

Tourism Development Model Analysis of Wutai Tribe of Rukai in Taiwan

Hsiao-Ming Chang¹, Cheng-Lung Wu^{2*}

¹School of Physical Education
Putian University, China

²Department of Marine Sports and Recreation
National Penghu University, Taiwan

*Corresponding author's email: [jerrywu \[AT\] gms.npu.edu.tw](mailto:jerrywu [AT] gms.npu.edu.tw)

ABSTRACT--- *This study applied qualitative research to explore the model of tribal tourism industrial development of Wutai Township in Pingtung. According to the analytical results, the main attractions of tribal tourism are indigenous peoples' culture, natural resources, and convenient transportation. This study also included the promotion and tourism information of governmental sectors and tribal organizations, as well as hospitality services offered by the tribes. The key of tribal tourism is the cooperation of the indigenous peoples, and their tolerance and respect for the visitors.*

Keywords--- tribal tourism, indigenous people, community construction

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research motivation and purpose

In recent years, the diverse operations of indigenous tribes have successively become a trend, and have provided new economic opportunities for the tribes. The transformation of traditional indigenous tribe industries combine the characteristics of local resources and the development model of tourism. Indigenous tribes are mostly in remote areas (or mountains), and they allow people from cities to approach nature and experience the cultures of different ethnic groups, thus, they have become potential tourism products of Taiwan. As tourists travel to Indigenous areas or tribes, they want to see their historical buildings, culture, handicrafts and traditional celebrations. However, with regard to the tourism development policy of the Taiwan government, not every tribe is suitable for tourism development, and even become a popular tourist attraction [1,2]. At present, tourism development in the Wutai tribe has been recognized by the government of Taiwan as the model of indigenous tribal tourism in the country. The local government has been devoted to the planning and development of guesthouse tourism, and created the "slate town". In 2001, it constructed Slate Lane, which shows the primitive and indigenous culture of the Wutai tribe, as well as numerous indigenous tribe images with artistic characteristics [3,4]. Thus, as tourists crowded into the area after the construction of Slate Lane, numerous indigenous tribes in Taiwan regard the village as a model [5]. Based on above, this study adopts case research, literature review, field interviews, and long-term observations, analyzes the tourism development process of the Wutai tribe, and takes the operational model to serve as reference for the tourism development of other indigenous tribes.

1.2 Research method

This study adopts the qualitative research method to conduct the investigation. Firstly, in the literature analysis part, it mainly collects reports and introductions about Wutai tribe, included the Internet, newspapers and magazines, mass media, books, research papers, and government research reports. Secondly, in the in-depth interview part, we mainly interviewed the elders, residents, handicrafts sellers and the Development Association personnel of the tribe. Thirdly, in the observation part, the researcher used the holiday to travel and stay in the tribe for many times, during which the interaction between indigenous people and tourists was observed in depth. In addition, the study also interviewed tourists, so as to better understand the development of tourism and their understanding and satisfaction of indigenous culture.

2. INTRODUCTION OF WUTAI TOWNSHIP OF PINGTUNG COUNTY

According to the announcement of the Taiwan Council of Indigenous Peoples, in 2019, there were 571,427 indigenous people in Taiwan [6]. At present, there are 16 ethnic groups of indigenous peoples, including Amis, Atayal, Paiwan, Bunun, Puvuma, Rukai, Tsou, Saisiat, Yami, Thao, Kavalan, Taroko, Sakizaya, Seediq, Hla'alua, and Kanakanavu, which are based on individual cultures, languages, customs, and social structures. Rukai can be divided into three groups: the Xia San community in the Maolin District of Kaohsiung, Wutai Township of Pingtung County, the original Rukai group in Qingye

Village of Sandimen Township, and the Danan group in Tungxing New Village, Beinan Township, Taitung County. Since the original Rukai group is located in remote mountains, according to scholars, it preserves the most Rukai features [7]. Among indigenous peoples in Taiwan, the most significant cultural characteristic of Rukai is its hierarchy system, where the family of the chief is the greatest landowner and leader of the tribe. Nevertheless, with the progress of time, social development, and national influence, Christianity and Catholicism have been introduced in the tribal society, and the traditional tribal lifestyle is dramatically changed. In addition, with the constant changes of society, the values of the traditional hierarchy system are twisted and even neglected [8]. The Totem of Cottonmouth is a feature of Rukai, and represents the son-in-law and family of the Rukai chief (see Figure 1). The Totem of Cottonmouth denotes the identity as a noble and one of the family members of the chief. Regarding culture and ceremonies, the lily is one of the most significant characteristics of Rukai (see Figure 2).



Figure 1. Totem of Cottonmouth



Figure 2. Totems of Cottonmouth and lily

Around Taiwan, there are more than 13000 Rukai people, who are mostly in Kaohsiung City, Pingtung County, and Taitung County, and Wutai Township of Pingtung County is the main town of Rukai people. Wutai Township includes Wutai Village, Dawu Village, Jilu Village, Ali Village, Haocha Village, and Chiamu Village. The Wutai tribe is the administration center of Wutai Township and the largest Rukai Village, and further includes the Wutai tribe, Shenshan tribe, and Kuchuan (Yila) tribe. Although the Wutai tribe is not the most ancient tribe, it is the center of politics and culture. There are numerous people in the tribe who mostly follow the Christian faith (Presbyterian Church, the Sabbath Day and Catholicism), and the scale of the churches is the largest, thus, it relatively guides and influences other Rukai tribes. Since Wutai Township is located in a remote area and far from the cities, entrance requires a Class A entry permit and transportation is inconvenient, thus, the invasion of the Han culture from the lowland was late. At the end of 1973, the government was devoted to the improvement of tribal life, and constructed external transportation lines to allow vehicles to arrive in Wutai tribe.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY OF WUTAI TRIBE

In 1987, Taiwan's government selected six indigenous tribes to implement a "guesthouse village project", and Wutai tribe was one of those selected. However, this pioneer development was introduced from other countries, such as Japan, and the residents were not familiar with the hospitality required by guesthouses. In addition, as the local infrastructure was not complete, local residents mostly treated the guesthouse project as a subsidy to improve local living environments, and reconstruct houses, kitchens, and sanitary facilities. Since 1990, when mayor Chi-Chuan Ko assumed office, he has actively planned and developed tourism in the area. Based on the experience of foreign guesthouse implementation, in 1994, he introduced the guesthouse village project and invited a Japanese professor to give a speech in Wutai to share the experiences of guesthouse hospitality and operation, in order to guide local residents to manage guesthouses. Thus, local residents' operational concepts of guesthouses were derived from the hospitality of Japanese guesthouses. In 1995, the "Ancestral arch" was constructed, which is the entrance image of Wutai Township, thus, when visitors enter Wutai Township, they could recognize the exotic climate. As local modern buildings could not represent the original characteristics of the tribe, starting in 1999, the government subsidized refurbishing the walls of the houses (with slate), slate roofs, slate totem, etc. Thus, year by year, the "slate village" of the Wutai tribe was recovered.

In 1997, the Executive Yuan of Taiwan initiated "the project of new landscapes for cities and towns", and numerous old streets and important tourist sites in Taiwan were valued and reconstructed. Wutai Township was subsidized from 2000 to construct the "new life of the Wutai tribe", and the main construction location was Slate Lane of Lin 10 in the Wutai tribe. In order to create unique "Rukai landscapes" and the image of a "slate town", the local government invited a local national treasure, the artist Mr. Pa-NanDu, as the designer, and local residents to visit other failed cases in Taiwan, in order to learn from the experience and develop the common consensus for "art street". In 2009, Typhoon Morakot severely struck southern Taiwan, including Wutai Township, and external roads and bridges were damaged. To avoid influencing the life of the indigenous people, the Directorate General of Highways constructed temporary culvert pipes, sidewalks, and steel bridges, in order that the indigenous people would not be trapped in the mountains. In October 2013, the Guchuan Bridge was opened, which is an external transportation line for Wutai (see Figure 3 and Figure 4). In addition, the roads to

Sandimen were reconstructed. Since then, as their travel plans are not influenced by transportation problem, visitors, tourism groups, and individual visitors can enter the tribe by various means of transportation (such as motorcycles and bikes). Table 1 shows that after 2013, the number of visitors to Wutai Township has grown constantly.

Table 1. Statistics of the number of visitors to Wutai recreation area (2011-2019)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of visitors	22,652	31,679	75,991	135,849	188,952	215,587	225,147	218,624	222,343

Source: statistics of Tourism Bureau on number of visitors in Wutai recreation area



Figure 3. Guchuan Bridge



Figure 4. Monument of the heroes in Typhoon Morakot

4. ANALYSIS OF TOURISM RESOURCES OF THE WUTAI TRIBE

At present, the traditional culture of Rukai is still preserved by the Wutai tribe, such as costumes, ceremonies, art, architecture, social class system, etc. There is a Rukai museum that collects and exhibits the numerous traditional relics of Rukai and shows the various dimensions of the tribe. In the museum (see Figure 5), tourists can approach the cultural origins and background of Rukai and learn the related knowledge. The museum is positioned as a permanent cultural preservation and national education institution, which reinforces local identification and the sense of belonging to the group, and continues the traditional culture of Rukai, thus, visitors can recognize the cultural background of Rukai. In addition, by in-depth visits in the Wutai tribe, people can discover the spirit of Rukai in local buildings (see Figure 6), street views, and humanity.



Figure 5. Rukai museum



Figure 6. Wutai elementary school

According to the local people in the Wutai township office and Wutai tribe, more than 95% of residents in Wutai are Christians, and the local Christian church brings mental peace. Over three years, the residents of the Wutai tribe constructed a church using the traditional Rukai housing structure and special slate and stone, and it has become one of classical works of important public art that can be seen around the village (see Figure 7). In addition, the house of the chief Dalabayang is preserved in the village, which has a yard around the house. For the indigenous people of the Wutai tribe, Dalabayang is the authentic noble and chief. When the chief has to announce affairs important to the indigenous people, they would meet in front of the chief's house.



Figure 7. Christian Presbyterian Church



Figure 8. House of the chief Dalabayang

Slate Lane is located beside the zig-zag of slate houses on a hill of the Wutai tribe. When walking through Slate Lane, visitors can appreciate the beauty of Rukai buildings, thus, the lane is also called art street. The lane was constructed according to the residents' numerous discussions, and the "image design" of each house is based on the hierarchical symbols of this traditional society. The walls of public spaces show life as it was in the past, including hunting, cloth weaving, weaving, the treatments of shamans, ceremonies and legends, which are based on slate sculptures, cement reliefs, and large-scale 3D cement statues. Slate Lane reveals the new landscape of Rukai culture around the tribe (see Figures 9-12). The researchers visited Slate Lane for several times and found that there were indigenous people selling handicrafts with Rukai characteristics along the way. They also enthusiastically explained the characteristics of their ethnic groups and the development process of the tribe. They have also heard from tourists and criticized by some scholars that the decoration of Slate Lane and Wutai tribe lacks the authenticity of indigenous culture. However, the Rukai people interviewed mentioned that in modern society, few indigenous people live in traditional houses. They also try their best to highlight the cultural characteristics of the Rukai nationality in modern buildings, and even retain some traditional buildings so that the next generation can understand their cultural roots.



Figure 9. Rukai men's dance in the ceremony



Figure 10. Rukai warriors carry the prey from the mountain



Figure 11. Cultural image of Rukai of Slate Lane



Figure 12. Rukai women's dance in the ceremony

5. DISCUSSION

Gunn and Var [9] introduced the successful operational factors of tourism destinations. "Supply" includes attractions, promotions, transportation, information, and services. Regarding attractions, Wutai successfully creates an exotic culture to attract visitors. According to Smith's analysis, four factors related to indigenous peoples' tourism development are environment (habitat), anthropological tradition (legacy), cultural influence (history), and handicrafts for sale [10,11]. Thus, when tourists visit the Wutai tribe, they are most interested in the unique and spiritual connection with culture and land, the values associated with the culture, the religion, skills, and knowledge, and the history and evolution of indigenous

peoples' development. In addition, with long-term governmental control and its high altitude, the Wutai tribe conserves the primitive forest and environment. Some visitors arrive to enjoy ecological tourism and mountain climbing, which are local attraction factors. The findings of this study are consistent with the previously mentioned key operation success factors for tribal tourism in Taiwan: indigenous culture [12,13] and natural resources [14,15] are the main attractions for the visitors.

Regarding promotion, after the implementation of weekend holidays in Taiwan, in-depth tribal and ecological tourism became popular, and some TV news and variety shows have been based on the Wutai tribe. Furthermore, in recent years, with the trend of international ecological tourism, the Wutai tribal area, which was previously considered to be an outdated and remote area, has become an important national site to promote "ecological culture tourism". Although the tourism development of the Wutai tribe is mostly implemented by the township office and private groups, such as community development and tourism development associations, the Wutai tribe is part of the available recreation in Wutai and in the neighboring areas, including the site of Sandimen of Shenshan tribe, which is part of the Maolin National Scenic Area. Tourism marketing relies on the assistance and promotion of governmental sectors, including the tourism department of Pingtung County government. Regarding transportation, as mentioned above, since typhoon Morakot, the Guchuan Bridge connects visitors with the tribe; in fact, the trip takes less than three hours. Regarding information, visitors can easily obtain the local situations and tourist resources of the tribe on guesthouse web pages, the Wutai township office, Pingtung County Government, and Maolin National Scenic Area. Regarding services, grocery stores are available, guesthouses provide accommodations, and street vendors sell traditional indigenous food and BBQ. In the process of indigenous peoples' tourism development, the most critical is the support of local residents and their respect for the visitors [14,15].

Sometimes, when the visitors crowd into the area, they do not respect the lives of the local indigenous peoples, which results in some negative effects; however, with the promotion of tribal organizations and tourism information, such negative situations are improved. In addition, the sale of indigenous people's handicrafts is important for the development of tribal tourism, thus, some indigenous people sell traditional Rukai jewelry as souvenirs. From the above findings, the reasons for the success of Wutai tribe tourism development are similar to those of the Tsou tribe in Alishan, Taiwan. The most important factor is the characteristics of indigenous culture, together with the ecological environment resources [16].

6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

6.1 Conclusion

According to the tourism development process of the Wutai tribe, the intent of development is to create economic opportunities, improve local living environments, and construct the unique characteristics of an indigenous tribe. In fact, since the government intends to take care of indigenous tribes in remote areas, the developments to date are associated with government policies. According to the analytical results, the main attraction of tourism in the Wutai tribe is Rukai culture and natural resources. Although the Wutai tribe is located in a remote area, the convenience of external transportation and accessibility are the reasons for the development of cultural and ecological tourism in the area. The Wutai tribe is listed as a model tribe and an important site of ecological and cultural tourism, thus, with the marketing of governmental sectors and tribal organizations, tourism information (web pages, promotion, and tourism fairs), and mass media reports, the public learn about the tribe, and intend to visit the village on holidays. Finally, the services in the tribe, including food, accommodation, tour guides, and the friendliness of the indigenous peoples, are the key factors for tribal tourism development.

6.2 Suggestions

In indigenous tribes, experiencing the indigenous peoples' cultural life is the key factor for visitors, who mainly intend to appreciate the charming mountainous landscapes. Thus, while focusing on hardware, local companies should conserve their primitive culture and natural resources, and avoid excessive exploitation. They should also design experiential activities according to local traditional Rukai culture and reinforce tourist information for visitors, in order to avoid their negative impact on the tribe. In addition, for the tribes that intend to develop indigenous tourism, they can check whether they have the conditions for development, including indigenous peoples culture, ecological landscape resources, hospitality and tourism services, and friendly residents' attitude. In addition, the assistance of government departments is an essential factor for the success of tribal tourism. Therefore, it is necessary for the tribes to set up development association, receive the assistance of the government and professionals, and establish the tourism industry of the tribes, so as to promote the positive development of the tribal economy.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was supported by a grant from National Social Science Foundation of China (No.18BMZ130).

8. REFERENCES

- [1] Hinch, T. and Butler, R. *Indigenous tourism: A common ground for discussion*. London: International Thomson Business Press, 1996.
- [2] Pratt, S., Gibson, D., and Movono, A. *Tribal tourism in Fiji: An application and extension of Smith's 4Hs of indigenous*

Tourism. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 2013; 18(8), 894-912.

- [3] Taiwan Tourism Bureau. Tribal light travel - Southern Taiwan. September 27, 2020 Available: https://theme.taiwan.net.tw/tribe/south_introduction.html
- [4] Maolin National Scenic Spot. Wutai Recreational Area. September 27, 2020 Available: <https://www.maolin-sa.gov.tw/04000088.html>
- [5] Chen, Po-Han. Economic transition of Rukai Wutai. Unpublished master thesis, MBA program, School of management, Taiwan University of science and technology, 2020.
- [6] Taiwan Council of Indigenous Peoples. 2019 Population statistics of Indigenous peoples in Taiwan. 2020; 8: 27. Available <https://www.apc.gov.tw/portal/docDetail.html?CID=940F9579765AC6A0&DID=2D9680BFECBE80B63BAF0DC1D8B674CC>
- [7] Chen, Qilu. Family and marriage of the Rukai people in Wutai, Pingtung, Taiwan, *Journal of China Nationalities*, 1955; 1:103-123.
- [8] Lai Qiyuan. The beauty and sadness of the Rukai nobles in Wutai tribe - A study of the power status changes of the Rukai nobles. Unpublished master thesis of National Development Institute of, National Dong Hua University, Hualian, Taiwan, 2008.
- [9] Gunn, C. A., and Var, T. *Tourism planning: basics, concept, cases* (4th ed) . New York: Routledge, 2002.
- [10] Smith, V. Indigenous tourism: The four Hs. In R.W. Butler and T.D. Hinch (eds.), *Tourism and Indigenous Peoples* (pp. 283-307). Toronto: International Thomson Business Press, 1996.
- [11] Kunasekaran, P., Gill, S. S., Talib, A. T., and Redzuan, M. Culture as an indigenous tourism product of Mah Meri community in Malaysia. *Life Science Journal*, 2013; 10(3), 1600-1604.
- [12] Huang, Hui-Chuan., Liu, Chia-Hao., and Chang, Hsiao-Ming. Does tourism development bring positive benefit to indigenous tribe? Case by Dongpu in Taiwan. *Advances in Research*, 2015; 4(4), 235-246.
- [13] Chang, Hsiao-Ming., Hung, Chiu-Hui., and Chou, Chin-Lung. A study of Alishan indigenous tribal tourism development in Taiwan. *Asian Journal of Environment & Ecology*, 2018; 8(1), 1-12.
- [14] Chang, Hsiao-Ming and Chang Liao, Li-Chu. A Study of indigenous tribe tourism planning and developing—Case by Huanshan in Taiwan. *Journal of International Management Studies*, 2014; 9(1), 146-155.
- [15] Chang, Hsiao-Ming and Huang, Hui-Chuan. A study of indigenous tribe tourism planning and developing—Case by Tamalung in Taiwan. *Journal of International Management Studies*, 2014; 9(2), 87-94.
- [16] Chang, Hsiao-Ming., Hung, Chiu-Hui., and Chou, Chin-Lung. A study of Alishan indigenous tribal tourism development in Taiwan. *Asian Journal of Environment & Ecology*, 2018; 8(1), 1-12.