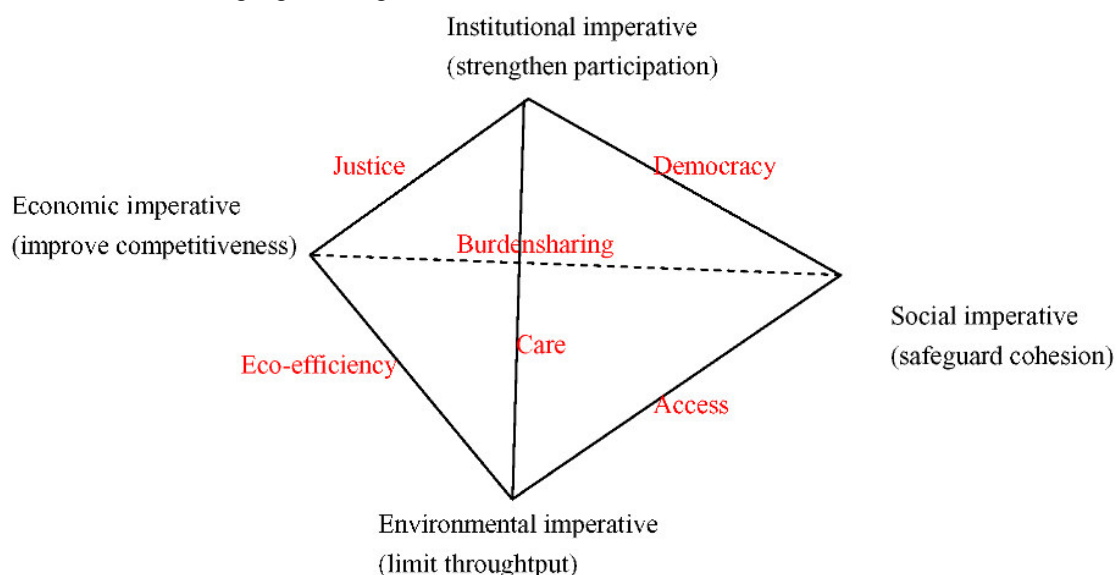


Figure 1. The prism of sustainability showing all the core components and imperatives.

3. Management of agritourism business

Comprehensive management is the key to the achievement of businesses of any kind (Kay *et al.* 2004). Traditional farm businesses and agritourism enterprises are no exclusion. Traditional farm management, or the management of construction agriculture, is normally focused on the specifics of husbandry (Turner and Taylor, 1998). Steward *et al.* (2000) specifically indicate that actual uses of resources such as land, labor, and capital are the central point of traditional farm management. Principally serving as agricultural producers, traditional farm businesses are less prospective to specifically address the importance of immaterial resources.

The management of agritourism businesses not only contains all fundamentals of traditional farm management, but also requires farm operators to specifically address the importance of intangible resources (Zheng, 2004). Since agritourism businesses are characterized as being both agricultural producers and service providers, the act of accepting, obtaining, developing, and accruing intangible resources in a sustainable way for the purpose of being reasonable and gainful in the industry is authoritative (Zheng, 2004).

4. Agritourism policy prospects

Most agritourism explanations are usually known in term of tourism business functioning within farm by way of amusing and teaching the visitors by farm owners themselves (Reynolds, 2005). Though, tourists and farm owners' prospects in agritourism are different. The visitors think that agritourism makes them to acclimatize and contribute with agricultural culture, production, surroundings, and reformation, whereas farm owners expect that agritourism is activity creating a source of agricultural income. In these days, the term of agritourism is used in amalgamation with other word such as agri entertainment (Blevins, 2003).

As regards the stated perception, agritourism is also comprised as a means in rural development. In this progression many agricultural sources within farm such as lodging, meal, water, labor, space, etc which unapplied in the process of agricultural production are presented in changing happenings of agritourism in order to make extra income to farmers. Consequently, this advantage increases the strategy of agritourism elevation especially in developing countries (Jenkins *et al.*, 1998; Kaminski, 1995).

Agritourism development in Yunnan China demonstrated that agritourism is not only provide additional income and new occupation chances for rural communities, but also have improved environmental preservation and cultural minorities and the rural lifestyle (Yang, 2012). Various problems of difficulty in the development of agritourism include; hygiene and lack of health, lack of cultural attraction, the lack of proper understanding of the phenomenon of tourism, lack of program planning, lack of reliable research and monitoring system (Papzan *et al.* 2012).

Policies of agritourism advancement cover prospects of tourists' escalation of knowledge and understanding on ecological protection, farmers' quality of life improvement by means of adding values of community agricultural activities, and educating natural resource management. From this sense, agricultural resource management is targeted significantly on the preservation of biodiversity which uses agritourism as a means together with other methods of agricultural resource management. At the same time, income from agritourism will be used incompletely for agricultural resource protection. Moreover, appearance of livelihood substitutes and growth in income among community members help in reducing the problem of increasing agricultural land (Gaworecki, 2006).

5. Conclusion

Agritourism is an evolving and progressively significant system of tourism which follows in both developed and developing countries. In a hastily urbanizing world it provides a range of experiences for urban visitors. As a country with the highest number of rural residents around the world, the Chinese government has always regarded rural development as an important focus for their policies and has been striving to find effective ways to implement these. Since the 1980s, with the adjustment of industrial structure in rural areas, China's agritourism has become a starting point in combining primary and tertiary industrial development and has realized a rapid growth in the past three decades of economic development in many areas. This review paper identifies these key issues based on a sustainable agritourism, management and policy prospects of China's rural tourism. China's agritourism needs to take into account the uniqueness of instinctive sustainable tourism features and must be focused for further studies.

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Conflicts of Interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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