

# Legislation Principles and Operation Efficiency of European and American Ecotourism

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**Abstract:** Along with the global problem of deteriorating ecological environment, human gradually establishes clear and definite norms and constraints on their activities. Ecotourism legislation has always been a focus in European and American countries. During decades of exploration, human beings constantly strengthened the legality, scientificity and humanity of ecotourism, obtaining certain achievements and leading to a brighter and clearer prospect of ecotourism legislation. Based on the study of legislation principles in European and American countries, the work creatively proposed some strategies to improve the operation efficiency of ecotourism.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism travel is realized on the basis of fully satisfied material life. In the 1980s, global tourism activities gradually affected and changed ecological environment, and then human's "changing the world" entered a new stage. Since then, the concept of "ecotourism" was put forward, and people were actively or passively influenced by this concept in their travel and entertainment activities. Furthermore, national legislation of many countries begins to emphasize this field. At present, worldwide ecotourism is showing a booming situation, and its economic income accounts for twenty percent of that of the entire tourism industry, presenting a rapid growth. In European and American countries, modern ecotourism is manifested in more abundant forms, such as original villages, undecorated buildings and unsophisticated folkways, exactly satisfying ecotourism lovers' pursuit. Those "alternative" new forms require special protection from tourism departments and necessary support from local residents (Xu Xiaoling, 2010). Actually, ecotourism concept aims to call on human to reduce their interference with the original form of tourism. The key to ensure authentic attraction of scenic spots is to keep or restore its original attraction to the largest extent. Thus, people's attitude and purpose of tourism have some distinct modern characteristics.

## 2 CONCEPT OF ECOTOURISM

The concept of ecotourism appeared in 1980s and was put forward by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It emphasizes that people should not unilaterally pursue the entertainment effect of tourism during any travel activity, ignoring the sustainable development of scenic spots. Instead, it requires people to pay attention to local ecological environment and residents' living conditions as well. This claim still shows its correctness and foresight today. If human continues unlimited exploration of scenic spots, largely changing national environment and violating the objective laws of the development of things, it will lead to exhaustion of tourism resources and damage of ecological environment. As a result, natural landscape cannot realize its value of tourism and appreciation. Furthermore, the contradiction between human and nature may be further intensified, thus resulting in irreparable loss and damage to human society. According to current rapid developing situation of global tourism industry, the exploration and utilization of natural resources is close to saturation (Yao Xiaoyan, 2014). In fact, nearly every place on the earth is marked with human's exploration footprints. Besides, with the rapid development of tourism, transportation, catering and other service industries, there will be an increasing passion of tourism travel. In terms of

China, most scenic spots are crowded with tourists every holiday and golden week. In fact, every natural landscape has its lifetime and tourist-tolerance capacity. In addition to the regular professional maintenance from scenic-spot personnel and the regular closure of scenic spots, more efforts are needed to realize a long-standing and better tourism service for people. In the 2014 International Ecological Civilization BBS held in Guiyang, Hans Gelman, the Swiss Federal Parliament Speaker, proposed the idea of mutually beneficial cooperation for ecological environment protection. Hans expressed the wish to realize the complementation and communication with China in the aspects of transportation, forestry and energy. Therefore, protecting ecological environment and realizing ecotourism has become a global wish. Efforts from different fields and countries around the world are needed to make the wish come true, thus guiding tourism industry towards sustainable development as soon as possible (Zou Qi, 2014).

### 3 LEGISLATION PRINCIPLES OF EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN ECOTOURISM

#### 3.1 Legality

The legislation concept and related work about ecotourism in European and American countries appeared earlier than in other areas, and the main protection content advocated in their work mainly referred to the protection of the primitiveness and integrity of natural landscape. That's why there are lots of scenic spots of primitive forests and ancient buildings in European and American countries. In fact, relevant tourism-supervision departments transformed their emphasis from creation into retention and inheritance; such behaviors of respecting history and time explain why worldwide tourists are so keen on the scenic spots in European and American countries. The emphasis of ecotourism in European and American countries is firstly manifested in the early and comprehensive legislation of ecotourism. Such serious attitude and rigorous rules regulate people's behaviors and firstly arouse enough attention from relevant departments and personnel, making convenience for the smooth work of legal compliance and law enforcement in the next step.

As early as in 1916, America began to apply legal procedures in tourism management, and

National Park Service was the initial management and law-enforcement department for tourism. In 1993, UK established *National Park Protection Law*, mainly aiming to regulate the exploration of natural landscape and to protect ecological environment. It can be seen that European and American countries refined and deepened the regulations and laws of tourism very early in order to realize the restriction of tourism industry and tourist behaviors, thus easing human's unlimited utilization of natural resources. Moreover, tourism administrations in some countries also tried to separate scenic-spot management from business management so as to achieve supervision based on relevant international laws and regulations. Therefore, the authority of relevant laws and regulations can be strengthened through various means.

#### 3.2 Scientificity

With the rapid development of advanced and scientific management concept and information technology, human spare no effort to link the work in different fields with science, hoping to promote sustainable development of this field through advanced science. Based on a survey from the International Ecotourism Society, people's tourism-travel choice gradually develops towards "protectional tourism". Meanwhile, some foundations or research institutes organize "exploration activities", taking a group of tourism lovers to some special regions that they are not familiar with or have not been to before. Thus, they can investigate local ecological resources and environment as well as people's living conditions, conducting scientific and reasonable evaluation through the efforts of all members. Therefore, they can get much knowledge and information for future protection and development of natural landscape. Such exploration activity is based on professional knowledge and exploration spirit. It not only provides reliable reference for the development of tourism resources, but also expands people's ideas on ecotourism legislation, ensuring the correctness of specific legislation work. For example, a British "Blue Adventure Foundation" organized some people to do a one-month field investigation for the original region of marine organism in Madagascar. In the end, they obtained the award from the United Nations and built a biological protection base there. Therefore, they realized the most effective protection to local organisms, laying necessary foundation for human scientific research and

ecotourism-resource development in the future. European and American countries have fully used their abundant science resources as necessary foundation of ecotourism resources protection and legislation. Such combination of science and ecotourism not only proves enough accuracy, but also provides good examples for the common development of tourism industry and scientific careers for other countries.

### 3.3 Humanity

Ecological legislation itself is a phased measure produced with population growth and resource exhaustion. Thus, there should be some reasonable explanations for the necessity of ecological legislation, but people's recognition and understanding is another important reason for the generation of ecological legislation. It is obvious that some imbalanced-development problems still exist in tourism industry. However, the key for people to accept ecotourism concept is whether those imbalanced-problems affects their self-interests. In fact, in order to make ecotourism legislation no longer embarrassed, "human" immediate interests should be considered from the beginning. The value of ecotourism is not to help tourism practitioners gain maximum profits but to ensure the integrity and lasting vitality of ecotourism resources. Therefore, the investigation of local people's living conditions should also be considered as the reason for tourism legislation. Thus, local people's rights and interests can be fully protected, making future rational utilization and development of scenic resources possible. For example, contaminated land is called "brown land" in the United States. In 1960s and 1970s, America treated the brown land of Gas Work Park in Seattle with 2,000 tons of chemical materials filling and leveling up that local "river of love", realizing so-called "treatment". However, the water quality survey in 1976 discovered that the "river of love" contained lots of chemicals including some carcinogens. At that time, 364 residents lived near by and more than 400 students studied in a primary school there. In the following 20 years, the U.S. government continued pollution treatment for that river until it was finally "treated". After this incident, the United States enacted related laws in 1980 to improve the inhumane management of ecological environment. According to the law, people whose living area were polluted or occupied can get corresponding compensation and policy supports from government.

## 4 OPERATION EFFICIENCY OF EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN ECOTOURISM

### 4.1 Improving efficiency through "differential treatment"

Ecotourism legislation actually is faced with various challenges. Natural landscapes in each country have different characteristics and specific environment. Thus, it is difficult to apply the same rules or methods to treat different natural landscapes. Besides, it is also not easy to realize a scale management for those natural landscapes. Therefore, "differential treatment" is necessary in the specific work of ecotourism management. People's distinction of those tourist attractions and natural resources are firstly established on the basis of field investigation, because the differences of various objects can only be accurately defined through field experiences and investigations. Therefore, ecotourism legislation and corresponding management on such basis can realize specific treatment according to different levels, requirements and goals. Such treatments can appropriately reduce management cost and generate more efficient response between complementation plans and objects, largely improving the pertinence and effectiveness of ecotourism legislation. The treatment of "brown land" in Germany accurately interpreted the concept of "differential treatment". On one hand, large-scale shopping centers and corresponding urban facilities can be constructed in areas with lower level of pollution to attract tourists, thus creating new value for those areas. On the other hand, heavily polluting factories requiring large cost of treatment should be shut down for purification treatment, and then transformed into a factory-related history museum. This kind of treatment plan, fully considering economic factors, is a win-win solution for environment and economy benefits. Such treatment plans can also be extended to the specific implementation of ecological-protection laws and regulations. Thus, human can strictly abide by the laws and regulations. Meanwhile, they can also creatively achieve a long-term development prospect for natural resources and certain economic values, thus realizing the harmony between human and nature.

## 4.2 Strengthening the participation of scientific and technological ideas

Many countries pay more and more attention to the role of science and technology in ecotourism legislation, but more in-depth exploration efforts should be paid to better solve the problems and difficulties in actual work. Such scientific efforts in ecotourism legislation are not limited to certain scientific inventions or some advanced technologies. In fact, some ideological concepts such as advanced management mode and scientific working methods also contribute to a better ecotourism legislation. For example, in the aspect of ecological environment protection, fund sources and its function ways present a new direction. America Travel Bureau gets special funding for ecological environment protection from the government; at the same time, it is also supported by taxes from the profitable units inside the scenic spots and donations from some social welfare organizations. Therefore, this kind of funding system increases the special funds at travel bureau's disposal and utilization. Meanwhile, it also optimizes the structure of main behavior bodies of such protection work, thus further strengthening the status of ecotourism and environment protection in public mind. In addition, international cooperation of ecotourism is developing gradually. Therefore, the tourism administrations and ecotourism legislation departments in some countries can share certain resources in tourism management. Furthermore, they can also exchange their experience and lessons of ecological protection and tourism management through information-network platform, providing some constructive suggestions for the management mode of future international tourism and ecological management. Meanwhile, the effect of ecotourism legislation can be significantly improved.

## 4.3 Enhancing the operability of legislation

The evaluation of legislation work largely depends on its implementation effects and feedbacks. European and American countries have achieved commendable practices in this respect. Besides, the standardized application of relevant laws and the flexibility in corresponding treatment cases help western countries to achieve smooth and successful ecotourism management. The United States enacted *Animal Protection Act*, *Safety Drinking Water Act*, *Clean Air Act* and some other series of laws and regulations as the norms of people's behavior, thus

enabling American to construct good environment-protection consciousness. For example, it has been a common rule that certain green area is necessary for a house no matter where it is built. In summer, tourists should make a reservation in advance when planning to visit Yellowstone, indicating the good feasibility and operability of a perfect legislation in the United States. In addition, more and more serious ecological-environment situations and problems also contribute to establishing relevant laws and regulations and realizing the concept of environment protection. The declining air quality, global warming issue and extreme climate disasters draw public's attention to the practice of ecological protection.

Everybody will go on vacations, and their ways to get along with environment as well as the results increase their senses of responsibility and mission. People with different social roles in different fields all make better and more obvious effects of ecotourism legislation, thus achieving greater practical significance. Laws and regulations related to ecotourism activities play the charm through everyone's effort of compliance with those regulations and rules. In return, people's long-term recognition and practice of the laws will lead to a huge difference to their living environment

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

After years' of efforts from professional tourism-management personnel and legislation staff, the ecotourism legislation in some European and American countries has achieved great results. Nowadays, natural landscapes are no long considered as only tourism resources. Besides, the historical reference value, cultural value and scientific value of natural landscapes are gradually discovered and appreciated by the public. This kind of more scientific and comprehensive recognition of ecotourism is not only beneficial to tourism management but also plays a positive role in the sustainable development of global ecological environment.

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