

The Study on Tourism Development of Maldives Island

Xiaoshi Feng^{1, a}, Shuyang Gan^{2, b} and Yabo Wang^{3, c}

¹International College, China Agricultural University, Beijing 100083, China;

²School of Business, Tianjin University of Finance and Economics, Tianjin 300222, China;

³College of Marine Sciences, Hebei Agricultural University, Qinhuangdao 066003, China.

^axiao_mu_1998@163.com, ^b847638259@qq.com, ^c2528586241@qq.com

Abstract

Maldives is a beautiful island country characterized by its unique tourism resources and landscape and it is famous for its well-known tourism all over the world. Although Maldives' tourism has developed for several years, there are still some aspects that need to be improved. The article analyzes the factors and problems that Maldives' tourism is faced with by the methods of questionnaires and interview and in the meantime puts forwards some suggestions to solve these problems according to the situation so as to offer some references for the improvement of Maldives' tourism development.

Keywords

Tourism, Maldives, policy, infrastructure construction, tourism education.

1. Introduction

Maldives is the archipelago of the Indian Ocean. It consists of more than 1,000 coral reef islands with an average elevation of 1.2 meters and the highest island is only 2.4 meters above sea level. It has very unique natural landscapes and is called as "the lost paradise". [1] It has 104 tourist resort islands with unique island-resort hotels which attracts thousands of foreign tourists especially Chinese tourists to visit Maldives in recent years. Therefore, the tourism has become one of the pillar industries of Maldives. The tourism revenue takes up 60% of the national currency revenues. In 2011, Maldives was removed by UN from the official list of least developed countries. In 2015, the GDP has reached 3.366 billion US dollars with an increase of 4.8%; and it attracted 333 million US dollars' foreign investment, and at the end of the year its foreign exchange reserve was 564 million US dollars.

In recent years, with the development of economy and tourism in the world as well as the effective management of the government, and tourism departments of Maldives, its tourism has kept a continuous growing which derived some problems that impeded Maldives's tourism development. For example, with the increase of the tourists, the environmental carrying capacity and the environment protection should be taken into consideration; the infrastructure of the tourism resorts need to be improved as well as the service of the local tourism should be kept up with the tourists' quantity.

2. The Problems and Factors That Affect the Tourism Development of Maldives

2.1. Research Methods

To explore the development condition of Maldives, the questionnaires and one interview has been adopted.

2.2. The Problems and Factors Existing in the Maldives' Tourism

Maldives is known as its beautiful scenery which attracts tourists from all over the world. From the aspect of the tourist quantity, it increased year by year with an escalating trend. Therefore, a large quantity of visitors would pile the pressure upon the local natural environment especially during the peak tourist season. For instance, more visitors would inevitably increase their activities such as surfing, diving and sailing and so on which would impact the local ecological environment especially may damage the underwater environment and the marine life; meanwhile, the waste that the tourists left could also pollute the natural landscape. According to the survey, more local workers were arranged to clean the rubbish on the beach and underwater. Beside, based on the pictures that the local residents offered, the scene several years before possessing more plants on the island was much more beautiful than that of the ones now [2].

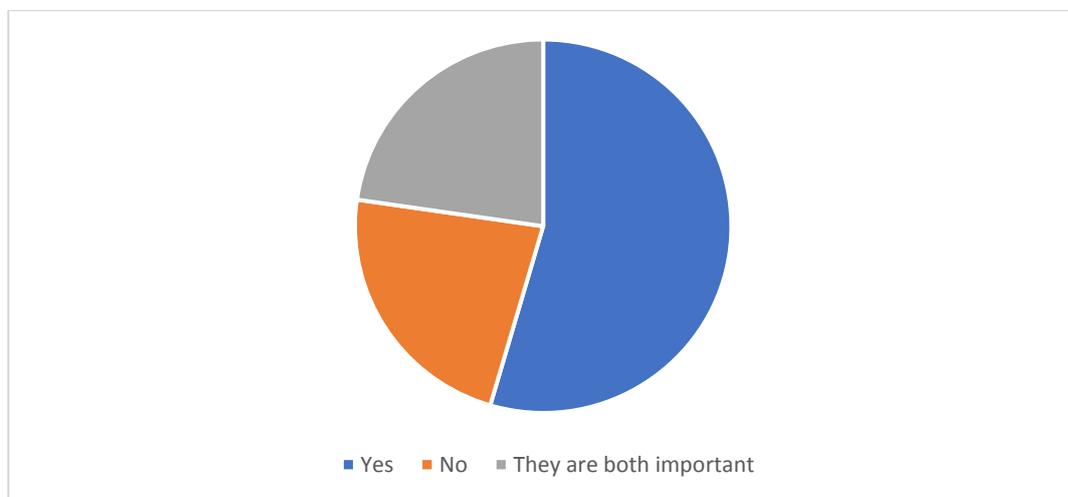


Figure 1. Residents' opinion on the relation between economic benefit and environmental protection ("Yes" means economic benefit is more important than environmental protection)

In accordance with the increasing of tourists, the local infrastructure construction need to be kept pace with the tourism development. For example, hotels, restaurants and the transportation are the most important facilities and are the basic requirements for the tourists who came to Maldives; in the meanwhile, the hotels and the housing furniture such as the air condition, shower and the refrigerators and so on in the hotels should be provided to satisfy tourists' daily need. Furthermore, in order to enrich the tourists travelling experience, the bars, gymnasium, and other relevant entertainment facilities need to be constructed. According to the data collected, more than half of the survey targets have no idea about the infrastructure construction improvement which could be seen that infrastructure construction have not been achieved much progress on the Maldives islands during the quick development of the tourism; and during the field survey, it could be found that the existing infrastructure level of some residential islands represented in Maldives is relatively backward compared with the same level administrative region of developing countries like China and other ordinary developed countries.

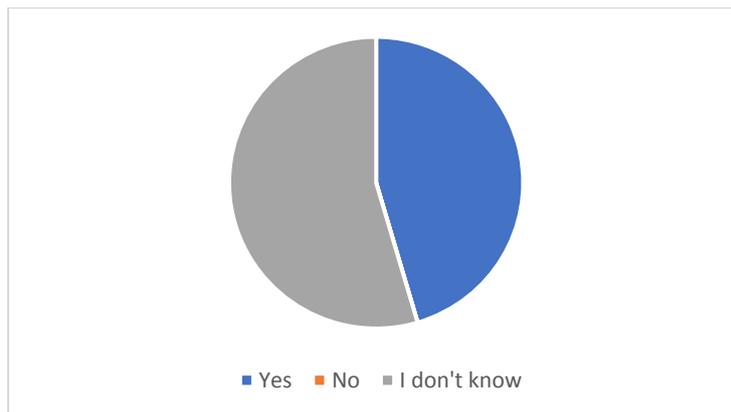


Figure 2. Maldives' residents' opinion on whether development of tourism promotes the national infrastructure construction or not

According to the survey results, it shows that almost half of Maldivian residents' were not aware of the importance of the environment protection. They believe that the economic interests are more important than environmental conservation. Especially, most of the young generations think that environmental conservation should give priority to the economy development.

In addition, most of Maldivian residents are occupied in jobs which are not associated with tourism; and most of the women in Maldives are housewives or only works for family business, while with the tourism's development and the service updating, more jobs need to be done and more people need to be engaged in this service industry.

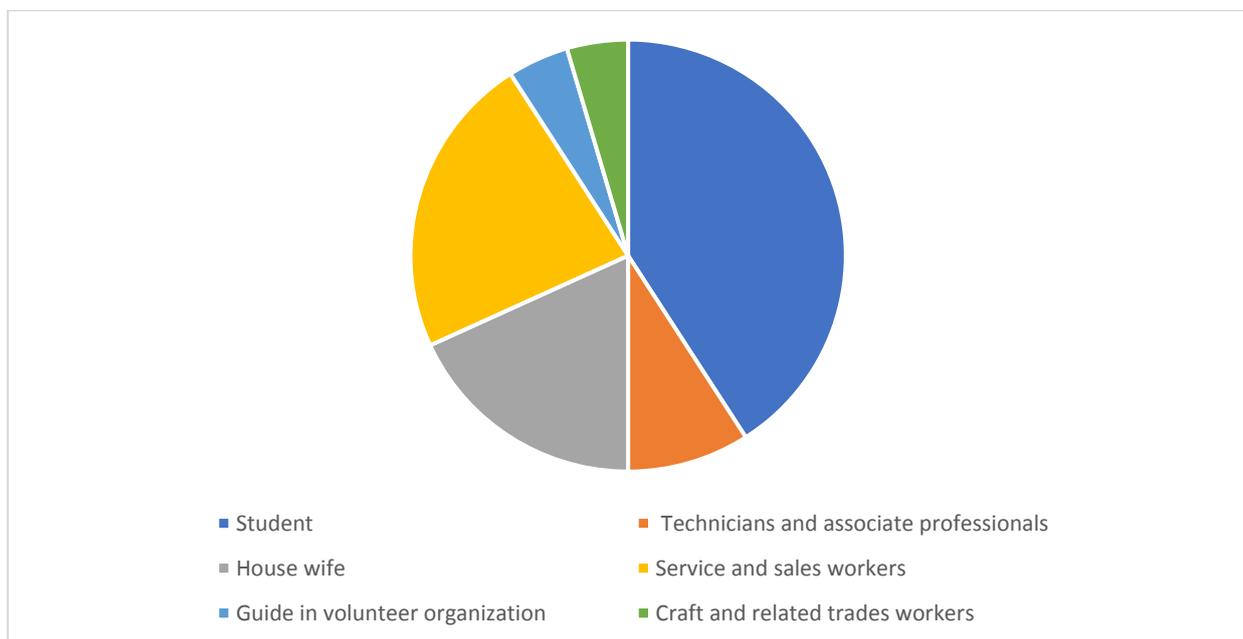


Figure 3. The occupation of Maldives residents

3. The Solutions to the Problems That Affect the Tourism Development

3.1. The Government Formulates Policy to Promote and Supervise Tourism Development

Owing to the tourism development of Maldives are attributed to its unique natural resources. The government need to realize its advantages and make full use of them by formulating laws and regulations to strengthen the awareness of natural resource protection and pursue a

sustainable development so as to achieve ecological tourism which would be a double win both for the sustainable development of tourism and the economy [3].

The government could also explore the potential tourism market to create customized tourism for tourists so that reduce the reliance on the fragile ecological environment and enrich the tourists' experiences [4].

In addition, the government could improve people's environmental protection awareness and promote the popularity of environmental protection concepts by education in which way both local residents and tourists could influence each other so as to improve the tourism quality and realize the ecological environment tourism.

3.2. The Tourism Department Improves the Infrastructure Construction and Offer Tourism Education

The infrastructure construction are the key factor for attracting people to Maldives continuously. The convenient traffic condition could save tourists' travelling time and makes the journey smoother and easier which would improve tourists' satisfaction and the housing and repast condition are the basic demands for tourists. Only if they have enjoyed a good sleep and meal, can they have a good mood to enjoy the wonderful scenery. Therefore, the tourism department should unite other department to improve the infrastructure level [5].

Whether the service is good or not would influence whether the tourists are more or less. Good service makes the customers feel at home which could bring better experience and therefore more tourists. Hence, the tourism department should encourage more professional personnel to offer professional service and provide more jobs in accordance with the direction of tourism development so that the service would be in good order even during the peak seasons; and it could also establish a specialized educational agency to train people for professional skills so as to improve the service level of Maldives [6].

3.3. The Local People Grasp the Opportunity to Improve Themselves to Serve the Tourists

The local residents should be brave in grasping opportunities, strive to improve their own scientific and cultural level, broaden their horizons, and especially raise their professional skills to offer the tourists a good experience. In Maldives, nearly half of the women do not have a job except as a housewife. Therefore, they could seize the opportunity of continuing education offered by the government and go out for a settled job which not only enrich their own life but also serve their country and tourists as well as increase their family income. Besides, local people's awareness of environmental protection in daily life could be better and easier absorbed by tourists subconsciously. Hence, they should improve their awareness, correctly view the relationship between economic development and environmental protection and enhance their sense of environmental protection so that establish environmentally friendly tourism.

4. Conclusion

Maldives' tourism has developed for several years and it has gained large achievement and therefore it has been a world-famous tourism resort. While during the development progress, there are still some aspects need to be improved. The article analyzed and offered the suggestions from the angles of government, tourism departments and the local residents such as pursuing for the protection of the natural environment to realize the goal of eco-tourism development, achieving the optimization of the infrastructure construction and the popularization of the concept of environment protection as well as the service updating. Only the government, the departments and the public pool their efforts together, the tourism could achieve a healthy and continuous development.

References

- [1] <https://visitmaldives.com/>
- [2] Li yan, huang zhengduo. Development of Maldives tourism and its causes [J]. South Asian Studies Quarterly, 2009(4).
- [3] Domroes M. Conceptualising State-Controlled Resort Islands for an Environment-Friendly Development of Tourism: The Maldivian Experience [J]. Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography, 2001, 22(2):16.
- [4] Domroes M. Tourism resources and their development in Maldives Islands [J]. Geojournal, 1985, 10(1):119-126.
- [5] Shakeela A, Ruhanen L, Breakey N. Human Resource Policies: Striving for Sustainable Tourism Outcomes in the Maldives [J]. Tourism Recreation Research, 2012, 37(2):113-122.
- [6] Shakeela A, Breakey N, Ruhanen L. Tourism Education's Roles in Sustainable Tourism Development: A Case Study of SIDS Introduction [J]. Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education, 2012, 24(1):35-43.

Appendix

Questionnaire 1

1. What's your gender?

A. male

B. female

2. What is your age?

A. Under 16

B. 16-24

C. 24-55

D. over 55

3. What's your occupation?

A. Student

B. house wife

C. Guide in volunteer organization

D. Technicians and associate professionals

E. service and sales workers

F. Craft and related trade workers

G. Other

4. Do you think that the transportation of your island is convenient?

A. Yes

B. No

C. I do not know

D. Other

5. Do you think that the development of tourism promotes the national infrastructure construction?

A. Yes

B. No

C. I do not know

D. Other

6. During the process of the development of tourism, do you think that the economic benefit is more important than the environmental protection?

A. Yes

B. No

C. They are both important

D. Other