



Rural tourism-an accelerator to the coordinated development of urban and rural areas

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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism has a close connection with the joint development of urban and rural areas, which still contributes a lot to the "three issues" that concerned with rural areas---the production, the location and the population of agriculture. Therefore, there should be an interactive mechanism between urban and rural areas in the process of its development. Accordingly, the research on this problem is helpful to pave a new way for rural tourism, and will promote the coordinated development between urban and rural areas. To go into details, rural tourism should be developed on a full scale by virtue of reasonable disposition of every aspect, ranging from integrated planning and operation, reinforced construction of ecological environment, valuing its social and cultural impacts, to elaborating as connection between urban and rural areas development.

Key words: rural tourism; integrated urban-rural planning; jointed development of "three issues" in rural areas

INTRODUCTION

1. THE INTERPRETATION OF "RURAL TOURISM" AND INTEGRATED "URBAN-RURAL PLANNING

Domestic studies of rural tourism can be traced back to the late 1990s, and has reaped fruitful results after more than a decade of collection. The following are some notable views: Du Jiang and Xiang Ping explain that, rural tourism covers such activities that are based on the cultural landscape, ecological environment, production activities as well as traditional customs in rural areas, united with sightseeing, studying, participating, entertaining, shopping and spending vacation[1]. He Xiaorong holds that rural tourism, by virtue of all the attractive tourism resources in the rural region, involves the tourism consumption behaviors which aim at meeting various travel demands such as sightseeing, leisure, vacation, studying, shopping etc, including all these travel-demand-oriented activities and the phenomena and relationships created by it. [2] While Wang Xiuhong argues that rural tourism is a sort of travel, which occurs in rural regions, attracting tourists by countryside natural scenery or artificial scenery that is characterized with folk culture, agricultural culture, gregarious culture, and civilian residential housing culture. In conclusion, they tend to locate rural tourism in rural areas, lock up urban residents as its target consumers, focus its activities on the properties of countryside and the folk custom, and bring out conspicuously rural ecology and culture with high participation experience.

The integrated urban-rural planning refers to an overall plan that triggers off a radiative and driving effect in economy development from city to countryside, which results from industrial support and repayment to agriculture. By building a long-term interactive mechanism, which aims at promoting agriculture by industry, advancing countryside through city, the "three issues" that concerned rural area should be gradually solved. The purpose is to narrow the gap between urban and rural regions, solve the problem that concerned agriculture, rural areas and farmers by bringing the production elements in free circulation between urban and rural areas, benefiting the mass of farmers with social and economic development achievements so as to achieve the rational deployment of public resources.

2. THE COUPLING BETWEEN RURAL TOURISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF "THREE RURAL ISSUES"

The solution and development of "three rural issues" is the core part of urban-rural planning as well as its fundamental goal. As a new emerging economic form rooted in countryside, rural tourism is closely connected with the development of "three rural issues", which apparently forms a coupling relationship between them.

2.1 the effects of rural tourism on "three rural issues" development

(1) Rural tourism promotes the industrialization of agriculture and helps agricultural products locally consumed. First, the ecological agriculture and agriculture with distinctive features arising from rural tourism can enhance the characteristic of agricultural products and the brand identity, and help to establish the agricultural industrial chain which integrates agricultural products processing, storage, transportation and sales so as to promote agricultural industrialization and development. Second, rural tourism is devoted to accentuate the properties of countryside which turns out to be the chief appeal to the tourists, who are attracted to experience the original and natural life style in the countryside, to eat and live in the farmhouses, to taste and buy local specialties. All of these greatly reduce the intermediate links and the cost of the sales, thus the agricultural products can be locally consumed.

(2) Rural tourism is favorable to absorb the rural redundant manpower and increase farmers' earnings. First, the development of rural tourism provides a large number of employment opportunities in rural regions which helps to absorb the rural redundant labor force. As is well-known, tourism is a labor-intensive industry, which can create a lot of job opportunities with its huge "multiplier" effect. Second, the development of rural tourism has increased farmers' income. Urban residents who enjoy rural tourism activities can not do without basic tourist entertainment and other activities, which absorbs farmers to serve the tourists, and thus their income has been increased.

(3) Rural tourism precipitates the adjustment of rural industrial structure, improves rural infrastructure and environment. To begin with, the first industry, namely agriculture was the traditional mainstay of rural economy, but the development of rural tourism not only directly promotes the development of the first industry, but also accelerates the development of architecture and manufacture in second industry and service, insurance, transportation in tertiary industry, therefore, it precipitates the adjustment of industrial structure in rural area[4]. On the other hand, perfect infrastructure and good hygienic conditions is the premise and basis of rural tourism development. It is an inevitable task to improve rural hygienic conditions and create a beautiful ecological environment for visitors in order to attract them.

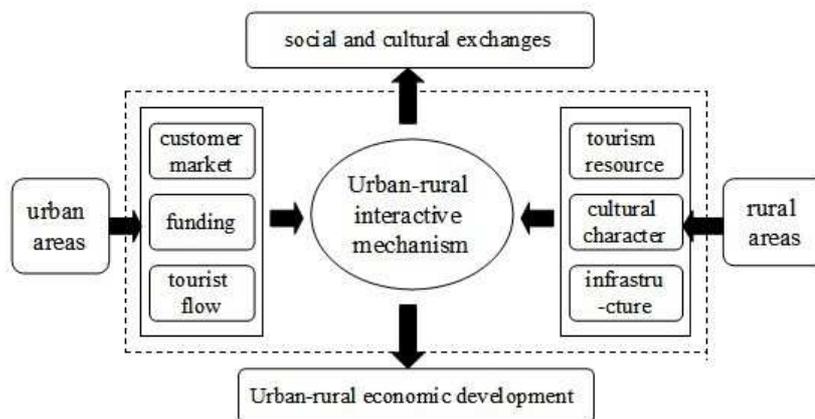
2.2 The impact of "three rural issues" on rural tourism

"Three rural issues" development will provide more opportunities for rural tourism. Agriculture, villages and farmers are the three elements that constitutes the principal part of rural tourism, and provides rural tourism with essential supplies. The farming culture, production and specialties with distinctive features that derived from agriculture, forms a sharp contrast with the urban residential life. Therefore, the programs that are involved in more participation and experiencing by tourists are hunted eagerly. The cultural scene, ecological landscape and folk activities in rural area incarnate the natural, simple, honest property of countryside, which as well has become the most essential elements of the rural tourism development. What's more, farmers transferred into human resources for the rural tourism development, who have the innate advantages as they know well and have a higher sense of pride about their hometown, which pushes them greatly to enrich their home town.

The "three rural issues" restricts the rural tourism development to a certain extent. Because it is the consequence of the sluggish development in rural area as a whole, particularly the unharmonious economic development. "Three rural issues" concerned problems such as agricultural industrialization, agricultural structure optimization, infrastructure perfection, hygienic conditions improvement, higher traffic accessibility, as well as the enhancement of farmers quality and their service consciousness, which to some extent lags behind and restricted rural tourism development and also increase the difficulties in its planning and exploitation.

3. URBAN-RURAL INTERACTIVE MECHANISM IN RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Cities and villages can not be separately planned in the process of rural tourism development, instead, the two sides should be taken into account as a whole and an interactive mechanism should be established between them. Actually, there is no denying of a down-to-earth significance in exploring such a mechanism, especially in speeding up the development of rural tourism, promoting urban-rural economic and social development and building a new socialist countryside. To illustrate it clearer, herewith the figure below:



It will be expounded in two aspects:

(1) Urban areas: In this interactive mechanism, city as a source of tourists gives impetus to the rural tourism development. First, city supplies the tourist market with customers. The target customers of rural tourism are mainly urban residents, who would like to experience a different life style far away from the bustling and flourishing, fast-paced life. The tranquility, leisure, peace, friendly-environment and friendly-ecology embodied in countryside life exactly fill the spiritual barrenness of urban residents. In addition, the increase of urban residents' income and leisure time allowed them more opportunities to enjoy the rural tourism. Second, urban areas development pours capital into the rural tourism. As a new economic growth engine and investment orientation, rural tourism has attracted a large number of investors from cities. Meanwhile, the introduction of new capital into rural tourism provides funding for its planning, infrastructure construction, comprehensive environmental improvement, its marketing and so on. Furthermore, the long-term development and constant innovation of rural tourism shall be guaranteed. Finally, urban areas create tourism flow into rural areas, which is a complex system composed mainly of tourist flow matching with tourism information flow, tourism material flow and tourism energy flow[5]. Or rather, urban areas equip rural tourism with a huge stream of people, who will train up to be management personnel or service personnel; an unlocked flow of materials, which opens up a service and marketing channel and production distribution; and an open flow of information which directs developers to follow up the market demand and enhance management level[6]. Therefore, the input of tourist flow provides a full range of favorable conditions for rural tourism development.

(2) Rural areas: On the other hand, rural areas, as the tourist destination, should play an active role in this interactive mechanism. First, rural areas provides urban tourist with diverse tourism resources. Rural tourism resources are different from other tourism resources, which posses obvious particularity and discrepancy. Its tourist attractions and tourism environment carrier lie in the original and traditional rural life and folk customs, so it is better than traditional tourism in terms of experiential participatory and inferior in terms of attractive sightseeing. Above all, to retain the image of rural landscape is the core of the rural tourism attraction[7]. Second, the cultural quality conveyed through countryside folks and their lives shall be emphasized in rural tourism. For this seems the concentrated reflection of rural residents' spiritual altitude and living conditions, and tends to become the most intuitive way for tourists to be affected by the image of the rural destination. Therefore the uniqueness, humanity, close community relationship and other cultural implications in rural areas has greatly highlit rural tourism. Urban residents not only enjoy the unique charm brought by the distinctive rural tourism resources, but their feelings also deepen by the cultural quality showed in rural tourism[8]. Finally, infrastructure is a premise for rural tourism development. The rural areas have been impressing urban tourists as unattractive because of its poor conditions, remoteness and inaccessibility. Hence, rural tourism planning is urge to ensure the consummate hydropower, transportation, communication, catering industry, accomodation and other infrastructure construction as the logistical support of rural tourism development, which is also a guarantee to attract and keep visitors.

In conclusion, rural tourism has to develop depending on its special tourism resources, unique humanity qualities and improved tourism infrastructures. While urban areas not only provide constant customers for rural tourism but fianancial support and tourism flow so as to run together with rural areas. Thereby, urban and rural areas form an effective interactive mechanism with interaction and mutual influence, which result in social-cultural exchange and joint development between urban and rural areas as a whole.

4. THE COUNTERMEASURES TO PROMOTE URBAN-RURAL DEVELOPMENT BY RURAL TOURISM

Rural tourism is gradually becoming an important way and effective solution to urban-rural development due to its

good economic driving effects and social benefits. With rural tourism becoming more mature, issues about how to make it better promote the fusion of social, economic, industrial development and coordination between urban and rural areas appear. This paper gives some reasonable countermeasures:

4.1 Overall planning and optimization of resource allocation in rural tourism

Rural tourism should be developed clinging to the principle of “planning in prior to development”, serve the goal of united development between urban-rural areas, and be guided by scientific development concepts. Firstly, under the principle of urban and rural harmonious development, planning should involve issues such as the land circulation, village layout, industry adjustment, personnel settlement, profit distribution mechanism, etc.. Secondly, it should be carried out under the reasonable planning and arrangement in space and time, namely, to integrate effectively advantageous resources between areas and schedule a developing plan in time. Finally, the government should properly exert its functions, by supporting in policies and finance, meanwhile coordinate and manage departments of agriculture, forestry, husbandry, culture and transportation by special project management.

4.2 Strengthen the ecological environment construction and set up a mode of sustainable development

Both rural tourism development and urban-rural planning are never allowed sacrificing the good ecological environment in rural areas. First of all, in the process of rural tourism development, we should give full consideration on the tourism bearing capacity and environmental capacity in rural tourism. It is a insurance to keep its development on a scientific scale and at a reasonable speed, avoid the destruction of rural environment and the waste of natural resources by blind development as well. Second, it is necessary to enhance the publication and education of ecological environmental protection, which should not be limited only within local residents, but also to rural tourists, so as to form a virtuous circle mechanism composed of protection consciousness of rural residents and active protection of tourists[9]. Finally, a mode of sustainable development should be established, which encourage to develop circular and ecological economy, especially to focus on developing ecological agriculture, and producing pollution-free green food in line with national safety standards to meet market demand.

4.3 Attach great importance to the social and cultural impact of rural tourism and promote spiritual civilization construction

Urban-rural united development does not follow an uniform requirements that denies of the remarkable feature and characteristics between areas, but a unified planning of urban-rural economic and social development in order to realize coordinated development. In fact, rural tourism development produces a series of social and cultural impacts that can not be ignored. The positive impacts mainly are reflected in improving the local farmers' cultural quality, promoting the development of rural compulsory education, expanding rural residents' horizons and reviving the folk culture and so on. On the other hand, rural tourism also brings about some negative effects, such as excessive commercialization and a shock against traditional culture. Therefore, more attention should be paid to these two sides of impacts so as to draw on advantages and avoid disadvantages[10]. What's more important, developers should make every effort to preserve the characteristics of countryside traditional cultural, advocate the construction of spiritual civilization, and give correct guidance as to foster a benign and healthy social conduct.

4.4 To bring industries of rural tourism into highly linkage and adjust industrial structure

Industries in urban and rural areas have been unconnected for a long time, actually, the second and third industries mainly assembled in urban areas, while the first industry mainly grouped in rural areas. Nevertheless, tourism industry, as a comprehensive industry, is closely related to industry, agriculture, manufacture, finance, insurance, medicine, communication security, environmental protection and other industries. Rural tourism is no exception. So rural tourism can take the lead and drive industries between urban and rural areas into linkage, which can promote the adjustment and optimization of rural industrial structure, boost harmonious development of the second and third industries in rural areas, and finally organically integrate industries between urban and rural areas.

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