Scientific Papers Series Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development
Vol. 21, Issue 3, 2021
PRINT ISSN 2284-7995, E-ISSN 2285-3952

P2P-ACCOMMODATION IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL REGIONS IN CHINA, BY THE EXAMPLE OF AIRBNB

Elena ILIEVA

University “Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov” - Burgas, College of Tourism, 1 “Prof. Yakimov” Blvd, 8010, Burgas, Bulgaria, Phone: +35956813761, Mobile:+359887192049, Email: elena-ilieva@abv.bg

Corresponding author: elena-ilieva@abv.bg

Abstract

Shared accommodation has changed the shape and patterns of tourism industry. China, which has opened its bounds during the last decade, is no exception. It is no doubt that the Chinese government is also steering huge efforts in rural regions through the last years to reduce poverty and to achieve economic and social development. Perceiving the great opportunities that sharing economy provides to governments worldwide, China has adopted, successfully integrated and even supported the sharing economy. P2P-accommodation, as part of the sharing economy, is seen as a chance to generate a positive influence in rural regions. Airbnb is the official partner of the Chinese government in this process and is actively participating in a wide range of activities. The main purpose of this article is to investigate the impact of P2P-accommodation on the Chinese rural regions development taking into consideration Airbnb presence on the market. A 5-step analysis methodology developed by the author is used, which examines the impact of Airbnb on the rural tourism market and how it helps the rural regions development in China. The revealed results show a positive economic impact of the integration of P2P-accommodation in rural regions, a variety of programs and measures to support the development of rural tourism in China and an improved well-being of the rural residents where Airbnb has concentrated its activity. As main conclusion we can underline that the integration of P2P-accommodation in Chinese rural regions has a positive influence helping poverty alleviation, revitalizing rural areas and improving life satisfaction of rural residents in China.

Key words**:** *development, P2P-accommodation, economic impact, rural tourism, China*

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, China has developed dynamically, unprecedented in its speed and scale. At national level, China seeks to abandon its outdated economic and social model and embark on a more balanced path of development. China is currently an influential economic and financial player on the international stage and the EU's second largest trading partner. Unfortunately, the problem of poverty and underdeveloped rural areas in the country remains on the agenda. In recent years, China has made efforts and invested a lot in revitalizing rural areas. Along with agriculture, the Chinese government finds excellent potential in the integration of shared accommodation in rural regions, which could help poverty alleviation, diversify the economic effects of the tourism industry toward rural China and provoke rural tourism to further develop and to provide international standards to tourists. Since Airbnb entered the Chinese market and introduced the P2P-accommodation along with Chinese local platforms, the geographical patterns of the listings have expanded to rural regions and stimulated the domestic tourism giving the tourists an option to have authentic experience, to get to know their culture and roots and to find peaceful surrounding as an escape from the overdeveloped urban areas. In this regard, the main research goal of the present study is to investigate the current and potential impact of Airbnb P2P-accommodation on rural region's development in China in terms of domestic tourism industry.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of shared accommodation on the development of the Chinese rural regions. Taking into consideration that the worldwide leader in P2P-accommodation is Airbnb,

which presence on the Chinese market is essential in terms and conditions of integration and development of the shared accommodation concept in close partnership with the Chinese government, the basic data refers to Airbnb. The methodology of the current study performs the following steps:
-Investigation of the current state and development prospects of the Chinese tourism with focus on domestic tourism due to the fact that domestic tourists are the major rural tourism practitioners in China.
-Study on history, state and development of rural tourism in China. The positive role that is playing in Chinese economy is to be revealed and the government efforts are to be summarized.
-The impact of the occurrence of Corona virus on the tourism industry in China is to be presented with a further study on the Covid-19 impact on domestic tourism.
-The integration of shared accommodation with a focus on Airbnb is to be investigated as also the current state and development in China and the different kind of activities, programs and partnerships in terms of rural tourism. The impact of Covid-19 on P2P-accommodation in China is to be measured in order to assess whether its recovery is faster than in the tourism field generally.
-Measurement of Airbnb's P2P-accommodation impact on rural regions development – taking in consideration poverty alleviation (Disposable Income of Rural Households by Selected Region of steady Airbnb presence); the tendencies in Poverty Conditions in rural areas in China, the trends in domestic tourism development and the intensity of Covid-19 recovery in a post pandemic situation.
The information used for the analysis is collected from official statements, publications and information bulletins of UNWTO, WTTC, National Bureau of Statistics in China and Airbnb China. The indicators are additionally synthesized till gaining indicators of significant information such as rate of increase/decrease, proportion rates and average value (mean and median). The information is further analysed with descriptive statistics such as summary and univariate analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Development of Chinese Tourism

Tourism in China has become one of the important industries in the structure of the national economy. Over the last few decades the tourist flows from and to the country and the domestic trips have significantly increased. Among the drivers, which led to this positive impact, as most important we can indicate the following:
-The appearance of a newly rich middle class.
-The easing of restrictions on movement by the Chinese authorities, especially for outbound tourism.
-The important role of China's government in building the necessary foundation for tourism development – transport (roads and railways), accommodation and catering establishments etc., complying with the international standards in tourism
As a result since 2012 Chinese ***outbound tourists*** are perceived as the greatest financial supporter for global tourism industry, forming 21% of the world's international tourism spending (USD 277 billion) for 2018. Considering ***inbound tourism***, in 2018 China is pointed out to be the fourth most visited country in the world after France, Spain and the United States. In 2018 China counted 62.9 million international tourist arrivals and performed steady increase of 3.6% compared to the previous 2017. For the same year the international tourism receipts are measured to be USD 40.4 million, which also indicated significant increase of 4.7% for the last 12 months[15]. At national level, tourism in China contributed USD 1.35 trillion to the national economy or 11% of China's GDP for 2018, which has almost doubled value as it was 6% in 2008. Moreover, tourism in China generated directly and indirectly employments of 28.25 million people, who were engaged in tourist services and the connected activities for the near 139.5 million inbound trips and five billion domestic trips in 2017 [3]. As we can conclude, the dynamics of production in tourism determine the dynamics of

employment and wages of employees in this sector [18].

Table 1. Performance of Chinese tourism, 2018

Indicator	Value
Inbound Tourism	141.2 million arrivals
Inbound tourism revenue	USD 127.3 billion
Outbound tourism	162 million trips
Domestic tourism	5.5 billion trips
Domestic tourism revenue	CNY 5.1 trillion
Total revenue	CNY 5.98 trillion

Source: [3].

The main preconditions for this dynamic process in Chinese tourism can be found in the opening of the Chinese economy and especially with the adoption of the Approved Destination Status (ADS) program in 1995. This initially allowed Chinese tourists to travel to a small number of state-approved destinations, but subsequently expanded the list of potential receptive destination significantly [6]. In our opinion, this opening process can be conditionally divided into three main phases:

-*First phase (mid-80s to early 90s of the 20th century)* – characterized by allowing travel of Chinese citizens abroad. Several Asian countries neighboring China have been approved, but travel purposes are limited to family visits. Business or private sector trips are also allowed, as well as cultural exchanges, including travel by scientists and participants in seminars and exhibitions.

-*Second phase (mid-1990s to 2010)* – adoption of the program for approved destinations, which expands the range of potential receptive tourist destinations. Licensing of a number of travel agencies that are allowed to organize group visits, usually to several foreign destinations. It is noteworthy that the visits are relatively short and the sights at place are viewed "quickly", thus limiting the contact with the locals and local lifestyle. The period is characterized by low incomes of tourists, strict tourist regulations, high language barrier and lack of experience in traveling abroad.

-*Third phase (from 2010 until now)* – characterized by increased incomes of Chinese citizens, who are beginning to spend more time on leisure and travel. The Chinese already have more travel experience, with a significantly larger number of destinations available (153 destinations/regions). Visa requirements have been eased for both Chinese outbound tourists and China's inbound tourists. Remarkably increased marketing activities of China's receptive destinations are to be reported as China is already a significant outbound tourist market. Thus, considerable qualitative changes in Chinese international tourism can be noticed. According to official data, individual travelers have already displaced organized group visits, with the former accounting for 60% of Chinese travelers abroad. Unpopular destinations are already being visited, the emphasis is on getting to know the local way of life, customs and culture, new things are being tried – not only cuisine, but also experiences. This applies in full force to both international and domestic tourism, where *rural forms are preferred*. Some of the most important features in the current profile of Chinese tourists are:

-They are more solvent;
-They are traditionalists;
-They are interested in world landmarks and world events;
-They like local specialties and hot drinks, even in summer;
-70% of them use air transport [13].

Covid-19 and Tourism

The emergence and rapid spread of Covid-19, which has grown into a global pandemic, has caused an unprecedented crisis in tourism industry around the world. Few months after the announcement of the first positive case, the governments were forced to introduce restrictive measures in almost all aspects of human life – personal, social, public, professional. Economically and socially, the world economy has suffered and continues to suffer enormous damage. The appearance of Covid-19 turned out to be one of the most dramatic in the history of tourism.

According to data from the latest report of UNWTO, till the end of October 2020 international tourist arrivals fell by 72% over the same period previous year. The connected loss of export revenues from these 900 million fewer international tourist arrivals is USD 935 billion, which is more than 10 times the loss in 2009 under the impact of the global economic crisis. Specifically, in Asia and the Pacific there were 82% less arrivals during the period considered – the greatest decrease worldwide, which is understandable with China announced to be the primary source of virus spread. Interesting observation at international level is that although international travel shows timid growth, domestic tourism continues to grow in several large markets including China, where domestic flights has returned to pre-pandemic levels. The expected economic loss because of the global crisis in tourism is estimated to be over USD 2 trillion in global GDP, which is more than 2% of the world's GDP in 2019 [16].

Table 2. Decline in international tourist arrivals by month, January – May, 2019/2020 (tourist arrivals in thousands)

Year	**JAN**	**FEB**	**MAR**	**APR**	**MAY**
2019	96,563	94,375	107,308	117,957	120,543
2020	98,453	83,408	48,313	3,653	2,837
Change	**+2%**	**-11.6%**	**-54.9%**	**-96.9%**	**-97.7%**

Source: [16].

Covid-19 and domestic tourism in China

Due to Covid-19 spread in China, the predicted decline in number of domestic tourists is 43% (3.4 billion people) and the loss in domestic tourism revenue is 52% or for the whole 2020 it will account less than USD 394 billion than in 2019. It is predicted that the effects of the pandemic on the Chinese tourism industry could be severe, which can be easily explained with the reduced paying capacity of the Chinese population because of the affected Chinese economy. On the other hand, reasonable effect on the reduced domestic tourism has also the drop in domestic flights. Chinese airline revenues in the first half of 2020 decreased by 77% compared to 2019 which is directly connected with the reduced domestic demand for air transport – for the first half of 2020 it fell by 62% [7]. Though, the second half of 2020 was more successful for Chinese domestic tourism, which led to partial recovery. Explanation could be found in the well-structured marketing campaigns in China about domestic tourism as a possible way to escape from home after the long lock-down in a number of cities. On the other side, China's domestic tourism has also one big advantage – 1.4 billion Chinese people, who have no other option than travelling within China [4].

Rural Tourism in China

Through the last two decades steady urbanization process is to be observed in China. From 2009 to 2019 the ratio between urban and rural population in China seems to be clearly rebalanced – from 52% rural population and 48% urban population in 2009 to 39% rural population and 61% urban population in 2019 (Fig. 1).

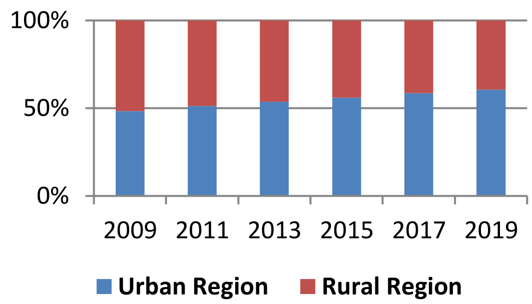

Fig. 1. Urban and rural population of China from 2009 to 2019 (selected years)
Source: [14].

Although big cities offer Chinese residents a lot of professional possibilities and personal comfort, especially for young people and young families, this doesn't mean that their life satisfaction is higher. A study reported that the Chinese people's life satisfaction score decreased from 7.29 in 2004 to 6.96 in 2014 [5]. Conjunctionally, the demand for rural tourism started gradually increasing as rural tourism is seen as a chance to alleviate problems caused by mass tourism in big overdeveloped cities and resorts. Most people living in big Chinese megalopolis are seeking for traditional and calm atmosphere, original and authentic experience and want to go back to the roots. That's the reason why rural tourism in China is one of the most preferable forms of tourism among domestic tourists. It's also important to notice that the evaluation of rural tourism experience is quite different between urban and rural tourists, but both of them are participating in rural tourism development. Moreover, approximately half of China's 55 UNESCO World Heritage Sites are in rural areas, giving rural tourism sector in China great development opportunities. If we could summarize it, rural tourism is generally seen as:

-Alternative to help alleviate problems caused by mass tourism in urban spaces;
-Catalyst for upgrading rural areas;
-Solid foundation for agricultural development;
-Specific way for poverty alleviation in rural areas in China;
-Conductor of cultural multiplication.

The development of rural tourism in China can be described as more dynamic through the last three decades, but with greater intensity since 1988, when China Urban and Rural Tourism Year was firstly introduced by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), followed by: China Eco-tourism Year in 1999, Chinese Life Tourism Year in 2004 and China Rural Tourism Year in 2006. After these several marketing campaigns of the Chinese government for promoting rural tourism as a sustainable tourism form [2], from our point of view, the results are excellent. As in 2018 the number of domestic travelers reached 5.54 billion, it is reported that more than a half – approximately 3 billion, were engaged in some form of rural tourism and generated tourism income exceeding CNY 800 billion. Gradually, through the whole period of development a variety of rural tourism-promoted activities, created by CNTA offering both financial incentives and government policy support, have effectively promoted the development of rural tourism in China (Baoren 2011). Moreover, at governmental level a National Rural Tourism Development Program (2009-2015) was introduced to all stakeholders. Based on this national program it was predicted that by the end of 2015 the National Tourism Bureau will have created 1,000 tourist towns and 10,000 characteristic tourism villages across China to promote rural tourism development at national level. The number of rural tourists was predicted to reach 771 million people and Chines rural tourism was challenged to form CNY 114.5 billion giving employment for 989 million people directly and additional 36.8 million indirectly. It was also expected that the average growth of per capita annual net income of farmers who engage in rural tourism will reach 5%. According to official data from CNTA in 2011, the revenue from rural tourism in China accounted for more than CNY 120 billion revenue and offered employment for over 15 million farmers. The last available data, officially announced by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, is for 2019, when rural tourism generated CNY 850 billion and 3.3 billion trips were made to rural areas. In our opinion, for this 10-years period this tremendous growth in rural tourism revenue – over seven times, is partially due to the successful integration of P2P-accommodation in the rural regions [19].

Additionally, another interesting trend is also being observed – more people want to return living in rural villages, attracted by the great opportunities for starting own business in the agricultural or tourism industry. In 2019 the people returned to the countryside were more than 8.5 million and the number of agricultural e-commerce firms exceeded 30,000.

Introducing Airbnb on the Chinese Rural Tourism Market

AirBnB was introduced to the Chinese market in 2009 through the Douban Forum – a social network of young people who exchange ideas and experiences. The posts there discuss mainly the flexibility of the platform in terms of check-in and check-out times. In fact, the earliest Chinese users of the platform are Chinese international tourists in terms of accommodation abroad. Subsequently, the Chinese government sees a valuable opportunity to stimulate GDP, increase tax revenues in the state treasury and create real work and income for more people, which is why it stimulates shared accommodation with a number of policies and regulatory frameworks. Currently, the main share of users are still international Chinese tourists in terms of their accommodation abroad, but with the help of the government, the stimulation of users in the field of domestic and rural tourism is also underway.

The main concurrence of Airbnb in China is the local P2P-platforms, which are very well developed and positioned on the Chinese tourism market. The bigger representatives of the local Chinese P2P-platforms are Tujia, Mayi, Xiaozhu, Muniao, Belvedor, Onehome, Fishtrip, Youtianxia, Ziroomstay, Zizalike. From these, the strongest native competitors for Airbnb in China are presented by Tuija and Xiaozhu [8].

Tujia is one of the most successful Chinese accommodation sharing projects, which according to the latest official figures for 2017 has more than 4,000 employees in nearly 1,350 Chinese and foreign destinations, and the list of shared accommodation units exceeds 400,000.

In terms of Airbnb development in China, highly valuable is the fact that Airbnb is the main partner of the Chinese government in promotion and introduction of the concept for P2P-accommodation among stakeholders at a national level. The platform has signed agreements with Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou to use the benefits of shared accommodation, further develop tourism and achieve poverty alleviation. Since 2016 Airbnb has signed memorandum of understanding with cities across China, the most important from them are with Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Chengdu, Chongqing and Guilin.

According to experts, shared accommodation will continue to grow strongly connected with rural tourism, which the Chinese government sees as one of the main ways to tackle poverty and increase the well-being of the ***rural population***. According to data, reservations for short stays in cities of the so-called third and fourth category and rural villages increased the most in the first half of 2018. Rural housing sharing has great potential as more Chinese tourists travel there to gain experiences they have only heard of and watched for. Large local platforms in this field are making more and more attempts to develop rural tourism, and this enables the local population to pursue new economic opportunities. In this regard, Airbnb also announced a partnership with the Yenqi Tourism Committee (Beijing), as part of its efforts to promote the housing sharing service and promote tourism in the Yenqing area. In 2018, AirBnB launched also a specialized rural tourism program in Guilin and, in partnership with the Guilin Tourism Development Committee, trained local families in Jingjiang Village on the benefits of sharing homes, the standards of welcoming tourists and the digital opportunities to do so. The main aim of the Guilin Rural Community Tourism program in partnership with Airbnb is to identify and promote new *economic opportunities* for locals through home-sharing.

According to AirBnB statistics, China is the company's fastest growing market and the second fastest growing outbound tourism market worldwide. It was planned to expand operations in several key cities and regions before the end of 2018, as China is expected to be Airbnb's largest source of tourists by 2020. According to the company, since its inception, there have been more than 10 million arrivals of Chinese tourists worldwide, more than half of which were in 2017. The number of Chinese tourists via Airbnb increased by 100% on an annual basis in 2017, and the number of advertised on the platform opportunities for accommodation in China – by over 125% [9].

In 2018 Airbnb also announced findings from its joint report with the World Tourism Alliance, titled “Home Sharing Empowers Rural Revitalization in China”. Based on data as of October 2018, Airbnb has seen an annual increase of 257% in rural listings in China. Close to 1,400 rural counties, county-level cities, and remote counties in China now have Airbnb listings, where Airbnb hosts have welcomed millions of guests and earned CNY 260 million in total *host income* [1].

Considerable growth can be recognized not only in home-sharing through the Airbnb platform, but also in terms of the so called “Experiences” – activities, hosted by locals and introducing the local culture, habits and lifestyle to the tourists. From only 10 Experiences in 2017, localized in Shanghai only, now there are more than 1,000 Experiences across China.

Covid-19 and P2P-accommodation in Rural China

Due to the pandemic situation in 2020 for the first five months of the year the official data shows that the transaction volume of P2P-accommodation in China fell by more than 72% and the number of bookings dropped by 65% compared with the same period in 2019. [17] In the second half of 2020 due to the better control of the Covid-19 spread, the short-term vacation rentals industry in China showed gradual recovery. It is important to emphasize that rural homestays and short-distance travel are mostly preferred among Chinese tourists. According to a report from the Sharing Economy Research Center from March to May there is proof for a start of the recovery process of P2P-accommodation industry on a month-on-month basis [10].

Table 3. Recovery process of Chinese P2P-accommodation, March - May

Period of 2020	Change in revenue	Change in bookings
March	+78%	+141%
April	+199%	+152%
May	+35%	+50%

Source: [10].

It is widely accepted that rural homestays are the top generator of positive Covid-19 recovery impact in China, especially in terms of shared accommodation development and domestic tourism. The newly reported from Airbnb tendencies in tourist`s behavior and demand are showing pronounced preference for trips close to home (81% of respondents) with maximal distance 200 km from traveler`s home and interest in the newly introduced by Airbnb Online Experiences (84% of respondents) as to reduce physical contact and guarantee secured experience for both sides – tourists and hosts.

The latest available official data for 2020 are confirming the hypothesis above. During the May Day holiday in China (May 1 to May 5) the Ministry of Culture and Tourism announced that the most popular choice for domestic tourism was *rural homestay*. For the holiday period rural areas in Beijing accepted more than 666,000 trips and benefited with CNY 79 million. Additionally, countryside homestays saw also a rapid growth – a survey among 100 hosts reported over 80% occupancy rate during the five holiday days. Data from the P2P-platform Tujia showed an increase by 6% in the rural homestay reservations for the same period [11].

P2P-accommodation impact on rural regions development

Since the real entering on Chinese tourism market of Airbnb and the widespread of shared accommodation among Chinese domestic tourists as whole are to be reported in 2013, the dataset will cover the period 2013-2019, which is the last available data at Chinese national level.

As it became clear from the previous sections, the integration of P2P-accommodation in China has an important role in domestic and rural tourism development. As presented in Table 4., in the period 2013-2019 the domestic tourists flow increased by more than 84%. Moreover, significant is the fact that till 2016, when Airbnb signed memorandums of understanding with different cities across China, the growth rate in domestic tourist flow was around 4.6% but after 2016 it began to grow on a year-on-year basis – **+6.8%** for 2016/2017; **+7.3%** for 2017/2018; **8.4%** for 2018/2019. Additionally, as seen from the information below, the number of rural residents in China practicing domestic tourism increased in the period 2013-2019 by 43%, which can be seen as a definite sign of improved well-being. More importantly, the tourism expenditure per capita of rural residents not only increased through the survey period, but also represented a larger share from the Tourism Expenditure per capita at a national level – from 64.4% in 2013 to 66.6% in 2019. Specifically, in the period 2013-2015 the share was around 64.4 to 64.7%, but after 2016 it shows more dynamical growth: 66% in 2017 to 66.6% in 2019. In our opinion, one of the favorable factors for this positive development of the domestic and rural tourism in China is the integration of Airbnb P2P-accommodation platform and the accompanying activities in partnership with the Chinese government, organizations and stakeholders.

Table 4. Domestic tourism in China, 2013-2019

Year	Domestic tourists (million)	*Rural Residents*	Tourism Expenditure/Per Capita (Yuan)	*Urban*	*Rural*
2013	3,262	*1,076*	805.5	*946.6*	*518.9*
2014	3,611	*1,128*	839.7	*975.4*	*540.2*
2015	4,000	*1,188*	857.0	*985.5*	*554.2*
2016	4,440	*1,240*	888.2	*1009.1*	*576.4*
2017	5,001	*1,324*	913.0	*1024.6*	*603.3*
2018	5,539	*1,420*	925.8	*1034.0*	*611.9*
2019	6,006	*1,535*	953.3	*1062.6*	*634.7*

Source: [12].

Generally, at a national level the poverty conditions in Chinese rural regions have improved tremendously since 2013 as seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Poverty Conditions in rural areas in China, 2013-2018 (2010 Standard – CNY 2300 per person per year)

Year	Poverty Population (10 000 persons)	*Change on year-on-year basis (%)*	Poverty Headcount Ratio (%)	*Change on year-on-year basis (%)*
2013	8,249	---	8.5	---
2014	7,017	*-14.9%*	7.2	*-15.3%*
2015	5,575	*-20.6%*	5.7	*-20.8%*
2016	4,335	*-22.2%*	4.5	*-21.1%*
2017	3,046	*-29.7%*	3.1	*-31.1%*
2018	1,660	*-45.5%*	1.7	*-45.2%*
2019	551	*-66.8%*	0.6	*-64.7%*

Source: [12].

The poverty headcount ratio has never been at such low level as in 2019 it is above 1% from the Chinese population. Again, apparently the more dynamic decrease of the poverty population in China is after 2016 to be reported.

Having a more careful look at the poverty conditions in the specific regions, where Airbnb has signed memorandums for P2P-accommodation development partnerships it makes impression that in two of the five Chinese regions the per capita disposable income of rural households is higher than the average at national level – Guangdong, where Shenzhen and Guangzhou are located, and Shanghai. Though, in the survey period significant is the fact that in the other three Chinese regions the per capita disposable income of households is showing positive development. If in 2013 the indicator under consideration in Sichuan, Chongqing and Guangxi is respectively 88.8%, 90.1% and 82.6% of the per capita disposable income of rural households at national level, in 2019 the share increased to respectively 91.6%, 94.5% and 85.5% from the average at national level. (Table 6.) It is clear that the signed memorandums in these three rural regions in 2016 influenced the local economy and population positively. Important is also the fact that in two of the researched regions – Chongqing and Guangxi, the indicator is increasing more dynamically (respectively +9.5% and +9.4%) than at national level (+8.6%) on average in the period 2013-2019.

Table 6. Per Capita Disposable Income of Rural Households by Selected Region, 2013-2019

Area	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**
National	**9,429.6**	**10,488.9**	**11,421.7**	**12,363.4**	**13,432.4**	**14,617.0**	**16,020.7**
Guangdong/ Shenzhen; Guangzhou	11,067.8	12,245.6	13,360.4	14,512.2	15,779.7	17,167.7	18,818.4
Shanghai	19,208.3	21,191.6	23,205.2	25,520.4	27,825.0	30,374.7	33,195.2
Sichuan/ Chengdu	8,380.7	9,347.7	10,247.4	11,203.1	12,226.9	13,331.4	14,670.1
Chongqing	8,492.5	9,489.8	10,504.7	11,548.8	12,637.9	13,781.2	15,133.3
Guangxi/ Guilin	7,793.1	8,683.2	9,466.6	10,359.5	11,325.5	12,434.8	13,675.7

Source: [12].

CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion we can assert that Airbnb P2P-accommodation has a positive impact on the development of rural regions in China, which can be proved with the following data supported statements:

-Tourism in China has big a contribution to national economy as it forms 11% of China`s GDP (2018) and employment, directly and indirectly of 28.25 million people. Domestic tourism performs bigger share from Chinese tourism with around 40 times more trips than the inbound tourism;

-Covid-19 spread caused unprecedented loss in international tourism worldwide (900 million fewer arrivals) and the greatest decrease is specifically in Asia and the Pacific (82% less arrivals). In China for 2020 the predicted decline in number of domestic tourists is 43% or 3.4 billion people. Though, second half of 2020 was more successful for the Chinese domestic tourism and a partial recovery is to be reported.

-Rural tourism is one of the most preferable forms of tourism among domestic tourists. The demand for rural tourism started to gradually increase since the new century has begun. Chinese rural tourism is generally seen as a catalyst for upgrading rural areas, specific way for poverty alleviation in China`s rural areas, conductor of cultural multiplication and soon it was pointed to help for faster recovery from the Covid-19 negative consequences.

-The development of rural tourism in China can be described as more dynamic through the last three decades. In this aspect three important government activities can be pointed as decisive:

-China Urban and Rural Tourism Year (1988); China Rural Tourism Year (2006) and the National Rural Tourism Development Program (2009-2015). The result is more than 3.3 billion domestic trips to rural regions and rural tourism income exceeding CNY 850 billion in 2018.

-The Chinese government evaluates the positive economic impact of the integration of P2P-accommodation in rural regions and sees great opportunity to stimulate GDP, increase tax revenues and improve the well-being of rural population. The most significant partnership in this aspect is with Airbnb - a number of policies and regulatory frameworks are being elaborated and introduced since 2013.

Airbnb has seen an annual increase of 257% in rural listings in China (2018) and now there are listing in more than 1,400 remote and cities villages. The reported host income in 2018 for rural regions is CNY 260 million.

-Due to the pandemic situation during the first five months of 2020 the transaction volume of P2P-accommodation in China fell tremendously (-72%) as also the number of bookings (-65%) compared with 2019, but in the second half of 2020 there is a positive Covid-19 recovery, where rural homestays are seen as the top generator of positive impact.

-During the researched period, 2013-2019, after the P2P-accommodation integrated in China through the Airbnb entrance, the domestic tourists flow increased by more than 84%. Additionally, after Airbnb has signed memorandums of understanding with different cities across China (2016) the growth rate in domestic tourist flow began to rise more dynamically.

-During the period 2013-2019 rural residents began to participate more in tourism and there is a curtain sign of their improved well-being – expenditure per capita of rural residents is higher, improved poverty conditions in Chinese rural regions (under 1% from the Chinese population). Additionally, the poverty conditions in the specific regions, where Airbnb has signed memorandums the per capita disposable income of rural households is higher on yearly basis, is closer to or above the average at national level and after 2016 it began to rise more sharply.

REFERENCES

[1]Airbnb, 2018, Airbnb and Guilin Municipal Government Work to Empower Rural Communities, https://news.airbnb.com/airbnb-and-guilin-municipal-government-work-to-empower-rural-communities/, Accessed on 19 February 2021.

[2]Atanasova, V., 2018, Marketing guidelines for the development of rural tourism in Strandja region. The International Sustainable Tourism and Environment Protection Conference, Edirne, 9-12.

[3]Baatarsuren, B., 2020, China Tourism: Get Known To Unknown Side of The Asian Giant, https://www.discoverchina.com/article/china-tourism, Accessed on 23 February 2021.
[4]Brain, L., 2020, Domestic tourism in China suffers staggering losses, https://www.tourism-review.com/domestic-tourism-in-china-went-drastically-down-news11680, Accessed on 20 February 2021.
[5]Cheng, H., Chen, H., Li, D., Yu, H., 2017, The Mystery of Chinese People's Happiness. Journal of Happiness Studies, 19 (2095–2114): 95-114.
[6]Chen, T. 2018, How Chinese consumers are changing the world, http://e-vestnik.bg/27495/kak-kitayskite-potrebiteli-promenyat-sveta-vizhte-turistite, Accessed on 19 February 2021.
[7]Cheshire, T., 2020, Coronavirus: China's tourism industry thriving as world battles COVID-19, https://news.sky.com/story/coronavirus-chinas-tourism-industry-thriving-as-world-battles-covid-19-12064860, Accessed on 20 February 2021.
[8]Dolnicar, S., 2018, Peer-to-peer accommodation networks: pushing the boundaries, Goodfellow Publishers Ltd, Oxford, 148-159.
[9]Dzyanhwai, Y., 2018, Shared Homes - the new hit on China's tourism market, https://www.24chasa.bg/novini/article/7139462 (in Bulgarian), Accessed on 20 February 2021.
[10]Feifei, F., 2020, Rural homestays rule the roost amid COVID recovery, China Daily, https://www.chinadailyasia.com/article/141548, Accessed on 19 February 2021.
[11]Hongyu, B., 2020, China's rural tourism leads way in sector's rebound despite COVID-19, http://en.people.cn/n3/2020/0515/c90000-9690953.html, Accessed on 19 February 2021.
[12]National Bureau of Statistics in China, 2020, China Statistical Yearbook 2020, http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2020/indexeh.htm, Accessed on 23 February 2021.
[13]Rakadzhiyska, S., Marinov, S., Dyankov, T., Yancheva, K., 2020, Tourist Markets, University Publishing House "Science and Economics" at the University of Economics, Varna, 187.
[14]Statistica, 2020, Urban and rural population of China from 2009 to 2019, https://www.statista.com/statistics/278566/urban-and-rural-population-of-china/, Accessed on 19 February 2021.
[15]UNWTO, 2019, International Tourism Highlights, UNWTO Publishing, Madrid: 2-4, https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284421152, Accessed on 23 February 2021.
[16]UNWTO, 2020, Impact assessment of the COVID-19 outbreak on international tourism, https://www.unwto.org/impact-assessment-of-the-covid-19-outbreak-on-international-tourism, Accessed on 20 February 2021.
[17]UNWTO, 2020, International tourism down 65% in first half of 2020, World Tourism Barometer, Vol. 18 (3), Madrid: 2-9, https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/wtobarometereng.2020.18.1.5, Accessed on 19 February 2021.
[18]Velev, M., 2018, The influence of the seasonal factor of the employment and remunerations in the agricultural sector in Bulgaria. Scientific Papers "Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and rural development", Vol. 18 (4): 405-410.
[19]Wang, L., Cheng, S., Zhong, L., Mu, S., Dhruba, D.G.C., Ren, G., 2013, Rural tourism development in China: Principles, models and the future, Journal of Mountain Science 10 (1): 116-129.