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# Analysis on Development of Farmer Tourism Market in China

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**Abstract** With the rapid increase in farmers' income and the rapid development of tourism, the tourism demand of farmers is increasingly growing, but the development of tourism market for farmers has not been given much attention. This paper summarized the overall situation of development of the farmer tourism, analyzed the consumption characteristics and supply characteristics of the farmer tourism in depth, and discussed the development potential of the farmer tourism. On the basis of discussion and analysis, it came up with recommendations including attaching greater importance to the farmer tourism market, developing marketable products, changing the traditional concept of consumption and enhancing tourism promotion activities, in the hope that both the government and enterprises pay more attention to the farmer tourism market.

**Key words** Farmer tourism, Market development, Consumption, Supply

## 1 Introduction

With the implementation of the strategy of building a moderately prosperous society in all aspects, how to properly solve the issues concerning agriculture, farmers and rural areas has attracted a wide attention of the whole society. In recent years, prosperous development of farmer tourism provides a new path for solving these three rural issues. There are nearly 1.4 billion people in China, and more than 800 million of them are farmers, therefore, farmer tourism is a huge market, the development of farmer tourism market is not only an opportunity for the tourism enterprises, but also an important measure for stimulating the development of China's tourism economy.

As early as in 2004, the National Tourism Administration determined the "tourism year of the masses" as tourism theme of that year, and tourism has become a main way of leisure. With the development of rural economy and the improvement in farmers' living standard, farmers' desire to pursue high quality life becomes more and more intense, and farmer tourism becomes a part of farmers' enjoyment of modern cultural life.

Nowadays, farmers have grown into an independent consumer group at the domestic tourism market. Especially in the eastern developed areas of China, farmers have become an important part of the domestic tourism market. However, the farmer tourism in China still remains at the early stage of development, it lacks definite positioning, and there are many problems. Therefore, effectively satisfying the tourism demands of numerous farmers will determine the future of China's tourism development.

## 2 Analysis on current situations of development of farmer tourism

### 2.1 Constant growth in number but low in speed According

to the statistics of China's tourism, the number of rural residents having a domestic travel is constantly increasing. From Table 1 and Fig. 1, in recent 10 years, both the total number of farmers having a travel and the number of people having a domestic travel continued growing, but the total number of farmers having a travel grew slowly (only growing by 31.26%), while the number of people having a domestic travel grew rapidly with the growth rate up to 65.15%. Although the total number of farmers having a travel increased, the growth rate was much lower than that of the domestic travel, leading to gradual decline of the percentage of farmers having a travel to the number of people having a domestic travel.

### 2.2 Consumption characteristics of farmer tourism

**2.2.1 Low travel frequency and low consumption level.** Since the rural population of China is large, the total consumption volume is large, but due to economic and other restrictions, the per capita tourism consumption of farmers is still very low. The consumption is mainly the travel expenses, other non-basic consumption expenditure (such as travel shopping, entertainment, and communications) is relatively small, and the expenses in guide services and other labor expenses are too small, the travel frequency of farmers is not only far lower than that of urban residents, but also lower than the national average level.

**2.2.2 Tourism consumption concept is relatively traditional.** The consumption behavior of farmers well reflects the traditional thrifty consumption concept of China for thousands of years and the conservative consumption pattern of living within one's income. Chinese farmers are closely connected with Chinese traditional culture. Their satisfaction with the existing state and backward consumption concept, to a certain extent, will affect the farmers' ability to accept tourism consumption.

**2.2.3 The demand for tourism products is relatively simple.** Because of the difference in living habits, cultural level and life concept, modern urban civilization, which contrasts with their real life environment, has a strong appeal to farmers living in the countryside for a long time. Therefore, the farmer travelers are inclined

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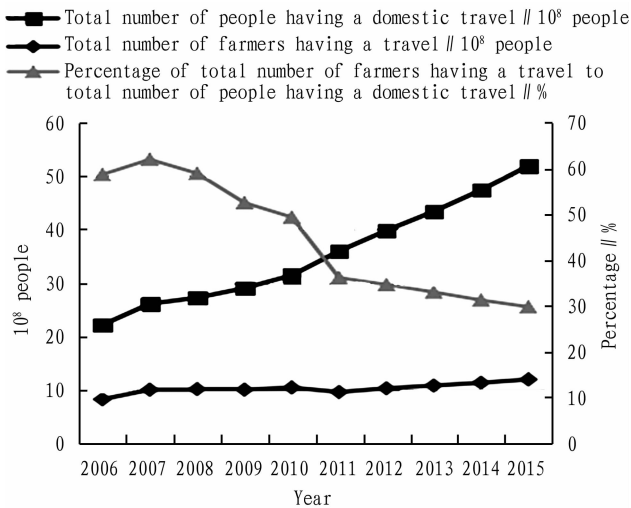
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to going to cities with a large population density and developed commerce (for example, Beijing), the artificial scenic spots (such as amusement park), and famous traditional scenic spots (such as the Palace Museum, the Great Wall, *etc.*). Different

from increasingly diversified tourism demands of urban residents, farmer tourism is still mainly sightseeing. Farmers are fond of big cities with developed tourism and commerce, and their demands are relatively simple.

**Table 1 Comparison between the number of farmers having a travel and the number of people having a domestic travel in 2006 – 2015**

|  | Year | 2006  | 2007  | 2008  | 2009  | 2010  | 2011  | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  | 2015  |
|--|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Number and percentage  |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Total number of farmers having a travel//10 <sup>8</sup> people  |      | 8.18  | 9.98  | 10.09 | 9.99  | 10.38 | 9.54  | 10.24 | 10.76 | 11.28 | 11.90 |
| Total number of people having a domestic travel//10 <sup>8</sup> people  |      | 13.94 | 16.10 | 17.12 | 19.02 | 21.03 | 26.41 | 29.57 | 32.62 | 36.11 | 40.00 |
| Percentage of total number of farmers having a travel to<br>total number of people having a domestic travel//% |      | 58.68 | 61.99 | 58.94 | 52.52 | 49.36 | 36.12 | 34.62 | 32.98 | 31.23 | 29.75 |



**Fig. 1 Comparison between the number of farmers having a travel and the number of people having a domestic travel in 2006 – 2015**

**2.2.4** Tourism consumption of farmers emphasizes economical and practical benefits. As to the means of transportation, farmer travelers tend to choose cheap railway and highway; in terms of accommodation, they like choosing budget hotels, hostels or family hotels, and some farmers choose to stay with friends or relatives; in catering services, they prefer clean and healthy diet with local characteristics and care little about nutrition and fashion diet. Generally, farmer travelers care more about economical and practical benefits, but care little about all-round experience of food, accommodation, recreation, and shopping.

### 2.3 Characteristics of supply of farmer tourism

**2.3.1** No adequate attention to the farmer tourism market. Government and departments at all levels care little about farmer tourism and invest little in farmer tourism. Besides, there is no effective management and supervision mechanism. Travel agencies also care little about the farmer tourism market. They believed that the early investment in farmer tourism is enormous, while farmers' tourism consumption ability is weak, so the profit may be low. The profit model determines that it is difficult for travel agencies to invest in rural market and provide better services for farmer tourism. At present, the tourism supply is not sufficient in the rural areas and few travel agencies extend the business to the township areas.

**2.3.2** No sufficient network channels for promoting farmer tourism. At present, China's tourism propaganda and service objects are mainly urban residents, but neglect the rural market and farmers. Most travel agencies do not have sales network in counties and towns. As a result, farmers getting better off earlier are hard to enjoy "one-stop" services of modern tourism. Travel agencies carry out little propaganda in rural areas, and the form is simple, mainly distributing booklets, so the coverage is small and the influence is low. Farmers know the tourism information mainly through word of mouth of relatives and friends.

**2.3.3** No suitable tourism products for farmers. Tourism industry generally cares about inbound travel and outbound travel with high profit, and vigorously promotes the holiday travel, ecological travel, business travel, and study travel, and products it introduce are mainly made to order for urban residents. Low consumption level of farmer tourism and imbalance of consumption structure make the suppliers such as travel agencies, restaurants and scenic spots feel unprofitable from the farmer tourism market. Without interest driving, they naturally will not provide characteristic products pertinent to the farmer tourism market. Therefore, there are few traveling routes developed towards farmers, and it lacks tourism products suitable for farmers.

## 3 Analysis on development potential of the farmer tourism market

**3.1 Rural economic development and increase in farmers' income** With the deepening of the reform and opening up, China is strengthening works in rural areas and attaches great importance to issues concerning agriculture, farmers, and rural areas. Besides, with rapid development of rural economy, farmers' income is increasing significantly and their disposable income is increasing, which provides a solid economic foundation for farmers to travel. In addition, with the rapid development of urbanization in China, a large portion of farmers go out to work, which enriches their source of income. In the concept of life, it is also better integrated with cities. This part of farmers has become the main force of tourism and plays a good demonstration and leading role.

**3.2 High demand of farmer tourism** The Department of Social Development of State Planning Committee made a survey in rural areas; how to spend money after getting rich, the travel ranks the second. This shows that the demand of rural residents for travel

becomes gradually higher with the increase in the income. The increasing number of rural residents having a travel also gives a good interpretation of the survey results. In the process of interviews with some farmers, we also heard following answer: "Some people feel that our farmers have low cultural level and little knowledge, but now, we live a good life and we hope to see the outside world, and let the urban residents realize that we live not worse than them". Once the tourism demand of farmers is stimulated, there will be unlimited business opportunities.

**3.3 Improvement in rural traffic and communication infrastructure** Traffic bottleneck is an important factor restricting domestic tourism of China, especially in the vast rural areas, the poor traffic situation greatly restricts the travel of farmers. With the rapid development of China's economy and the acceleration of infrastructure construction, the problem of rural traffic is gradually resolved, and the travel radius of farmers continues to expand. The improvement of traffic and communication conditions not only shortens the time and space distance between tourist source area and destination, but also broadens the channel of information acquisition of farmers and improves farmers' understanding and selection of tourism products.

## 4 Recommendations for developing the farmer tourism market

**4.1 Raising the attention to the farmer tourism market** The tourism enterprises to all levels of government departments should raise awareness of the development of farmer tourism market, take it is an important part of building a moderately prosperous society in all aspects, so that the development of farmer tourism becomes a new base and new growth point for promoting the development of tourism industry. Tourism enterprises should change the previous practice of neglecting domestic tourism needs and being tired of making little profit, and should correctly recognize the status of farmer tourism market, take the development of the farmer tourism market as an effective approach for expanding the tourism industry and building brands, and actively guiding farmers to change the concept of consumption, and raising the awareness of farmer to travel.

**4.2 Developing marketable tourism products** Apart from relying on scenic spots in the province, big cities, and famous scenic spots, the development of farmer tourism should also consider that farmers' tourism demands have been changed from basic level to higher level. Therefore, development of tourism products must integrate with new recreational concept and increase innovation elements, and develop suitable products on the basis of improving the traditional tourism products. For example, it is recommended to develop diversified tourism products, such as travel for learning experience of new countryside construction, agri-entertainment tour, and warm family holiday tour, folk custom tour, romantic honeymoon tour, and cultural experience tour.

**4.3 Changing the traditional consumption concept of farmers** Government departments should strive to improve the rural social security system, to improve the rural minimal social security standard, and reduce the worry of tourism consumption of farmers. It is recommended to establish a rural social security system, including medical care, endowment, employment, education, to strengthen farmers' sense of safety. Besides, it is recommended to establish and improve the rural insurance service network, strengthen the propaganda of social insurance, and change the situation of farmers' prevention of risks through increasing savings. In addition, it is recommended to increase the investment in rural education, improve the cultural quality of farmers, narrow the income gap of farmers, and change the traditional concept of consumption of farmers.

## 4.4 Strengthening the propaganda and promotion of tourism

Considering the imbalance of rural economic development level in China, the development of rural tourism market should not be carried out blindly, and the tourism propaganda should not be carried out comprehensively. Firstly, it is recommended to propagate and promote the tourism in suburban rural areas, select targeted areas and people, so as to gradually drive the tourism market of other rural areas. Secondly, different rural areas should take different propaganda and promotion measures. For example, in suburban rural areas, farmers are rich and have living conditions close to urban residents. Thus, it is feasible to take the same propaganda and promotion measures as that for urban residents, such as radio and television, newspapers and magazines, network and other modern media. However, but for most rural areas, it is recommended to conduct propaganda and promotion by advertising. In addition, in the busy season of tourism, it is recommended to take regular or irregular rural tourism promotion activities.

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