

# Research on the Challenges and Solutions for Ethnic Tourism Service Management in Xichang City, Liangshan Prefecture in the Regional Tourism Era

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**Abstract:** With the advent of the regional tourism era, ethnic tourism service management in Xichang City, Liangshan Prefecture, faces new challenges and opportunities. This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the current state of ethnic tourism service management in Xichang City, identifying existing issues such as uneven service quality, an imperfect management system, and the need for improved professional quality among service personnel. To address these problems, the paper proposes several countermeasures, including establishing a service system oriented toward tourists' needs, enhancing professional training for service personnel, and optimizing the management model for tourism service quality. The study aims to promote the sustainable, rapid, and healthy development of tourism in Xichang City, Liangshan Prefecture, and contribute to the prosperity of tourism in Sichuan Province by improving the management level of ethnic tourism services.

**Keywords:** Regional tourism; Xichang City, Liangshan Prefecture; Service management; Problems and countermeasures

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## 1. Introduction

In the current context of universal tourism, regional tourism has become an important means of promoting local economic development <sup>[1]</sup>. Xichang City, Liangshan Prefecture, with its unique natural landscape and Yi culture, is facing new challenges and opportunities in tourism service management. The booming development of regional tourism not only caters to the growing public demand for tourism consumption but also promotes urbanization, deepens supply-side structural reform, and fosters integration and development across primary, secondary, and tertiary industries <sup>[2]</sup>. The Chinese government has actively promoted regional tourism since 2018, establishing 168 national-level regional tourism demonstration areas <sup>[3]</sup>.

As a minority area, Xichang City in Liangshan Prefecture plays a significant role in regional tourism development. The city continuously improves tourism facilities, develops tourism resources, adheres to principles of optimizing resource allocation, highlights distinctive characteristics, and enriches content, successfully creating the brand "Great Beauty Liangshan-Yi Ethnicity." However, current research on regional

tourism mainly focuses on developed regions in the east, with relatively few studies on minority regions in the west <sup>[4]</sup>. Therefore, this study takes Xichang City in Liangshan Prefecture as a case study, focusing on the problems of ethnic tourism service management and their countermeasures <sup>[5]</sup>. By analyzing tourism resources and related industrial development and combining these with the local context, the study summarizes and generalizes the path for regional tourism development <sup>[6]</sup>. This has far-reaching significance for the theoretical study of tourism development in underdeveloped ethnic areas and helps promote the sustainable, rapid, and healthy development of tourism in Xichang City, Liangshan Prefecture <sup>[7]</sup>.

## **2. Current situation of Xichang City's regional tourism development**

### **2.1. Classification and survey of tourism resources in Xichang City**

Regional tourism promotes the expansion and in-depth exploration of tourism resources in Xichang City. The study comprehensively and deeply analyzes the tourism resources of Xichang City across four aspects: natural ecology, history and culture, rural tradition, and industrial industry. It summarizes four major categories, 13 subcategories, and more than 200 representative resources, which provide core support for the development of regional tourism.

### **2.2. Assessment of the development value of tourism resources in Xichang City**

Based on an in-depth exploration and analysis of Xichang City's tourism resources, and with reference to the research of Xie Kaiyun <sup>[8]</sup>, the study evaluates major tourism resources and assesses their development potential. These evaluation results can serve as a basis for tourism development.

### **2.3. Current status of economic indicators of tourism in Xichang City as a whole**

During this year's Spring Festival holiday, Xichang City received a total of 215.91 million visitors, with local tourists and those from other parts of the province accounting for about 70%, and tourists from outside the province making up about 30%. Additionally, Dechang, Huili, and Coronation counties in Xichang were popular among self-driving tourists, with most visitors coming from within the state and some from Panzhihua, Yunnan, and other areas.

Following the tourism boom during the Spring Festival, Xichang City also welcomed a large number of tourists during the subsequent Qingming Festival and May Day. During the Qingming Festival, Xichang received a total of 130 million visitors, with local tourists and those from other parts of the province making up about 65%, and tourists from outside the province accounting for about 35%. This data indicates that during the Qingming Festival, a traditional holiday, tourists prefer short-distance travel and visits to friends and relatives. During May Day, Xichang's tourism peaked again, receiving 180 million visitors, with local tourists and those from other parts of the province comprising about 60%, and tourists from outside the province making up about 40%. This data reflects that during May Day, a long holiday period, there is a stronger willingness to travel, with a wider range of choices.

According to the plan, Xichang City will fully implement the strategy of strengthening the state with culture and tourism, actively expanding the model of all-region and all-season tourism, aiming for state tourism economic revenue of more than 90 billion yuan by 2026, and a service industry value-added of 120 billion yuan. Additionally, Xichang City plans to accelerate the pace of becoming an internationally renowned sunshine recreation and health tourism destination. Xichang City intends to position itself as the center for fast-tracking the development of Xichang's culture and tourism economy, shaping it into Sichuan's tourism sub-center and a nationally renowned tourism city, thereby leading and promoting the overall development of Liangshan.

### **3. Analysis of ethnic tourism service management problems in Xichang City, Liangshan Prefecture**

In the rapid development of tourism, the problems of ethnic tourism service management in Xichang City are particularly prominent <sup>[6]</sup>.

#### **3.1. Uneven service quality**

Uneven service quality has become a key factor limiting the tourism experience. Although Xichang boasts unique tourism resources, the actual service levels vary significantly across different tourist attractions, hotels, and restaurants. Some tourism service facilities are outdated, hygiene standards are poor, and tourist feedback is inconsistent, which seriously affects the overall image and reputation of the tourism industry. These issues reflect a lack of rigor in the formulation and implementation of service standards and insufficient monitoring of service quality.

#### **3.2. Quality of service personnel**

The quality of service personnel is a critical issue that cannot be overlooked. Some service staff lack necessary professional training and cultural literacy, display poor attitudes toward tourists, have inadequate language communication skills, and possess limited knowledge of local ethnic cultures. This inability to provide in-depth cultural exchanges and explanations hinders tourists from gaining a deeper understanding of the local culture. These problems reveal shortcomings in the current training system and insufficient attention to the selection and development of service personnel.

#### **3.3. Insufficient exploration and inheritance of tourism cultural connotations**

The insufficient exploration and inheritance of tourism's cultural connotations are evident in Xichang. The city's ethnic culture and traditional customs are important selling points, yet many tourism projects and activities are overly commercialized, emphasizing entertainment at the expense of cultural depth. As a result, tourists may enjoy leisure and entertainment but find it challenging to experience a deeper cultural engagement. This also means that tourism does not fully contribute to the preservation and inheritance of local culture. The lack of strategies for exploring and disseminating cultural values in tourism product design and promotion is a significant issue.

#### **3.4. Inadequate service management mechanisms**

Currently, tourism service management in Xichang City suffers from an ineffective coordination mechanism, with insufficient cooperation among various departments and a lack of information sharing, leading to inefficiencies. Additionally, imperfect policy support, such as the absence of clear regulations on service quality, inadequate tourism market supervision, and insufficient encouragement for the participation of civil organizations and communities, are key factors limiting the improvement of service management.

#### **3.5. Lack of branding and shallow development level of cultural tourism**

The Yi region of Xichang is rich in cultural heritage, including the late Qin and early Han October solar calendar, the Yi epic "Le Otei," and relics from the Tang and Song dynasties Nanzhao Dali Kingdom period, such as the Boshi Wahei petroglyphs. These cultural resources are of significant value to humanity, yet they have not been effectively transformed into tourism resources or capitalized upon in the tourism industry. Current cultural tourism development focuses more on cultural form rather than content.

### 3.6. Need for improved tourism infrastructure

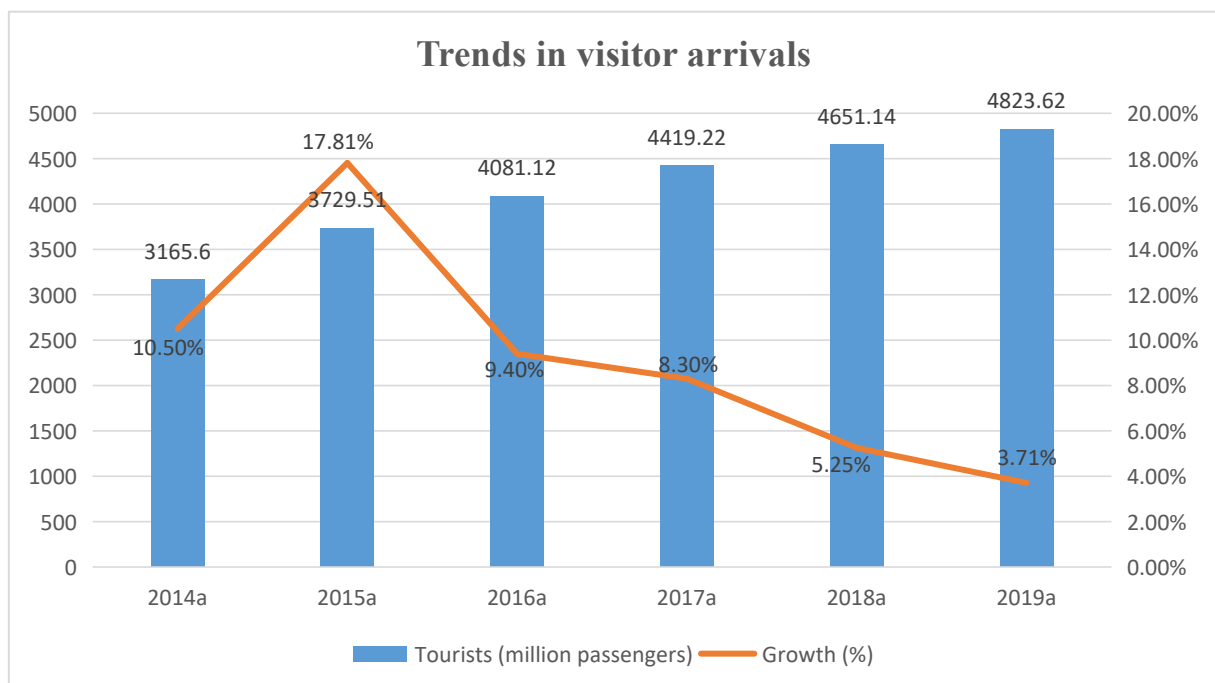
The tourism infrastructure in Xichang City is relatively underdeveloped, with inadequate supporting attractions. The connecting roads between attractions and main traffic arteries are not up to standard, and there is a lack of specialized tourism corridors. The tourism distribution function of traffic hubs is underutilized, there is a lack of clear central distribution points, and the road signage system is inadequate. The main body of tourism traffic services is not robust enough, and a specialized and diversified tourism traffic system has yet to be established. Additionally, the overall level of hotels and guesthouses is low, with a limited number of star-rated establishments, and the standard of tourism reception facilities does not meet expectations.

### 3.7. Lack of tourism branding and poor brand benefits

The image a region projects and the tourism impression it presents are crucial for tourism development. However, awareness of Xichang’s tourism is not high; in 2019, foreign exchange income was just over 200,000 yuan, with the main tourists coming from the nearby Chengdu-Chongqing region. This indicates that only the nearby areas are familiar with Xichang’s tourism resources, and a recognizable tourism brand has not been established. In recent years, Xichang has focused on promoting the “Daliangshan” brand, but the level of brand development remains shallow, and its connotation needs to be enriched.

### 3.8. Tourism development needs new drivers

Recent statistics show that new tourism projects have either not been developed or their degree of development is low, and no new economic growth points have been established. Liangshan’s original tourism resources have been developed for more than ten years, and despite corresponding growth in economic income and tourist arrivals, the growth rate has been declining. Liangshan’s tourism growth requires the exploration of new economic growth drivers (see **Figure 1**).



**Figure 1.** Statistics of tourism revenue and growth rate in Liangshan Prefecture, 2014–2019

## 4. Analysis of the causes of the problems

The root causes of the tourism service management problems are multifaceted and interconnected and collectively impact the effectiveness of ethnic tourism service management in Xichang City.

- (1) Lagging tourism service concepts: In the traditional tourism service model, Xichang City may have focused too heavily on the development and utilization of tourism resources, while neglecting the enhancement of service quality and cultural content. This resource-centered approach fails to promptly adapt to modern tourism consumers' demand for personalized experiences and in-depth cultural exploration, resulting in service management strategies and methods that are not keeping pace with contemporary expectations.
- (2) Incomplete policy support: Despite the various efforts made by the Xichang government to promote tourism development, a complete service quality assurance system may not yet have been established. This includes gaps in policy formulation, a lack of clear guidance on tourism service standards, and insufficient constraints on non-compliant behaviors. Additionally, there are inadequate incentives for service quality improvement and insufficient supervision of market participants, leaving the market somewhat unorganized.
- (3) Immaturity of the market mechanism: The tourism market in Xichang City may lack a mature service evaluation system and consumer protection mechanisms, which results in ineffective competition between high-quality and low-quality services. Combined with the dispersed nature of tourism service resources, this makes it challenging to create a scale effect for service quality improvement, and there is insufficient motivation for individual enterprises to improve.
- (4) Lack of education and training system: Although Xichang City has rich ethnic education resources, there may be a lack of systematic training and continuous educational support for the professional skills and cultural education of tourism service personnel. This deficiency hinders service personnel from fully showcasing the charm of local culture in their work and meeting the growing demand for personalized services from tourists.
- (5) Inadequate management mechanisms: Inadequate management mechanisms affect the efficiency of service management. The lack of an effective coordination mechanism in multi-sectoral cooperation in tourism service management may lead to delayed information transmission and improper resource allocation, thereby impacting the stability and improvement of service quality. Additionally, low participation from communities and civil society organizations means that local resources and insights are not fully utilized in the planning and implementation of tourism services, affecting the localization and innovation of services.

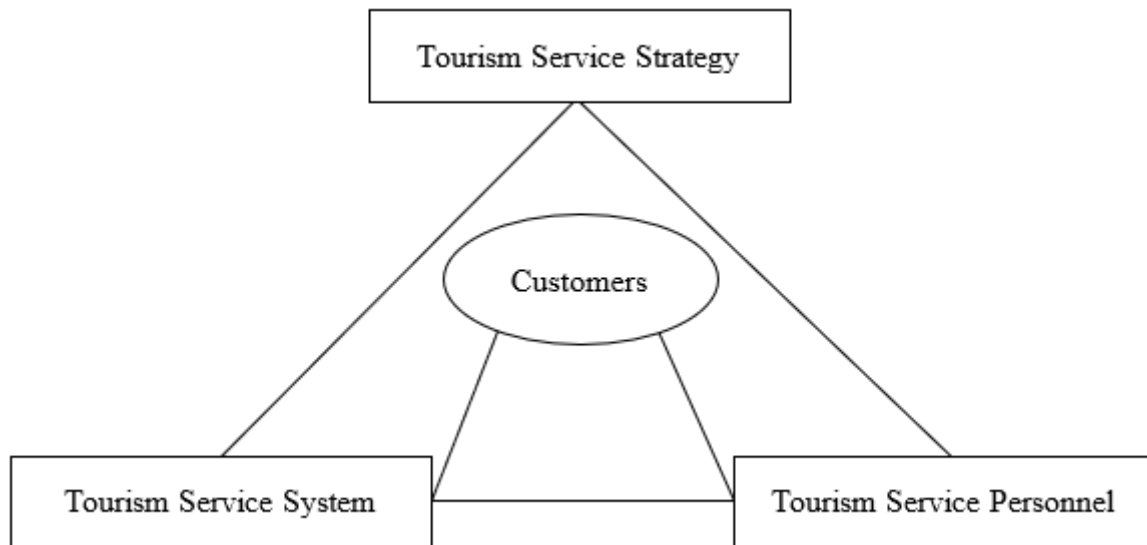
The issues in the management of ethnic tourism services in Xichang are not isolated but are caused by a combination of outdated tourism service concepts, incomplete policy support, immature market mechanisms, lack of education and training systems, and inadequate management mechanisms. To address these problems, Xichang City needs to undertake comprehensive reforms in policy formulation, market mechanism improvement, education and training, community participation, and management innovation to enhance the overall level of ethnic tourism service management and drive the sustainable development of the tourism economy.

## 5. Improvement countermeasures for ethnic tourism service management in Xichang City, Liangshan Prefecture

- (1) Strengthening service quality supervision: Strengthening service quality supervision is crucial for

improving service management. Xichang City should adopt international quality management tools, such as the ISO9001 quality management system, to establish scientific service quality assessment standards, ensuring that all tourism service units adhere to standardized practices. Additionally, implementing a real-time feedback mechanism for tourist satisfaction through online evaluation platforms can provide a basis for continuous service improvement. The government should conduct regular inspections of tourism services and strictly address violations of service quality standards to incentivize enterprises to enhance service quality.

- (2) Improving the professional skills of service personnel: A comprehensive training system for service personnel should be established, offering regular professional skills training in areas such as language communication, service etiquette, and cultural knowledge. This will ensure that service personnel can provide high-quality, personalized services. Furthermore, encouraging service personnel to engage in in-depth studies of local ethnic culture will enhance their ability to share and promote Xichang's cultural heritage, enriching the tourist experience.
- (3) In-depth exploration and preservation of ethnic culture: Xichang City should collaborate with academic institutions and art groups to systematically research local ethnic cultural heritage and incorporate these findings into tourism projects, creating culturally distinctive tourism products. Community participation should be encouraged to integrate traditional folk arts, handicrafts, and customs into the tourism experience, allowing tourists to experience authentic ethnic culture and promoting the preservation of local traditions.
- (4) Establishing a scientific tourism service management system: The government should improve relevant laws and regulations to provide a clear legal framework for service quality. This includes setting up tourism service quality supervision organizations, strengthening market oversight, and maintaining market order. Additionally, the government should guide and support enterprises in forming alliances to improve overall service quality through industry self-regulation. Encouraging the participation of civil organizations and communities in tourism service management will help create a diverse governance model and develop unique community-based tourism services.
- (5) Building a customer-centered quality management model: Based on the "Trinity" theory, a customer-centered quality management model for tourism services should be developed. This theory emphasizes that customers, rather than products, should be the focus of management, and all organizational behaviors and system designs should be customer-centered. This approach is particularly relevant for ethnic tourism service management, as it aims to enhance customer satisfaction. The model comprises three elements: tourism service strategy, tourism service system, and tourism service personnel (as shown in **Figure 2**). These elements are interrelated and work together to meet customer needs. The tourism service strategy serves as the guiding principle for quality management, while the service system and personnel provide the means and support to implement the strategy. Through this model, Xichang City can improve the service quality of ethnic tourism, increase tourist satisfaction, and promote sustainable tourism development.



**Figure 2.** Customer-centered tourism service quality management model

- (6) Professional talent cultivation: Regional tourism requires professionals with expertise and innovation in relevant fields to drive its development. Currently, the talent structure often separates cultural preservation and tourism development. There is a need for professionals who understand both cultural preservation and innovation, as well as tourism operations. Liangshan, like many minority areas, faces challenges in attracting talent due to remote locations and economic constraints. Therefore, policies should be implemented to attract talent, and local graduates and postgraduate students with cultural and tourism backgrounds should be nurtured to contribute to the development of regional tourism in Liangshan. Additionally, partnerships between schools and enterprises or governments can establish internship bases to strengthen the talent pool.
- (7) Increasing investment and promoting Yi cultural brand tourism: Tourism development in minority areas often requires substantial funding and state or government support due to local economic constraints. In the Xichang City area, efforts should focus on fully implementing comprehensive tourism strategies, mobilizing resources from enterprises, local residents, and tourism practitioners, and strengthening supervision of policy implementation. Emphasis should be placed on brand promotion, increasing external publicity, and actively participating in events like the Travel Expo and West Expo. Collaboration with mainstream media, such as CCTV and National Geographic magazine, as well as utilizing new media platforms like WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin (TikTok), will help increase visibility. Gradually, the Liangshan Yi culture brand will gain recognition, reducing seasonal and festival dependencies in tourism and attracting consistent visitor traffic.
- (8) Enhancing the quality of tourism services: Strengthening tourism safety management and improving enterprise safety production levels through safety knowledge campaigns and special inspections is essential. Additionally, comprehensive tourism environment management, strict enforcement of tourism contracts, and actions against illegal activities like publishing false advertisements and offering “zero-negative-fare tours” are necessary to ensure market order. Increasing training for tourism industry personnel, organizing statewide tourism skills competitions, and using a “promote training through competition” model will continually enhance the skills and quality of practitioners, ensuring the safe, orderly, and sustainable development of the tourism industry.

These improvement measures aim to address issues of service quality, personnel skills, cultural preservation, and the establishment of a scientific tourism service management system. Implementing these countermeasures will enable Xichang City to upgrade its ethnic tourism service management in the era of regional tourism, enhancing tourist satisfaction, attracting more visitors, and promoting economic prosperity while preserving and inheriting ethnic culture. Throughout this process, Xichang City should continuously monitor domestic and international tourism market trends and adjust its strategies flexibly to adapt to the evolving tourism environment.

## **6. Conclusion**

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the challenges facing ethnic tourism service management in Xichang City within the context of regional tourism. It identifies the main problems in service management, including inconsistent service quality, inadequate service personnel, insufficient exploration of cultural connotations in tourism, and unsound management mechanisms. Furthermore, it explores the underlying causes of these issues, such as outdated service concepts, inadequate policy support, immature market mechanisms, and a lack of education and training systems.

In response to these challenges, the paper proposes a series of specific improvement measures. These include strengthening service quality supervision, adopting international standards to enhance the standardization of service quality, improving the professional skills and cultural literacy of service personnel through training and education, exploring and preserving ethnic cultures to enrich tourism products, establishing a scientific tourism service management system, and enhancing laws and regulations. These measures aim to improve service quality and tourist satisfaction, promote the sustainable development of tourism, and foster the harmonious coexistence of tourism and local culture.

With the trends of globalization and individualization in tourism, along with national policies promoting high-quality tourism development, the reform and upgrading of ethnic tourism service management in Xichang City are particularly crucial. The analyses and recommendations provided in this study are expected to help Xichang City distinguish itself in the competitive domestic and international tourism markets. By shifting from a resource-dependent model to one driven by service and experience, Xichang City can further solidify its tourism status in Sichuan Province and across the country, serving as a model for other regions. In the future, Xichang City should continue to monitor domestic and international tourism market trends and continuously adjust and optimize its tourism service management strategies to maintain its leading position in the tourism economy, cultural preservation, and tourism experience. The theoretical framework and empirical analyses in this study can also provide valuable insights into other ethnic tourism destinations, contributing to the prosperity and development of ethnic and cultural tourism in China. As the global tourism industry evolves, the optimization and upgrading of ethnic tourism service management in Xichang City will not only enhance the tourist experience but also create a broader space for the integration and symbiosis of the local economy and culture.

## **Disclosure statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.



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