

Study on the Benefit Realization Mechanism for Farmers and Herders in Rural Tourism: A Case Study of Gala Village in Nyingchi City

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of the rural revitalization strategy, rural tourism has become an important pathway for promoting income growth among farmers and herders and rural development. This study takes Gala Village in Nyingchi City as a case study. Based on the perspective of "Integration of Production, Living, and Ecology," it uses grounded theory to code and analyze interview data from 21 farmers and herders, systematically extracting three major benefit realization mechanisms. The findings reveal that production benefits form the economic foundation through diversified income streams and democratic distribution; ecological benefits create a virtuous cycle through environmental protection initiatives and green technologies; and social benefits build community governance capacity through cultural identity and collective action. These three dimensions interact synergistically to promote comprehensive development of farmers and herders in economic, environmental, and social dimensions. This study provides theoretical and practical insights for sustainable rural tourism development in plateau ethnic regions.

Keywords: Rural Tourism; Benefit Realization Mechanism; Grounded Theory; Integration of Production; Living and Ecology; Gala Village; Farmers and Herders

1. Introduction

Rural tourism, as a vital industry for rural revitalization, has developed rapidly in ethnic regions leveraging their resource advantages. However, with industrial optimization and upgrading, issues of benefit distribution have gradually become prominent^[1]. In this context, researching the relationship of benefit distribution in rural tourism holds significant theoretical and practical importance for optimizing distribution mechanisms and safeguarding the rights and

interests of all parties.

Existing research has produced rich findings on benefit distribution mechanisms in rural tourism. Foreign research started earlier, focusing primarily on collaborative governance models^[2] and community participation mechanisms^[3]. Domestic research has focused more on empirical analysis of income-increasing effects^[4] and typological studies of benefit distribution models^[5]. While recent studies have begun to examine rural tourism from the "Integration of Production, Living, and Ecology" perspective^[6-7], in-depth exploration of micro-mechanisms for benefit realization in plateau ethnic regions remains insufficient.

Xizang rural tourism, leveraging its unique natural and cultural resources, has become a crucial pathway to boost farmers' income and drive rural transformation. As the host of Nyingchi City's "Peach Blossom Cultural Tourism Festival", Gela Village has transformed from a traditional pastoral village into a model tourist destination by utilizing its thousand-mu wild peach orchards. In 2024, its tourism revenue exceeded 3.7 million yuan, establishing it as a representative case of Xizang's rural tourism development. However, how farmers can effectively participate in and achieve diversified benefits during tourism development remains a focal point of theoretical and practical research. While existing studies have demonstrated the income-increasing effects of rural tourism at the macro level, they have yet to systematically reveal the internal logic and operational pathways for realizing farmers' interests at the micro level. Based on the "Three Lives Integration" theoretical framework and employing grounded theory methodology, this paper systematically analyzes the benefit realization paths of Gela Village's farmers in rural tourism, aiming to provide empirical support for rural tourism and farmers' development in ethnic regions.

2. Research Region and Methods

2.1 Case Study Area Overview

Gala Village is located in Bayi District, Nyingchi City, Xizang, 12 kilometers away from the urban area. With 33 households and 149 residents, it boasts over 1,200 century-old wild peach trees and is known as the "First Peach Blossom Village". As the host of the Nyingchi Peach Blossom Cultural Tourism Festival for twenty consecutive years, the village has developed an industrial development model centered on peach blossom tourism. In 2024, its collective economic income reached over 7 million yuan, making it a typical tourism-dependent village. This study selects Gala Village as a case study primarily based on its representativeness, industrial characteristics, and research feasibility. On one hand, the village exemplifies the successful experience of plateau rural revitalization through leveraging distinctive resources, while simultaneously facing common challenges such as a single industrial chain and concentrated income distribution. On the other hand, its convenient location and well-developed infrastructure facilitate in-depth field research.

2.2 Research Methods

This study employs qualitative research methods guided by grounded theory, adopting the "post-positivist grounded theory" paradigm. Through in-depth interviews with 21 farmers and herders from Gala Village, we collected primary data. The semi-structured interviews covered dimensions including participation patterns, income distribution, environmental impacts, and community relations, resulting in approximately 50,000 Chinese characters of interview transcripts. Using NVivo20.0 software for three-level coding analysis—open coding, axial coding, and selective

coding—we ensured systematic and scientific research processes^[8]. While existing scholars have conducted valuable quantitative explorations on the efficiency of rural tourism development in Nyingchi using the DEA model, this study aims to leverage grounded theory to deeply uncover the "processes" and "meanings" behind the data, thereby addressing explanatory gaps in existing research at the micro-level^[9]. The study strictly adhered to the principle of theoretical saturation, employing continuous comparison and iterative analysis methods^[10]. During the coding analysis of all 21 interview transcripts, it was observed that the conceptual and categorical framework had stabilized after the 16th interview, with no new theoretical insights emerging. Through rigorous saturation testing of the remaining five texts, it was confirmed that neither new concepts nor categories were identified, nor did any new theoretical relationships arise between existing categories' attributes and dimensions. These findings meet the data saturation criteria for qualitative research.

3. Qualitative Analysis of Benefit Realization Mechanism

3.1 Open Coding: Initial Concept Extraction

Through line-by-line analysis and comparison of interview transcripts, 126 free nodes were identified. Following a conceptual categorization process, these semantically similar nodes were consolidated into 21 initial concepts (Table 1). These concepts encompass multiple dimensions of rural tourism participation for farmers and herders, including economic benefits, ecological conservation, and social relationships, establishing a foundation for subsequent axial coding.

Table 1. Initial Coding Results of Interview Texts

Number	Initial Concept	Interview Excerpts	Reference Points
1	Core revenue from tourism	S01 The biggest income of is the income of Taohuayuan, the ticket dividend. You can get a lot of money every year. S03 The third season of income is the most prosperous time in Taohuayuan. The fourth and fifth months are the busiest and happiest times, and the money bag is full.	4
2	Income from diversified industries	S01 Our village also rents land to restaurants and gets an annual rent. G02 When I bought into the building materials market, my family took 50,000 yuan and received a dividend of 4,500 yuan last year.	5
3	Income distribution patterns	S01 With more money, he can buy new clothes and school bags for his children and pay the tuition fees. S04 With more income, my mother and I are living a better life. We can take better medicine and keep our rooms warm in winter	5
4	Democratic decision-making	S01 The dividends in the village are decided by the villagers meeting and voting with their fingerprints.	3

	g processes	S01 These accounts are posted in the village for public display, so that everyone can see them. S02 Now the village meeting is held, everyone dares to speak up, if you have any opinions, they will listen to the village cadres.	
5	Equitable distribution rule	G13 The village collective economic dividend is owned by everyone, including children and half of the deceased elderly. It should be divided according to the number of people, the number of households and the number of laborers. S02 More work, more fairness.	2
6	Community identity and honor	S01 Gala village is becoming more and more famous, many people know it, it is very famous, I am very proud and happy. S03 After the general secretary came to my home, there were many people visiting my home. I was tired of cleaning every day. Although I was tired, I was happy and proud.	4
7	Cultural inheritance and communication	S01 During the festival, the village will also organize activities to welcome tourists to participate in them and let them feel our Xizangan culture and enthusiasm.	2
8	Human capital enhancement	S03 We must make sure that the children study hard so that they can be successful in the future. G12 In the past, women in families mainly took care of the family, but now women have become the "half sky" of family income.	4
9	Social security benefits	G04 The village has corresponding subsidy policies for the elderly and college students, so that the elderly have something to rely on. G11 The village also gave 2,000 yuan to people over 70 years old and college students to live on.	2
10	Environmental self-sustainability	S01 The village will organize a group to pick up trash, weeding and so on, so that the Peach Blossom Spring is more clean and tidy. S03 I picked up the trash because I saw it, not just for the subsidy. Protecting the environment and making money from tourism are not in conflict. S05 It is no longer a matter of giving money, but now it has become a habit and a conscious act.	4
11	Application of environmental technology	S02 Pruning trees is a skilled job, and technicians from the forestry bureau teach it. S04 The pesticides used are low-toxicity, and there is no harm to the environment or people. S10 This is called recycling. The grass feeds the cow, and the cow dung can fertilize the land. It is not wasted at all.	3
12	Environmental incentive system	S05 We have a "green bank" here, where we exchange recyclable waste for points and daily necessities. S06 Not long ago, the village added a green financial points ranking list... according to the score of the ranking list, the loan quota in the Agricultural Bank of China will be increased accordingly. S01 The village will organize a garbage pickup together... there are corresponding subsidies, and the rich have money.	3
13	Ecological value recognition	S01 Protecting the environment and making money from tourism are not in conflict. S01 I truly feel that green mountains and clear waters are as valuable as gold and silver. G08 In the past, we cut down trees, but now we plant trees instead.	2
14	Party building leadership and integration	S01 The village cadres are just like us. They work more than we do and worry more than we do. S05 Fortunately, the village cadres had the vision to take us in the right	2

		direction.	
15	Resource capitalization operation	G04 Farmers have been transformed into shareholders, increasing the annual income of the village collective by 4.5 million yuan. S08 The rent will be increased to 4,000 yuan per mu every five years.	3
16	Redevelopment of the collective economy	G07 After all the party members worked separately, we finally unified our ideas and decided to use the land compensation for the construction of the village economic entity. G05 Every household in the village participates, and the average annual income of each household is 30,000 to 40,000 yuan.	2
17	External intelligence introduction	S02 There were forestry technicians who came to teach us how to cut the trees so they would grow better. G02 We have invited many Han employees from the mainland, hoping to teach us advanced management experience and production technology from the mainland.	2
18	National unity atmosphere	G06 We all get along well and are united as one family. G08 We invited Han employees to eat Gutu together, and they learned to make tsampa. Although their faces were covered with powder, everyone laughed very happily.	2
19	Brands and industrial chains	S07 We not only sell scenery, but also experience and culture. Ethnic costume travel photography, food specialties, archery, horseback sightseeing and so on are very popular with tourists. S05 We also built a fruit picking garden and planted winter rapeseed flowers and qingke, and the village's tourism industry has been growing. S05 In September last year, the village developed four red tourism routes and launched a batch of innovative cultural and creative products.	2
20	Institutionalized constraints	S02 The package is divided into parts, and the responsibility is assigned to the person. If there is a problem in someone's area, they will be found. S01 The dividends in the village are decided by the villagers meeting and discussing them together. S01 These accounts are posted in the village for public display.	3
21	Development philosophy consensus	S01 Protecting the environment is not in conflict with us making money from tourism. S08 Going it alone is not enough. We need to develop together, form a scale and build a brand.	3

3.2 Master Axis Coding: Core Mechanism Extraction

Based on the theoretical framework of "three-life integration", three core categories were finally extracted through systematic induction of 21 initial concepts, forming a theoretical model of interest realization mechanism for farmers and herdsmen in Gala Village.

3.2.1 Production efficiency: benefit co-creation system

This mechanism comprises three interrelated subcategories: the multi-stakeholder benefit generation mechanism, the equitable benefit distribution mechanism, and the inclusive development outcomes mechanism. The multi-stakeholder benefit generation mechanism serves as the fundamental revenue source for

farmers and herders participating in rural tourism, encompassing multiple channels such as ticket dividend income, land lease rent, and transportation team operating profits^[11]. The equitable benefit distribution mechanism ensures fair allocation of development outcomes within the community through institutional arrangements including democratic decision-making by village assemblies and public disclosure of financial accounts^[12]. The inclusive development outcomes mechanism demonstrates effective transformation of economic benefits into livelihood improvements, specifically manifested in income allocation for children's education, healthcare, and housing upgrades. The inefficiency issue in the production dimension observed in the Gala Village case resonates with the 2023 macro conclusion from the Xizang agricultural-industry integration study that

"agriculture lags behind tourism development," indicating that enhancing industrial chain integration remains a universal challenge for sustainable development in plateau rural tourism^[13].

3.2.2 Ecological benefits: environmental virtuous cycle

The environmental virtuous cycle mechanism comprises four dimensions: Environmental self-maintenance forms the foundation through villagers' proactive participation in daily eco-friendly practices like garbage disposal and peach tree pruning; Environmental technology application provides scientific support via modern agricultural techniques such as low-toxicity pesticide use and circular agriculture models; An innovative incentive system transforms environmental behaviors into economic benefits through mechanisms like "Green Bank" credit redemption and preferential "green finance" loans^[14]; Ecological value recognition reflects a profound shift in farmers' ecological consciousness, embodying the sustainable development concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets". This aligns with Long Yuqing's (2024) propositions regarding market-oriented ecological compensation and high-quality ecotourism. The "Green Bank" initiative in Gala Village demonstrates that grassroots innovation may provide a bottom-up solution to address the challenge of insufficient ecological compensation^[15].

3.2.3 Social benefits: community governance

The community governance mechanism operates through three synergistic sub-systems: The collaborative governance framework, built around the "Party branch leadership + multi-stakeholder participation" model, establishes an economic community where village collectives and residents share benefits^[16]. The human capital and social capital enhancement mechanism manifests through educational awareness campaigns, vocational training programs, and improved economic empowerment for women. Meanwhile, the cultural identity and empowerment mechanism strengthens community cohesion and cultural confidence via ethnic cultural exhibitions and cross-cultural exchanges^[17]. These practices mirror the spontaneous collective actions observed by Sun Jiuxia et al. (2023) in Xiawu Village, such as the "three days of cordyceps digging followed by two days off" initiative. Similarly, Gela Village has developed a distinctive collaborative governance model under Party leadership. Both cases demonstrate that respecting and activating

communities' inherent collective action logic is crucial for building sustainable governance systems^[18].

3.3 Selective Coding: Theoretical Model Construction

The three core domains form an organic whole, where production efficiency serves as the fundamental driving force, ecological benefits ensure sustainable development, and social benefits act as the system stabilizer. Through the synergistic interaction of "interest-environment-governance," they establish a logically coherent theoretical model for realizing farmers' and herders' interests. This model reveals the mutually reinforcing and cyclically reinforcing pathways among economic returns, ecological conservation, and social governance in rural tourism development.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

4.1 Research Conclusion

Through grounded theory analysis, this study systematically constructs a theoretical model for realizing the interests of farmers and herders in rural tourism in Gala Village. The model comprises three core mechanisms: the "interest co-creation system," "environmental virtuous cycle," and "community governance consortium," embodying the practical application of the "triple-life integration" concept in rural tourism. Key findings reveal: First, economic benefits form the foundation for farmer participation, but equitable benefit-sharing must be ensured through democratic decision-making and inclusive distribution. Second, ecological conservation and economic development are not mutually exclusive—through institutional innovation, they can achieve positive interaction. Finally, enhanced community governance capabilities and strengthened cultural identity provide the social foundation for sustainable rural tourism development.

4.2 Policy Implications

Based on research findings, this paper proposes the following policy recommendations: In the production dimension, we should further improve the "Party branch leadership + multi-stakeholder participation" model for benefit co-creation, promote democratic decision-making mechanisms and financial transparency systems, while encouraging the development of tourism-related industries to extend industrial chains and reduce reliance on single-ticket revenue. In the ecological

dimension, a dual incentive mechanism combining "green banking + ecological compensation" should be implemented, establishing dynamic ecological compensation standards to create scientific pathways for realizing ecological value. In the social dimension, we need to strengthen the collaborative development model of "cultural empowerment + community governance", enhance vocational training in tourism services for farmers and herders, and organically integrate traditional cultural elements into tourism products.

4.3 Research Limitations and Prospects

This study has the following limitations: As a single-case study, the universality of its conclusions requires further validation; The research primarily relies on cross-sectional data, making it difficult to reflect the dynamic evolution process of benefit realization mechanisms; Quantitative analysis of interaction strengths between mechanisms remains unaddressed. Future research could conduct multi-case comparative studies to explore differences in benefit realization mechanisms under various development models; adopt longitudinal tracking methods to analyze dynamic evolutionary patterns of benefit realization mechanisms; and incorporate social network analysis to quantify interactions among stakeholders. Additionally, with the advancement of digital technology, the impact of rural tourism digital transformation on benefit realization for farmers and herders warrants particular attention.

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