



Research on the Development Mode of Homestay Clusters in Danba Beauty Valley Resort

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Abstract: Resorts, crucial for travellers' better life and high-quality development of tourist destinations, have homestays as an essential part. This study investigates the traits and development model of homestay clusters in Danba Beauty Valley, and it is found that the following features exist in this area. a. Rural homestays take the lead. b. Homestay clusters highly overlap with traditional rural settlements. c. Homestay development has been in the growth stage. d. Economic homestays dominate without quality ones. e. Widely-recognized environment and services with refinable sanitation and facilities. Moreover, the homestays in Danba Beauty Valley Resort have developed into a cluster and shown scale, transformed from ethnic rural settlements to a provincial-level tourist resort, and brought about the local homestay development model in western Sichuan. Namely, Government and Policy Support, Apt Guidance and Systematic Layout, Dual-Core Driven and Linked Development, Landscape-Based and Culture-Shaped, and Top-tourism-brand-energized homestay clusters.

Keywords: resort; homestay clusters; development model

1. Introduction

Amid the booming global tourism, resort, conducive to economic development and cultural spread, has been increasingly in the spotlight of governments and investors. A resort, namely, refers to a cluster of facilities with favorable resource and environment, allowing travelers to enjoy leisure time, including relaxation, fitness, sports, intellectual development, and entertainment[1]. Located in Hengduan Range, Danba Beauty Valley, with distinctive natural landscape and culture heritage, has been a popular tourist destination, attracting numerous tourists globally. Resorts fall into national-level and provincial-level, with a total number of 59 provincial-level ones in Sichuan Province from 2013 to 2022. In December 2021, Danba Beauty Valley Resort, covering fifteen villages in Jiaju Town, Jiarong New District in Zhanggu Town, and five villages in Mordo Mountain Town, was approved as a provincial-level one[2]. It extends east to Haneyi Village in Mordo Mountain Town, south to Danba Tourism Distribution Square in Zhanggu Town (Jiarong New District), west to Kapama Peaks, and north to Yaoku Village in Jiaju Town, covering approximately 35.97 square kilometers, with the core area being 15.69 square kilometers.

Rooted in traditional villages, homestay clusters has taken shape in Danba Beauty Valley Resort. This research targets the traits and development model of homestay clusters in the resort, guiding similar ones for upgrade and quality growth both theoretically and practically.

2. Features of the Homestay Cluster in Danba Beauty Valley Resort

Drawing on Basic Requirements and Evaluation of Tourist Homestays (LB/T 065 - 2019)[3], tourist homestays utilizing idle local residences, with hosts attending to guests and buildings under 4 floors and 800m², offer tourists an immersion into the local nature, culture and ways of life, and by location, they're categorized as urban and rural homestay. Based on the above standard, this study examines homestays in Danba Beauty Valley Resort (Data Source: Ctrip, time as of July 2022, the same below). It turns out the total number of homestays in the resort is 110, with 73 in Jiaju Town, 35 in Mordo Mountain Town, and 2 in Zhanggu Town (Jiarong New District). Obviously, Jiaju Town is the core of the homestays in this area, accounting for 66.36%.

2.1 Rural Homestays Take the Lead

The Danba Beauty Valley Resort mainly consists of Jiaju Town, Mo'erduo Mountain Town, and Zhanggu Town (Jiarong New District). Notably, rural homestays dominate in the resort, accounting for 98%.

2.2 Homestay Clusters Highly Overlap with Traditional Rural Settlements

Based on rural settlement, the existing homestay clusters continue to expand and thrive, with considerable overlap between the two.

2.3 Homestay Development Has Been in the Growth Stage

Around 2000, a few residential lodgings sprang up in the resort, paving the way for the incipient stage of homestay there. According to Ctrip's statistics, from 2001 to 2015, the number of homestays grew 0.73 annually, a slow growth rate, which indicates the nascent and small-scale stage of homestays, with the majority being converted from traditional residences.

2016 served as a turning point for homestay development of Danba Beauty Valley Resort, with growth shifting from slow to rapid. From 2016 to 2022, the average annual growth rate reached 13.43 homestays.

2.4 Economic Homestays Dominate without Quality Ones

Through statistical period, the diamond ratings of homestays fall in two-diamond and three-diamond levels (a few four-diamond ones since 2024), especially with the two-diamond homestays taking the lead. Meanwhile, there is no one-diamond homestays, which suggests that the homestays in Danba Beauty Valley Resort transformed from simple decorations to unattended reception, equipped with basic facilities.

Since the initial stage, the resort's homestay quality has much improved, yet high-quality ones remain rare. According to Basic Requirements and Evaluation of Tourism Homestays (LB/T 065 -2019) and the implementation protocol of Amendment 1[3], tourism homestay levels are categorized into three ones: C (lowest), B, and A (highest). Up to now, no homestay in Beauty Valley Tourist Resort has attained Class A, with a dearth of quality ones.

2.5 Widely-recognized Environment and Services with Refinable Sanitation and Facilities

The average score of guest's comments on homestays amounts to 4.66 points. With respect to four main comment dimensions, the scores in a descending order are: service (4.76points)> environment (4.73points)> hygiene (4.62points) > facilities (4.54points). For comment tags, "Great view" and "Warm-hearted boss" obtain the highest frequencies and are well-recognized by guests, showing the warm hospitality of the locals. Furthermore, the environment and service are widely recognized, while the hygiene and facilities need upgrading.

2.6 Traditional Villages Empower the Homestay Cluster

So far, there are six national-level traditional villages in this resort area(data source: the sixth batch of the National Traditional Village Directory released by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development), along with 12 provincial-level traditional villages (Sichuan Traditional Village Directory announced on the official website of the Sichuan Provincial Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development in December 2022). The above indicates traditional villages have endowed the homestays and increased their market competitiveness, and vice versa.

2.7 Dependence on Scenic Spots

The homestays in the Jiaju Twon are all located within the Jiaju Scenic Spot, which has attained a AAAA-level rating. Likewise, most homestays in Muerduo Mountain Town are in the AAA-rated Zhonglu Scenic Area. Within the above areas, the traditional architectural styles remain intact and well-preserved.

The homestays, which serve as tourist attractions, are converted from traditional residences or newly built in line with the traditional style. Regarding tourist flow of homestays, the flow from the scenic spot, which functions as the core tourist attraction, holds an absolute edge. Taken together, the homestay's low and peak seasons in the resort vary in accordance with fluctuation of scenic spots', showing dependence on scenic spot.

3. The Evolutionary Phases of Homestays in Danba Beauty Valley Resort

3.1 The Phase of Muti-brand Scattered Operation

Around 2000, lodgings based on traditional residences emerged in the resort, with homestays at an initial and small-scale stage. The vast majority of homestays, with limited quantity, were converted from traditional residences and mainly in the core areas of Jiaju and Zhonglu Scenic Spot. Regarding business model, it features local residents' self-operation with weak brand awareness. As the name of Jiaju and Zhonglu spreads far and wide, the number of homestays is surging. Since 2017, external capital has initiated its influx, bringing about a coexistent framework of diverse models, namely farmers' self-construction and self-operation, "external capital + farmers", and "external capital + farmers + village collective economy".

At this stage, there exist numerous small, scattered regional brands with weak external influence and brand awareness.

3.2 The Phase of Brand Alliance

The 2021 work report of Danba County People's Government proposed to step up the tourism products, boost the high-quality homestays, and diversify tourism experience, signaling the onset of brand alliance. Moreover, the Jiaju Homestay Alliance in Beauty Valley of Danba County was officially launched On April 25, 2022. Subsequently, the 2022 government work report of Danba County was proposed, aiming to encourage the clustered development of high-quality homestays.

4. The Developmental Model of Homestay Clusters in Danba Beauty Valley Resort

Since 2000, the number of homestays in Beauty Valley Resort has been increasing annually, accompanied by a continuous expansion in terms of space, which spreads from the core areas of Jiaju and Zhonglu Scenic Spots to the adjacent vicinities. Currently, a "two-cores, two-wings, three-areas, one-zone" homestay layout has basically taken shape. Two cores, namely, are Jiaju and the Zhonglu Scenic Spots. Two wings refer to the Xiaojinchuan River Basin (along National Highway 350) and the Dajinchuan River Basin (along National Highway 248). Three areas consist of Jiaju Town, Mo'erduo Mountain Town, and the Zhanggu Town (Jiarong New District). One zone is Danba Beauty Valley Resort.

The homestay tourism in Danba Beauty Valley Resort is intricately intertwined with heritage preservation, traditional village conservation, Jiarong traditional culture, rural revitalization, idyllic rural landscapes, and rural living patterns. Consequently, the Homestay Cluster of Danba Beauty Valley Resort has formed and taken shape, evolving from ethnic rural settlements to a provincial resort and giving birth to the Danba Beauty Valley Model for homestay development in Western Sichuan. The details are as follows.

4.1 Government and Policy Support

Homestays, a novel and prominent focal point of rural tourism, have become another Danba tourism icon subsequent to the ancient watchtowers. In recent years, Danba County has boosted regional tourism via key scenic spots and pursued all-for-one tourism. What's more, to meet local needs, it has introduced homestay policies which underpin tourism, and allocated resources to quality homestays and industry upgrade.

For the high-quality development of the homestay industry, Danba County has adopted plenty of effective measures. Specifically, some organizational bodies have been established such as the Homestay Industry Leadership Group, the Homestay Development Office, and the Folk Homestay Alliance Association. Besides, the local authority has tried to boost the homestay with Rural Revitalization (by all-for-one tourism) and cultural-tourism rural travel. Additionally, the Policy Measures for Assisting Enterprises in Danba County has been rolled out, for the purpose of enhancing the subsidy and incentive efforts for the private economy and allocating resources to quality homestays. To sum up, the local government has enacted policies and attracted investment, aiming to drive tourism homestay industry.

4.2 Apt Guidance and Systematic Layout

With apt guidance of local authority, a systematic layout of homestay cluster has taken shape. In 2019, the Danba County Homestay Upgrade Management Measures was launched, aimed to boost homestay economy in Jiajia, Zhonglu and other scenic spots. In addition, the Master Plan of Meirengu Tourism Resort has provided more advanced and detailed guidance for the expansion and progress of homestays within the area. For the purpose of implementing standardized norms, decentralized operation, unified management and centralized marketing and clustered development, the Development Plan for High-End Homestay Clusters in Danba and the Development Plan for Characteristic Homestays in Key Villages has been issued. Subsequently, the Master Plan for Danba County as an International Tourism Destination of Homestays formulated in 2021, paves the way for systematic layout and transformation from "single" to "cluster".

4.3 Dual-core Driven and Linked Development

With Jiaju and Zhonglu Scenic Spots serving as core drivers, local government promotes integrated development of homestays and rural industries, thereby cultivating the inherent potency for Rural Revitalization. For one thing, by means of clustered rural homestay development, market mechanism activation, as well as mobilization of social forces, the local's initiative to engage in homestay business can be fully fired up. The local government has maximized labor, technology and capital to the fullest extent, intended to develop a novel rural economic model with the homestay economy at its core, thereby realizing the mutual reinforcement and symbiotic relationship between homestay development and Rural Revitalization. For another thing, grounded in diversified and integrated development of the rural homestay industry, the business model is diversified and profit is spurred, which empower the integrated development of the primary, secondary and tertiary industries in rural areas.

4.4 Landscape-based and Culture-shaped

Homestay tourism within ethnic minority regions assumes a distinctive and function in the context of Rural Revitalization[4].Rural homestays, the vessels of nostalgic sentiment, serve as the tangible realm where people pursue a "cozy dwelling". Situated in the Hengduan Mountain Range, the beauty Valley Tourist Resort is graced with magnificent natural scenery. Therefore, in the process of homestay development, while making good use of the natural landscapes, it is more crucial to focus on "culture - the essence of homestay development". All in all, the homestays in Beauty Valley Resort have integrated multiple functions, including accommodation, aesthetics, vacationing, and immersive experiences[5], which contributes to the preservation of local architectures and customs.

4.5 Top-tourism-brand-energized Homestay Cluster

By virtue of regional public brands, a homestay cluster has taken shape in Beauty Valley Resort, with the A-level Scenic Spots of Jiajia and Zhonglu as the core.

In recent years, by means of flagship brands-Dazziling Landscape,Charming Danba, with local villages as main carriers (Jiaju, Zhonglu, Suopo, and Badi), backed by national strategies (ecological protection, all-for-one tourism, poverty alleviation, and rural revitalization), relying on local strengths (favorable idyllic landscape, regional culture, green products and ecological climate), Danba County boosts rural tourism, and the homestay industry thrives. That's how local rural homestays upgrade, rural cultural tourism enriches, market recognition rises, and tourists seeking for quality and immersive experience increases. Thus, the homestays within the resort area have experienced remarkable growth and evolution, thereby cultivating a substantial and well-structured homestay industry.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the development model of homestay cluster in Danba Beauty Valley Resort, integrating government and policy support, apt guidance and systematic layout, cultural preservation and market mechanism, offers valuable experience for the homestay industry not only in western Sichuan but through the whole country: a. Conducive environment shaped by local authority via policies and financial support. b. Systematic growth guided by professional scheme. c. Upgraded infrastructure through government's investment initiative or fund-attracting drive. d. Harmony between homestay industry and local culture based on preservation and inheritance of traditional culture. e. The invigorated market and booming of homestays driven by competition and incentive mechanisms. f. Upped market recognition and influence, inspired by top-tourism-brand.

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