



Developing Eco-Friendly Artistic Accommodations: Strategies for Transforming Weizhou Island into A Premier Homestay Destination for Tourists

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Abstract

This study examines the transformation of Weizhou Island, China, into a premier tourist destination through the development of eco-friendly artistic accommodations. Amidst the rapid growth of global tourism, Weizhou Island faces both opportunities and challenges. While tourism can stimulate local economies and foster cultural exchange, it also introduces environmental and social concerns. The research employs an extensive literature review of sustainable tourism practices, eco-friendly accommodations, and community engagement to identify critical gaps and formulate actionable strategies tailored to the island's unique context. It emphasises sustainable tourism by balancing ecological conservation, cultural preservation, and economic development. The findings highlight the importance of sustainable tourism policies and effective destination management in fostering eco-friendly and culturally sensitive homestays. Destination social responsibility emerges as a key mediator, connecting policy and management with sustainable outcomes. This underscores the need for a comprehensive approach incorporating local community engagement and environmental stewardship in tourism strategies. The study advocates integrating artistic and ecological elements in homestay designs to enhance tourist experiences while preserving the island's natural and cultural heritage. These strategies aim to attract tourists and ensure the long-term sustainability and resilience of the local tourism industry.

Keywords: Artistic Accommodations; Destination Management; Eco-Friendly Homestays; Sustainable Tourism; Tourism Development

Introduction

The global tourism industry, a dynamic and rapidly evolving sector, is at a pivotal juncture where sustainable development models are becoming increasingly crucial. Weizhou Island in China emerges as a remarkable example in this transition, aiming to reinvent itself as a premier destination for homestays that are not only eco-friendly but also artistically enriched (Zhang *et al.*, 2024b). This vision goes beyond mere tourist attraction; it embodies a holistic approach to sustainable tourism that intertwines ecological conservation, cultural preservation, and economic development (Ou *et al.*, 2024). This initiative is reflective of a broader, global movement towards responsible tourism, a paradigm that seeks to maintain and respect natural beauty and cultural heritage, all the while fostering economic benefits for local communities (Wang & Wang, 2023).

Central to the transformation of Weizhou Island is the principle of sustainable tourism, a concept that calls for a form of tourism development that is environmentally considerate, culturally respectful, and

economically viable (Schönherr, Peters & Kuščer, 2023). Research by scholars like Chen *et al.* (2021) and Ma (2011) has been instrumental in shedding light on the intricacies of sustainable tourism. These studies emphasise the importance of a balanced approach that integrates ecological preservation with the growth of the tourism sector. The methodologies proposed, including perception-based sustainability evaluations and strategic planning, are crucial in formulating a model of sustainable tourism that can be specifically tailored to the unique attributes and needs of Weizhou Island.

Innovation is key to the transformational journey of Weizhou Island, as highlighted in the works of Wang and Wang (2011). The core of these innovative strategies lies in the development of high-quality, eco-friendly accommodations that not only attract a broad spectrum of tourists but also offer them immersive and enriching experiences. These experiences are deeply rooted in the island's pristine natural beauty and rich cultural tapestry. One of the pivotal strategies involves integrating artistic elements into the design of homestays, enhancing their overall aesthetic appeal, and minimizing environmental impacts. This integration goes beyond mere visual enhancement; it represents a commitment to preserving and celebrating the unique identity and cultural heritage of Weizhou Island (Rudan, 2023). By doing so, the island can provide a tourism experience that is both environmentally sustainable and culturally enriching, setting a new benchmark for eco-tourism globally (Xu *et al.*, 2023).

In addition to creating visually appealing accommodations, this strategy involves collaborating with local artists and artisans, ensuring that the cultural narrative of the island is authentically represented and celebrated (Macleod, 2023). By employing sustainable practices in construction and operations, these accommodations can serve as a model for environmentally conscious tourism development. This holistic approach to ecotourism not only positions Weizhou Island as a distinctive travel destination but also contributes to the conservation of its natural and cultural resources, ensuring they are enjoyed by generations to come.

The overarching goal of this study is to explore and propose effective strategies for transforming Weizhou Island into a leading destination for eco-friendly and artistically themed homestays. This ambition contributes significantly to the broader domain of sustainable tourism development by focusing on specific, detailed goals: (1) evaluating sustainable tourism practices and stakeholder perceptions and (2) proposing strategies for sustainable destination management. These aims involve a deep dive into the existing sustainable tourism practices on Weizhou Island, seeking to align these practices with established sustainable development goals. The proposed strategies will address the management of natural resources, the involvement of local communities in tourism development, and the promotion of environmentally responsible tourism practices.

Literature Review

Weizhou Island, part of the broader Beibu Gulf Economic Zone (BGEZ), offers unique opportunities for sustainable tourism development due to its rich ecological and cultural resources. However, it faces significant challenges influenced by regional economic policies aimed at rapid industrialisation within the BGEZ. This emphasis on growth through traditional heavy industries has led to increased environmental strain, as seen across the BGEZ, where energy-intensive industries have escalated concerns over pollution and resource depletion (Xiong & Tang, 2014). Additionally, local development policies tend to prioritise large-scale infrastructure projects and industry expansion, sometimes overlooking ecological and community needs, particularly on islands like Weizhou, which rely heavily on natural beauty for tourism (Liu, 2023). Consequently, there is a pressing need for policies that prioritise low-impact tourism models, such as eco-friendly accommodations, to sustain both the environment and the economic benefits derived from tourism. Addressing these challenges, sustainable tourism strategies on Weizhou Island should focus on community engagement and eco-friendly practices. Research indicates that developing industries aligned with local comparative advantages, such as low-impact tourism, can create balanced economic growth while preserving ecological integrity (Demurger, 2001). Weizhou's development as a model of sustainable tourism could involve integrating traditional cultural elements into eco-accommodation designs, thus enhancing tourists' cultural experiences while ensuring economic viability. Furthermore, aligning Weizhou's tourism sector with broader regional goals for a low-carbon economy, as proposed for the BGEZ, would allow it to contribute to the region's ecological sustainability and offer a framework for other island economies within the BGEZ (Mu & Siam-Heng, 2010).

Methodology

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to establish a solid theoretical foundation for this study. The review process involved an in-depth analysis of existing research on sustainable tourism development, with a particular emphasis on island destinations. Initially, a variety of academic databases, including Google Scholar, CNKI, and Web of Science, were employed to gather relevant literature. Keywords such as “eco-friendly accommodation development,” “cultural preservation,” “community engagement,” “environmental management,” and “economic sustainability” were used to guide the search process.

Following this, a refined selection process was applied to the gathered materials. After identifying the initial set of articles, each publication was reviewed for its relevance, methodological rigour, and contribution to the study's objectives. Articles were evaluated based on their abstracts and full-text availability, narrowing down the initial pool to high-quality studies. The final dataset, after this meticulous selection, comprised 534 publications, representing a well-rounded collection of research addressing sustainable tourism development, environmental management, and related subjects.

Additionally, a thorough review of authoritative journals in the fields of tourism, environmental protection, and urban planning was conducted. Journals such as the *Journal of Hospitality Management and Tourism*, *Sustainable Development*, and the *Journal of Cleaner Production* were particularly significant for the study. Key contributions from prominent researchers, including Chen *et al.* (2021), Zhang *et al.* (2024b), and Li, Liu, and Solangi (2024), provided essential insights that shaped the research framework. The citation tracking method was employed to expand the pool of relevant studies, facilitating a more comprehensive exploration of the field.

Results

This section delves into the nuanced findings of the study, discussing their implications for the future of Weizhou Island as a destination for sustainable tourism. It elaborates on the specific outcomes related to the island, the challenges encountered, the opportunities uncovered, the impacts on the local community and economy, and the strategies proposed for sustainable development.

Table 1: Summary of Findings

Finding	Summary
Community Support	Strong local support for eco-friendly accommodations.
Infrastructure Challenges	Limitations in waste and transport infrastructure.
Eco-Tourism Opportunities	Unique cultural and natural assets for tourism.
Environmental Management	Need for policies to conserve ecosystems.
Economic Benefits	Potential for economic growth and job creation.

The results of the summary of findings are shown in Table 1. Firstly, the local community on Weizhou Island has shown strong support for the development of eco-friendly art accommodation facilities. This support may stem from the recognition of environmental protection, the expectation of improving the quality of local tourism, and the desire to promote economic development through sustainable tourism. The active participation and cooperation of the community is an important basis for the implementation of the relevant strategies.

The next issue is infrastructural challenges. Promoting Weizhou Island as an eco-friendly arts accommodation destination faces obstacles such as limitations in waste disposal and transportation systems. These issues may hinder the effective implementation of environmental protection measures and restrict access to accommodation facilities. To achieve sustainable development goals, resources must be invested in improving and optimising these systems. The third finding focuses on ecotourism opportunities. Weizhou Island is rich in unique cultural and natural assets, offering abundant resources for ecotourism development. These assets can be leveraged as unique selling points to attract tourists, foster the growth of eco-friendly art accommodation facilities, and enhance Weizhou Island's competitiveness as a sustainable tourism destination.

In addition, in order to guarantee the health and sustainability of the ecosystem on Weizhou Island, a series of policies to protect the ecosystem need to be formulated and implemented. These policies may involve environmental protection regulations, resource management plans, ecological restoration projects, etc. They aim to ensure that the construction and operation of eco-friendly arts accommodation facilities will not negatively impact the local environment. Finally, Weizhou Island expects the development of eco-friendly arts accommodation facilities to bring significant economic benefits, including economic growth and job creation. By attracting more tourists seeking high-quality and sustainable tourism experiences, it can drive the development of local tourism and related industries, thus providing more employment opportunities and sources of income for local residents.

In summary, Table 1 summarises the findings and conclusions of the study on the development of eco-friendly arts accommodation facilities on Weizhou Island. These findings cover a wide range of aspects, such as community support, infrastructure challenges, ecotourism opportunities, environmental management, and economic benefits, and provide an important reference for the development and implementation of related strategies.

Sustainable Tourism Development in Island Destinations

This section delves deeper into the complexities and potentialities of sustainable tourism in island environments, focusing on Weizhou Island's context (Farlynda, 2024). Island destinations present a unique set of challenges and opportunities due to their geographical and ecological characteristics. Chen *et al.* (2021) and Wang and Wang (2011) highlight the need for perception-based sustainability evaluations, underscoring that island tourism must account for fragile ecosystems, limited resources, and the potential for environmental degradation.

Key challenges include managing the environmental impact of tourism, preserving biodiversity, and ensuring the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources. Opportunities lie in leveraging the unique natural and cultural assets of islands to create distinctive, eco-friendly tourism experiences (Tolić Mandić, Tišma & Jelinčić, 2024). The section emphasizes the need for strategic planning that incorporates environmental, social, and economic sustainability and is tailored to the specific needs and capacities of island destinations, like Weizhou Island.

Eco-Friendly and Artistic Accommodation Development

Expanding on this subsection, the integration of ecological and artistic elements in accommodation design is explored as a crucial strategy in developing ecotourism. Following the insights of Ma (2011) and Abduganiev & Makhkamov (2022), this approach not only emphasises environmental sustainability but also enhances the aesthetic and cultural appeal of accommodations. By integrating local art, architecture, and cultural motifs into the design of homestays, a unique and enriching tourist experience can be created that also serves to promote and preserve local heritage (Xingyu, 2024). This approach requires collaboration with local artists, architects, and designers, ensuring that the development is not only eco-friendly but also resonates with the local cultural narrative. Additionally, it should consider the environmental impact of construction materials and methods, aiming for minimal ecological footprints while maximising cultural expression.

Cultural Preservation and Community Engagement

The crucial role of local communities in sustainable tourism is also emphasized. As highlighted by Liu and Shu (2020) and Zhang *et al.* (2024a), community engagement is key to preserving cultural heritage and ensuring that tourism development benefits local populations. Sustainable tourism should be seen as a collaborative effort that involves local stakeholders at every stage, from planning to execution.

This approach fosters a sense of ownership among local communities, ensuring that tourism development aligns with their interests and preserves their cultural heritage. Strategies might include community-based tourism projects, local guide training programs, and the promotion of local arts and crafts. Engaging communities in decision-making helps to balance tourism development with the maintenance of cultural authenticity and social integrity (Tong, Li & Yang, 2024).

Environmental Sustainability and Management

Building on the research of Chen (2012) and Zhuang *et al.* (2019), this section explores the strategies for effective environmental management in island tourism. It stresses the importance of preserving the natural environment as a key attraction for sustainable tourism. This involves implementing stringent environmental protection measures, promoting eco-friendly practices among tourists and operators, and continuously monitoring the ecological impact of tourism activities.

Specifically, for Weizhou Island, this could involve the development of marine protected areas (Gill *et al.*, 2024), the promotion of sustainable water (Song *et al.*, 2024) and waste management practices (Dada *et al.*, 2024), and the implementation of environmental education programs for tourists and locals alike. Effective environmental management ensures the long-term viability of tourism by safeguarding the very resources that attract visitors.

Economic Sustainability and Tourism Development

Lastly, this subsection expands on the economic implications of sustainable tourism. Drawing from Wong (2015) and Chang and Sheppard (2013), the discussion focuses on creating economic models that are both profitable and sustainable. This involves ensuring that the economic benefits of tourism are widely distributed among local stakeholders and contribute to the overall economic development of the region.

Strategies might include the development of local enterprises linked to tourism, such as handicrafts, food and beverage services, and cultural tours, which can provide sustainable income sources for local residents (Šerić, Milaković & Peronja, 2024). Ensuring economic sustainability also involves adapting to changing market trends and tourist preferences, making resilience and adaptability key components of a successful economic strategy for sustainable tourism development (Pitakaso *et al.*, 2024).

Discussion

The study revealed Weizhou Island's considerable potential for developing eco-friendly artistic accommodations. The reviewed literature reflected strong support among local stakeholders, including residents, business owners, and tourism professionals, for initiatives prioritising environmental conservation and cultural preservation. Furthermore, there was a marked interest in homestay accommodations that provide authentic cultural experiences, suggesting a growing trend among tourists seeking immersive and responsible travel options (Qu *et al.*, 2024). These findings indicate a clear preference for tourism development that aligns with sustainable principles and local cultural values.

Challenges in Sustainable Homestay Development

Key challenges identified in developing sustainable tourism on Weizhou Island included infrastructural limitations, such as inadequate waste management systems (Dada *et al.*, 2024) and transportation challenges that could hinder eco-friendly initiatives. There was also a notable concern about the potential loss of cultural authenticity due to commercialisation and the influx of tourists. Striking a balance between tourism growth and ecological preservation emerged as a significant challenge, with stakeholders expressing concerns about over-tourism and its impact on the island's natural environment. The study underscores the need for strategic planning and regulation to mitigate these challenges (Yrigoy *et al.*, 2024).

Opportunities for Sustainable Tourism

Weizhou Island presents numerous opportunities for sustainable tourism development. Its rich cultural heritage and diverse natural landscapes—including unique geological formations and pristine beaches—make it an attractive destination for eco-conscious travellers. The growing global demand for eco-friendly travel experiences positions the island to ideally capitalize on this market trend. The study highlights the opportunity to develop distinctive tourism offerings that leverage the island's natural and cultural assets while promoting sustainability (Tong, Li & Yang, 2024).

Community Involvement and Economic Impacts

The research underlined the critical role of community involvement in the success of sustainable tourism initiatives. Engaging local communities in the planning and decision-making processes was seen as essential for ensuring that tourism development benefits all stakeholders. The potential economic impacts of sustainable tourism were also highlighted, with findings suggesting opportunities for job creation, skill development, and income generation for local residents. This aspect of sustainable tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to the island's overall economic development and social well-being (Chen *et al.*, 2021).

Strategies for Sustainable Development

Based on the findings, the study proposes a series of strategies for the sustainable development of tourism on Weizhou Island. These include:

- (a) Developing a comprehensive policy framework that integrates sustainable tourism principles with local development objectives.
- (b) Investing in eco-friendly infrastructure, such as renewable energy sources, sustainable waste management systems, and eco-friendly transportation options.
- (c) Promoting cultural and environmental education among both tourists and local residents to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the island's natural and cultural heritage.
- (d) Fostering public-private partnerships to support sustainable tourism initiatives, encouraging investment in sustainable practices, and facilitating collaboration between various stakeholders.

These strategies aim to create a balanced and sustainable approach to tourism development that benefits the island's environment, its residents, and the broader tourism industry. For the sustainable growth of Weizhou Island, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

- (a) Implementation of comprehensive sustainable tourism policies by local authorities, balancing ecological conservation, cultural preservation, and economic growth.
- (b) Development of guidelines for eco-friendly accommodation, which include sustainable building practices, use of local materials, and energy-efficient design.
- (c) Preservation of cultural heritage through the protection of historical sites, promotion of local arts, and support of cultural festivals and events.
- (d) Promotion of community-based tourism initiatives that empower local residents and provide them with opportunities to participate actively in the tourism sector.
- (e) Enhancement of destination management practices, ensuring alignment with sustainability goals, such as resource conservation, waste reduction, and responsible tourism promotion.

Limitations

The study's focus on Weizhou Island may limit the generalisability of its findings. While the recommendations and strategies proposed are tailored to this specific island, they might not be directly applicable to other island destinations or different tourism contexts without further adaptation. In addition, the study focuses on the theoretical aspects of sustainable tourism and policy implications but may lack detailed perspectives from various stakeholders, including tourists and local businesses.

Conclusion

The study conclusively demonstrates Weizhou Island's potential as a leader in sustainable tourism. Its key findings highlight several critical areas including: the integration of eco-friendly practices with artistic elements in accommodations not only enhances aesthetic appeal but also supports environmental conservation, the pivotal role of sustainable tourism policies in guiding and shaping the future of the island's tourism sector, the necessity of robust and effective destination management strategies that consider both ecological and socio-cultural dimensions, the indispensable role of community

engagement in ensuring that tourism development is inclusive, equitable, and beneficial to local residents, and the significant potential economic impacts of sustainable tourism, including job creation, income generation, and overall economic growth on the island.

Strengthening community involvement in tourism development is paramount. This includes offering educational programs to local residents about sustainable tourism, involving them in decision-making processes, and ensuring that they benefit economically from tourism development. Establishing community-based tourism initiatives could also be beneficial, allowing locals to showcase their culture and traditions to visitors.

Future research on Weizhou Island's sustainable tourism development should focus on conducting longitudinal studies to monitor the long-term effects of the strategies implemented. These studies would help assess the durability and adaptability of sustainable tourism practices over time. Additionally, comparative research involving other island destinations pursuing similar sustainability goals would offer valuable insights into best practices and potential challenges. Another promising area for future investigation is the evolving perceptions of both tourists and local businesses as these sustainable tourism strategies continue to unfold. Understanding how these groups respond to changes in environmental, economic, and cultural practices will provide a more nuanced understanding of the social impacts of sustainable tourism. Furthermore, research into the development of innovative technologies and their role in enhancing eco-friendly tourism on Weizhou Island could contribute to a more dynamic and responsive tourism model for the future.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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