

# Current Situation Analysis and Development Ideas of Rural Tourism under the Strategy of Rural Revitalization

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**ABSTRACT.** Rural revitalization requires “five formula”: industrial prosperity, ecological livable, rural civilization, effective governance, and rich life. Among them, “industry prosperity” is not only address rural revitalization, but also the core factor in the policy. The tourism industry, as a kind of rural industry, is quietly increasing. Rural tourism industry plays the second major role in the economic development of rural areas and promotes rural revitalization. At present, China's rural tourism industry has achieved some gains, yet there are some shortcomings. For example, the rural environment has been affected, many accompanying industries have no proper management of government policies, and the rural industrialization has been accelerated. This paper analyzes some outstanding problems facing the rural areas from the actual situation and put forward feasible solutions from the government's point of view to promote the better development of rural tourism industry.

**KEYWORDS:** Cultural tourism; Rural revitalization; Current situation analysis; Tourism development

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Proposal of Rural Tourism

Spanish scholar Rosa María Yague Perales (2001) defines rural tourism into two different types, i.e. traditional rural tourism and modern rural tourism. Traditional rural tourism began to exist after the Industrial Revolution, which was mainly due to the migration of some urban residents to countryside in the form of “returning home” vacation. Though the traditional rural tourism impacts positively the local economy, with the increase in urban-rural exchanges, yet it varies from modern rural tourism. Long vacations tends to accelerate the traditional rural tourism activities, but it doesn't really promotes the development of local economy with local employment opportunities, thereby improving the local financial

environment. In fact, traditional rural tourism exists widely in developed and developing countries. In China, traditional rural tourism is often classified as family visit tourism. Modern rural tourism, a new fashion of tourism began to emerge in rural areas in the 1980s. Especially after the 1990s, its development was rapid. Tourists' motivation of tourism was obviously different from traditional tourists who returns home. The main characteristics of modern rural tourism were as follows: the time of tourism is not limited to a country's national holidays; modern rural tourists enjoy completely the beautiful scenery, natural environment, architecture, culture and make use of other resources in rural areas; and the contribution of modern rural tourism to rural economy not only increased the local financial revenue, but also it created employment opportunities for local people, as well as injecting new vitality into the local economy.

In China, it's said that the rural tourism generated in 1950s in Shijiazhuang to meet foreign exchange affairs (Lu Tang, 2017). But some domestic scholars agree that rural tourism originated in Shenzhen in the 1980s. In the late 1980s, Shenzhen opened the "litchi festival" in order to attract foreign investment, and then opened the picking garden, which achieved tremendous outcome (Lu Tang, 2017). During the middle and later period of the 1990s, the rural tourism model was introduced, and it accelerated its rapid development, which holds a broad market prospect (Xueming Zhang, 2012). The rural tourism in its true sense is a new type of tourism appeared in the late 19th century, and rapidly developed after the "World War II" (Lu Tang,2017).

### ***1.2 Definition of Rural Tourism***

The academic circles at home and abroad have not completely unified definition of rural tourism, mainly has the following opinions:(1) Spanish scholar Gilbert and Tung (1990) argued that rural tourism is a form of tourism in which farmers provide tourists with accommodation and other amenities to engage in various leisure activities in typical rural environments such as farms and pastures. (2)The World Economic Cooperation and Development Committee (OECD, 1994, P.15) defined it as: rural tourism happens in rural areas, where the rurality is the core and unique selling point. (3)Arie Reichel and Oded Lowengart of Israel and the American man Ady Milman (1999) indicated that rural tourism is concise and to the point that is located in rural area. It has the characteristics of special livestock in rural areas, such as small scale of tourism enterprises, open area, and sustainable development. (4) Based on Bramwell and Lane (1994, England), rural tourism is not only a tourism activity based on agriculture, but also its a multifaceted tourism activity. Its also natural tourism with special interests such as walking, mountaineering and horseback riding on holidays, adventure, sports and traditional health care, hunting and fishing, educational activities, traditional culture experience, and as well as some regional folk lifestyle activities.

There are several definitions on rural tourism in China. He and Li (2002) defined rural tourism in a narrow sense, referring as tourism activities in rural areas, with rural natural and cultural objects as tourist attractions. The concept of rural tourism

includes two aspects: one is that it occurs in rural areas, and the other is that it takes the rural nature as its tourist attraction, both of which are indispensable. A tourism activity of stereoscopic landscape is constituted by agricultural biological resources, agricultural economic resources, and rural social resources (Xu Yang, 1992). It is with village community as the activity place, and with the unique production patterns, lifestyle and pastoral scenery of village as the key object (Bo Ma, 1996). It is a way of tourism with the rural countryside scenery and activities as attraction, with the urban residents as the target market, by meeting the needs of tourists for entertainment, knowledge and return to nature as the sole purpose (Jiang Du & Ping Xiang, 1999). Zhang Jianxiong (2003) defined it as a small-scale, discrete tourism activity with sightseeing, vacation and leisure nature, based on various types of villages, with rural culture, rural life and rural pastoral scenery as a tourist attraction.

In this paper, rural tourism is a new type of tourism with rural natural settings and cultural objects as its key tourist attraction, mainly relying on the beautiful landscape, natural environment, architecture and culture of rural areas. and also on the basis of traditional rural leisure and agricultural experience tourism, expanding and developing new tourism modes for conference vacation, leisure and entertainment projects is essential.

### ***1.3 The Existing Research Perspectives Review***

At present, there are many perspectives to study the development of rural tourism industry at home and abroad. European countries are the frontier areas of rural tourism development, especially in Spain. Spain is worldwide known for its tourism industry, which has been and still is one of the main production sectors in Spain (M.Victoria, 2011). The main research includes the combination of rural tourism and national unity with the choice of rural tourism as a sustainable development alternative. Sustainable tourism is the only type of tourism that could offer authentic countryside lifestyle, where people could relax themselves and enjoy the nature with country lifestyle, but not like in artificial tourism theatre created for exploitation (M.Victoria, 2011). In Romania, Monica Iorio (2010) argue that "Tourism has been firmly integrated into the families' existing situation as a complementary activity, contributing to economic diversification and forging a positive linkage with agriculture. It also added value to families' capabilities and skills, enriching their lives in non-pecuniary ways". Another representative theory is Claire's claim from Britain. He concluded that successful rural tourism development depends on strong leadership for cross sectoral activities between rural tourism businesses, rural tourism projects which take calculated risks for the benefits of the destination, and strengthening the links between different sectors in the rural economy. However, in the longer-term, leadership needs to encourage the concept of follower-ship, so that rural tourism destinations can sustain their economies through their own efforts. So a proactive, rather than passive role by followers is important to ensure this is achieved (Claire Haven-Tang,2010).

Since 1998, when "China Rural Tourism Year 1998" was first introduced to start by the China National Tourism Administration(CNTA), followed by "China

Eco-tourism Year 1999” and “Chinese Life Tourism Year 2004”, a series of RT-promoted activities, created by CNTA offering both financial incentives and government policy support, have facilitated farm diversification into tourism. As a result, the number of rural communities has greatly increased in pursuit of different forms of rural tourism, particularly “Nong jia le” tourism, a dominant form of RT in China (Hu, 2008). On the other hand, although the development of rural tourism in China has made some significant achievements, a number of problems and challenges facing the sustainable development of rural tourism in China have been identified (Baoren Su,2011). The government should step up publicity to raise farmers’ household awareness and participation in policies. At the same time the government using the region’s tourism resources, to create a unique travel model, so as to elevate the farmers’ household out of poverty, and farmers’ household livelihood development to be sustainable (Yi xiao and Dongqi Luo, 2018). Therefore, the development rural tourism can enrich, innovate and optimize the structure of tourism products, adapt to the personalized tourism development, as well as help meet the diverse needs of tourists, open up the potential tourist market, and develop new incremental points of the tourism economy (XueMing Zhang, 2012).

This paper will analyze some outstanding problems facing the rural areas based on the actual situation, and put forward some feasible solutions from the government's point of view to promote the better development of rural cultural tourism industry under the background of Rural Revitalization Strategy in China.

## **2. Current Situation of Rural Tourism Development in Midwest Areas**

The core of rural tourism industry lies on the definition and development of culture. The tourism industry in this paper refers to the accompanying industries such as the tourism industry spots formed in the countryside centered on the major scenic spots, the characteristic accommodation and tour guides providing support for the cultural tourism industry, and the leisure and entertainment industries providing a good consumption environment for the cultural tourism industry. In recent years, due to the acceleration of the process of urban industrialization, a large area were subjected to environmental pollution, and the phenomenon of urban hollowing has become increasingly challenging. It has become a general trend that the population of big cities flows to the countryside during the holidays in daily time, not to mention the festival holidays. Because of the low level of development in rural areas, the environment of it isn’t affected and remains in a very good condition, which lays the foundation for the development of cultural tourism industry. At the same time, the state has now formulated many policies conducive to rural development. Urban counterpart support to promote the development of rural economy and other tertiary industries has been carried out in many places in China. The southeast coast and the eastern region are the new promising areas of China's economic development. Therefore, this paper mainly discusses the relatively backward rural areas in the central and western regions. Under such a vigorous Rural Revitalization strategy, the rural tourism industry in the central and western rural areas is changing rapidly, which is an important factor to promote the growth of local economic strength.

According to the latest statistics from the Ministry of agriculture, China, based on the implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy, the added value of the “Internet +” related industries accounted for 14% of the added value of agriculture; the rural tourism industry accounted for 8.9%; the contribution rate of new industries and new formats to the total output value of agricultural and rural society exceeded 20%. The increase of tourism industry output value brought about by the strategy of Rural Revitalization was visible.

From the main distribution areas of scenic spots in China, the central and western regions are the most popular tourist areas for many people in China. At present, after the author's experience and interviews in some developed rural areas of tourism in the central and Western regions, many tourists do not connect culture with tourism. First of all, the environment around major scenic spots has been increasingly affected negatively, resulting in local residents being disgusted with foreign tourists. Local scenic spots in rural areas are built for foreign tourists, but local villagers have not enjoyed the privilege of preferential prices, which leads to the lack of locality of cultural tourism industry, and gradually to formalization. Secondly, the emergence of characteristic accommodation and unprofessional “tour guides”, the unreasonable charge of accommodation, and the one-stop service of accommodation and “tour guides”, which are gradually coming into our concern, also need the attention and standardization of the government. They not only increase the employment rate, but also lead to the widening gap between the rich and the poor in the countryside.

### **3. Rural Revitalization Strategy Makes Rural Tourism Face New Development Opportunities**

As early as February 5, 2017, the central government issued public opinions advocating the full participation and benefit of farmers, and set up an idyllic complex integrating circular agriculture, creative agriculture and farming experience. The pilot demonstration was carried out through the channels of comprehensive agricultural development and transfer payment of comprehensive rural reform. In this year's Central Document No. 1, it is mentioned that vigorous efforts should be made to build new rural service industries, and the comprehensive development model of “agriculture + cultural tourism” has been taken as key agenda.

This model has more advantages than the general industrial support projects. This is also relative to the difficulties encountered in the implementation of many characteristic projects and industrial poverty alleviation projects in rural areas. The key to the development of the rural tourism industry is to improve people's cultural awareness and ideological quality, which is relatively easier for villagers to participate in the construction of a new industrial project. Moreover, foreign industries may not be as viable as local self-production industries. Rural areas have natural environmental advantages and ecological livable characteristics, which further promote the development of tourism industry. Since farmers are confined to the land for many years, this has led to a sense of resistance to the land itself, which is why the Rural Revitalization Strategy emphasizes innovative rural services. The

original intention of the cultural tourism industry is to protect the environment. On the premise of developing the local tourism resources, it integrates various factors of culture. This type of service industry relieves the pressure of farmers' work, transforms the way they work, and fundamentally changes the way of life in the countryside.

#### **4. Feasible Ways to Improve the Development of Rural Tourism Industry**

##### ***4.1 To Conform to the Reforms of Rural Supply-side Structure and Construct the Development Model of Rural Complex***

The pastoral complex will be a sustainable model to fully promote the development of rural industry. Through the comprehensive development model of “agriculture + culture and tourism + real estate”, the pastoral complex focuses on building a comprehensive rural industrial chain covering four levels: core industry, basic industry, supporting industry and derivative industry. In this way, we can innovate urban and rural development, form industrial change and bring about social development in a way of “development” that can allow enterprises to participate, top-level design with business model, combination of urban elements and rural areas, and multiparty co-construction, which will reshape the beautiful countryside and small towns in interior China.

##### ***4.2 Establish a Standardized Residential System and Implement Leisure Agriculture and Rural Tourism Projects***

Residence is a new force in the development of China's tourism industry in recent years. At present, there are nearly 100,000 different types of residential accommodation in China, and many of which are located in rural areas. The development of residential accommodation provides a new opportunity for the development of rural economy dominated by rural tourism. In the past, the development of rural tourism, due to the lack of good accommodation facilities, it was difficult for tourists to stay in the countryside for longer period, and at the same time, they will not leave much consumption in the countryside. The so-called rural tourism is basically based on sightseeing and low-level rural vacation. The rise of boutique accommodation has begun to change this situation. Residence can let city tourists really live in the countryside, and be able to integrate into the rural community, to experience the life of the countryside in depth. Document No. 1 policy in this year loosened the restrictions on rural cultural and tourism formats, such as residential accommodation, and vigorously promoted the development of various forms of agricultural and tourism projects. However, the government needs to regulate the rules of the development of the residential market, prevent the unreasonable charge of residential accommodation, and increase the villagers' unfair income.

#### ***4.3 Developing Cultural Tourism Industry with Specific Rural Characteristics***

Document No. 1 of 2018 further addresses the development of rural tourism projects, listing four tourism forms: forest and grassland tourism, River and Lake Wetland tourism, ice and snow sea sports, wildlife domestication and ornamentation. As the most compatible industry with “thriving industry and ecological livability”, rural cultural tourism industry is also the first industry to transform rural ecological resources into economic sources. Under the background of rural revitalization, it is urgent to take cultural tourism industry as the main industry of rural economic revitalization. We will steadily increase the proportion of cultural tourism economy in rural economy, inject new impetus into rural revitalization through the development of characteristic cultural tourism, realize economic and population diversion, let more urban tourists come in, and let more traditional and modern farmers stay.

#### ***4.4 Create a New Style of Rural Culture and Civilization and Improve the Quality of Villagers***

Rural revitalization is guaranteed by local culture and civilization. We must stick to both material and spiritual civilization, enhance the spiritual outlook of peasants, cultivate civilized local customs, good family customs and simple folk customs, and constantly improve the level of rural social civilization. First of all, we need to vigorously inherit and develop the excellent traditional culture in rural areas. Based on the rural civilization, drawing on the excellent achievements of urban civilization and foreign culture, and on the basis of protection and inheritance, innovative transformation and development are constantly endowed with the connotation of the times and rich forms of expression. Effectively protect the excellent farming cultural heritage, and promote the rational and appropriate use of the excellent farming cultural heritage. Deeply excavate the excellent ideological concepts, humanistic spirit and moral norms contained in farming culture, and give full play to its important role in cohering people's hearts, educating the masses and purifying people's customs. Secondly, we need to strengthen the construction of rural public culture. According to the requirements of standard, network, content and talent, we should improve the rural public cultural service system. We had better give full play to the radiation role of county-level public cultural institutions, promote the construction of comprehensive cultural service centers at the grass-roots level, achieve full coverage of public cultural services at the rural level, and improve service efficiency. In order to further promote cultural benefits to the people, public cultural resources should focus on rural areas and provide more and better rural public cultural products and services.

### **5. Conclusion**

Starting from the current situation of rural tourism development, this paper sums up the outstanding problems of it, and puts forward some measures to solve them.

The government should mainly carry out the reform based on the current level of rural development and the actual situation. Civilized tourism, the dissemination of rural culture, the combination of culture and tourism still has a long way to go. Rural tourism is the main force driving rural economic growth in the future. We should pay enough attention to it.

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