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Development and Research on Rural Regional Characteristic Sports Tourism Industry: A Case Study of Southern Jiangxi Province

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Abstract With the hope of providing basis for sound development of rural sports tourism industry in economic less-developed region and the establishment of macro industry policy, this paper demonstrated the selection of development way, space frame and product system of rural sports tourism industry in southern Jiangxi Province by consulting document literature and conducting field research and based on the analysis of social background for the rise of rural sports tourism.

Key words Southern Jiangxi Province, Rural area, Sports tourism industry, Development model

1 Introduction

Rural sports tourism industry provides tourists for all kinds of services including productive work, sports and fitness, entertainment and folk culture communication in rural area in the form of rural sports tourism commodity and by developing rural ecological resources relying on rural collective economy, enabling tourists to obtain more comfortable and unique experience from it^[1]. In 2010, the *Guidance of the State Council about Accelerating the Development of Tourism Industry* clearly proposed to develop "sports tourism" vigorously, and it also provided strategic support and policy guarantee for further development of rural sports tourism^[2].

The Southern part of Jiangxi Province has long enjoyed the fame as Song Dynasty Town in south of Yangtze River, cradle of the Hakkas and former red capital; but due to historic and geographic reasons, it remained in less-developed situation. And there were 7.376 million of rural population in the city by the end of 2012, taking 79.6% of the total. Developing rural special sports tourism by utilizing rural special regional culture and geographic landform in southern Jiangxi Province is an effective way to promote economic and social development. This paper demonstrates the selection of development way, space frame and product system of rural sports tourism industry in southern Jiangxi Province by analyzing the social background for the development and rise of rural sports tourism, so as to provide reference for sound development of rural sports tourism industry in Southern Jiangxi Province.

2 Social background and advantages for the development and rise of rural sports tourism industry in Southern Jiangxi Province

2.1 National and local government policy and guidance provide system guarantee for the development of rural sports tourism industry in Southern Jiangxi Province With the development of social economy, the increase of leisure time and public health consciousness and under the influence of the factors such as the improvement of rural transportation and the development of tourism resources, the rural sports tourism industry is rising gradually. In order to promote the development of rural sports tourism, National Tourism Administration and General Administration of Sport have launched some activities, such as "2004 living tourism for the masses in China" and "2006 China rural tourism", to expand the influence and scale of rural tourism. Since 2006, Ganzhou City government has issued many regulations including *"The Eleventh Five – year" Guidelines for Action in Development of Ganzhou Tourism Industry, Work Suggestions on Cultivating Tourism Pillar Industry in Ganzhou City and Management Way for Tourism Resources Development and Tourism Facility Construction in Ganzhou City*, and in March 2013, Ganzhou has been approved to set up "national tourism poverty alleviation experimental site. Therefore, such a series of policies and guidelines provide system guarantee for the development of rural sports tourism industry in Southern Jiangxi Province.

2.2 Good momentum of development of tourism industry provides a strong support platform for the development of rural sports tourism industry in Southern Jiangxi Province

Southern Jiangxi Province has a rather late start in rural sports tourism but a strong development momentum, in which the rural tourism products taking "going hiking in suburbs, going on holidays, Hakka culture, red education and farming engagement" as the main lines have been established, and 5 national industrial and agricultural tourism demonstration sites and 25 province-level rural tourism demonstration sites have been set up successfully. In

2013, there were 7 rural tourism sites in the region being approved as the first batch of 4A level rural tourism sites in the province, preliminarily forming rural tourism product system^[3]. On this basis, it is completely necessary and practicable to expand sports and entertainment activities in rural area relying on multifarious geomorphic features such as gorge, hills, rivers and forest land in Southern Jiangxi Province as well as regional resources such as red culture and Hakka culture, and these features and resources are also strong supporting platform for the development of rural sports tourism industry in Southern Jiangxi Province.

2.3 Various regional culture and folk custom are special human resources for the development of rural sports tourism industry in Southern Jiangxi Province Known as the famous old revolutionary area, the subject of central revolutionary base area during the agrarian revolutionary war period and the core for national soviet campaign, Southern Jiangxi Province is the important forming place for Mao Zedong thought and the birthplace of soviet area spirit^[4]. Amid the booming of national red tourism, Southern Jiangxi Province is also using this culture resource to create high-quality red tourism actively, develop local economy and promote excellent culture. Also, Southern Jiangxi Province is the important gathering place of the ancient Hakka and the biggest settlement of today's Hakka which occupies over 95% of the total population of the local. And during the long-term multiplying, the Hakka folk culture with unique features has been formed in this region. Known as "Song Dynasty Town in south of Yangtze River", Southern Jiangxi Province also has time-honored Song Dynasty Town culture, in which 41 minority nationalities such as She, Mongol and Hui nationalities have lived and full-bodied folk culture has been accumulated by unique natural environment and ancient life style. Therefore, it has some advantages of special regional culture and human resources to develop rural sports tourism in Southern Jiangxi Province which is mixed with red culture, Hakka culture, Song Dynasty Town culture and folk custom culture.

3 Development of rural sports tourism industry with regional features in Southern Jiangxi Province

3.1 Selection of regional development way for rural sports tourism industry in Southern Jiangxi Province Relying on theoretical basis including "balanced development", "gradient advancement" and "growth pole", there are three selectable ways available for the regional development of sports tourism industry, *i. e.*, balanced development way, imbalanced development and imbalanced coordinated development way^[5]. And their specific connotations are as follows: (1) the balanced development way requires tourism industry to develop synchronously within the region and implement standard management, while the disadvantage of this way lies in the difficulty to create competitive environment, thus causing slow response to the demand of tourism market and tourism products having no features. (2) Imbalanced development way takes highlighting a key point as the guiding thought and conducts sequential development for tourism products, but it is easy to

quickly widen the gap between tourism industries in different areas, causing that only individual area has strong development momentum while most of them are in a backward state. (3) In imbalanced coordinated development way, the government will make overall plans and take all factors into consideration for backward regions of development and give play to cross-regional complementarities and overall advantages to form competition resultant force and reduce the gap between regions while taking full advantage of resource advantages and features of tourism industry in different regions, thus taking the sustainable development path.

According to the above analysis, it can be seen that the essence of imbalanced coordinated development way in rural sports tourism industry is tilting towards the levels such as system, capital integration and human resources allocation moderately, paying attention to cross-regional coordination and development and meeting the demand for open development of sports tourism industry. By taking overall considerations on some subjective and objective factors such as resource distribution of rural sports tourism in Southern Jiangxi Province, current development situation of Southern Jiangxi Province tourism industry, it is thought that imbalanced coordinated development way has a comparative advantage in the development of rural sports tourism industry in Southern Jiangxi Province.

3.2 Timing selection and space frame for regional development of rural sports tourism industry in Southern Jiangxi Province

Due to the scarcity of resources and endowment differences of resources in different regions, the time sequence for development of sports tourism industry in different regions is defined^[5]. To define the development time sequence of regional sports tourism industry, not only should the social and economic development environment be considered, but also the agglomeration and diffusion of regional industry. According to industry development characteristics and the selection of imbalanced coordinated development way for rural sports tourism and taking overall consideration in current situation of characteristic tourism in Southern Jiangxi Province and distribution feature of rural sports tourism resources, it is thought that the development for current rural sports tourism industry in Southern Jiangxi Province can be divided into the following four time sequence stages and regional plates (Table 1).

3.3 Rural sports tourism product system with regional features in Southern Jiangxi Province According to space frame of rural sports tourism industry with regional features in Southern Jiangxi Province, the following four rural sports tourism product systems can be the focus to be established:

First is "cradle of the People's Republic series" rural sports tourism product; which highlights the historic position as the cradle of the People's Republic, former red capital and core of former Central Soviet Area, gives play to the main theme of red culture and develops new rural red sports tourism products, such as experience tourism including Yudu Experience Park of the First Crossing of Long March and Retrace Long March Road.

Second is "cradle of Hakka series" rural sports tourism product; which excavates sports culture contained in folk activities such as festival, religion and sacrifice of Hakka ethnic group by taking the exhibition of Hakka culture as the main line, to meet tourists' double demands on pursuit of truth and seeking difference as well as beauty appreciation and self-entertainment. For example, the performance of "Nine lions worship elephant", held in rural area of Yingqian region in Shangyou County from the second day of the first lunar calendar month to Lantern Festival, attracts tens of thousands of tourists from the surrounding provinces and cities to participate in; and for another example, Meiguan Ancient Post Road with about 3 km long in Dayu County, composed mainly of scenic spots and historic sites, natural landscape and human landscape, has been built as nostalgia and leisure rural sports tourism product which integrates with entertainment, fitness and sightseeing.

Third is "beautiful waters and mysterious hills series" rural sports tourism product; which takes full advantage of good natural ecological environment in Southern Jiangxi Province to show the

landscape scenery adequately, and this is also the direction for the development of rural sports tourism. Southern Jiangxi Province should focus on creating Shangyou Doushui Lake, Anyuan Sanbai Mountain, Chongyi Yangling National Forest Park as well as Huichang Ruohan Rock and Shicheng Jiuzhai Hot Spring, to cultivate experience, sightseeing and leisure rural sports tourism market.

The fourth is "world's orange hometown series" rural sports tourism product; mainly developing "three rural experience" rural sports tourism products, i. e. , rural life experience, farmer role experience and rural economy experience. As the world-famous main production area for navel orange, Southern Jiangxi Province can utilize orange resources to develop experience tourism such as watching, picking and tasting oranges, making an attractive way to urban residents. Therefore, conditional villages can plan several navel orange sightseeing experience areas and exploit the resources such as ancient village and town, idyllic scenery, folk custom and leisure agriculture on this basis, so as to develop experience and leisure type rural sports tourism^[4].

Table 1 Basic situation for regional development time sequence and space frame of rural sports tourism industry in Southern Jiangxi Province

| Time sequence stage | Regional plates | Areas included | Features of rural sports tourism resources | Location characteristics |
|---------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Stage I | Red culture Sports tourism plate | Mainly refer to eastern part of Southern Jiangxi Province, including rural areas of original central Soviet base core areas such as Ruijin, Xingguo, Yudou and Xunwu | Relying on human tourism resources and customer source of red culture, develop experience and sightseeing type rural sports tourism | Prominent culture and market locations, and better tourism location |
| Stage II | Hakka culture Sports tourism plate | Mainly refer to southern part of Southern Jiangxi Province, including rural Hakka settlement areas such as Longnan, Qunnan and Dingnan | Relying on human tourism resources of Hakka culture, develop experience and sightseeing type rural sports tourism with folk custom features | Prominent culture location, and general tourism and economy locations |
| Stage III | Ecological vacation Sports tourism plate | Mainly refer to western part of Southern Jiangxi Province, including rural areas with rich natural resources such as Shangyou, Chongyi, Dayu and Anding | Relying on natural resources such as ecological environment, beautiful waters and mysterious hills, develop experience type rural sports tourism such as leisure and fitness | Better market location and poorer geographic location |
| Stage IV | Song Dynasty Town culture Sports tourism plate | Mainly refer to counties and districts surrounding Ganzhou, including rural areas reserving historic sites and relics of Song Dynasty such as Nankang, Gan County, Shangyou and Xinfeng | Relying on human tourism resources of Song Dynasty Town culture, develop sightseeing and visit type rural sports tourism with regional features | Prominent culture location, and general market location |

4 Selection of development math for rural sports tourism industry with regional features in Southern Jiangxi Province

4.1 Establishing sound policy and law system of rural sports tourism with the help of market-oriented approach The ultimate goal for developing rural sports tourism project is to meet tourists' demand and make tourism products be selected and consumed by tourism consumers, thus gaining economic benefits and social benefits. Therefore, rural sports tourism must also conduct sufficient argument on product positioning, development mode, supporting facilities and fund investment at the beginning of development with the help of market-oriented approach. According to current development situation of rural sports tourism in Southern Jiangxi Province, the special rural sports tourism of Southern Jian-

gxi Province should be promoted to tourists coming to Jiangxi Province, and the potential for second trip of tourist group should be cultivated. The government should provide necessary policy and fund support for the development of rural sports tourism resources in Southern Jiangxi Province, in particular, as to the reality of imperfect rural sports tourism law and policies, it should make further innovation in rural sports tourism management system, resource development mode and benefit distribution system and promote rapid and sound marketization, socialization and industrialization development of rural sports tourism in Southern Jiangxi Province.

4.2 Creating featured brand product of rural sports tourism based on resources On the basis of following market-oriented principle, rural sports tourism should also exploit tourism products

with regional features starting from existing resources based on resources constantly, to meet tourists' personality psychological needs such as "novelty, curiosity and particularity". And the rural areas of Southern Jiangxi Province should take full advantage of natural resources and human resources, highlight ecological, folk custom and education features to realize the connection of "red", "ancient" and "green" culture and create rural sports tourism products with regional features of Southern Jiangxi Province.

4.3 Improving soft power of rural sports tourism by taking talent cultivation as foundation Having congregated talents and stable talent reserve are critical for the stable development of sports tourism^[6]. As an emerging industry, rural sports tourism is in urgent need of a batch of professional talents who know sports professional knowledge and have tourism, economy and management subject background. Taking tour guide as example, in addition to have professional quality of general tour guide, the rural sports tourism guide should also master and be able to conduct all kinds of outdoor activities, have professional qualification of water life saving, outdoor sports guideline and the first aid, so as to ensure personal safety of tourists in the process of sports tourism^[7]. However, rural sports tour guides are mainly composed of general tour guides currently who are lack of professional sports knowledge. In addition to the tour guide, there is also a shortage of specialized talents in Southern Jiangxi Province rural sports tourism, including marketing personnel, management personnel, researchers and inheritors of folk sports project, influencing the rapid development of rural sports tourism. Therefore, the government, relevant departments and industries should strengthen the cooperation with colleges, professional schools and institute of physical education located in Southern Jiangxi Province, cultivate relevant personnel for rural sports tourism and provide high quality human resources support for the promotion of rural sports tourism.

4.4 Bringing connected effect of rural sports tourism into play by taking regional cooperation as shortcut Based on the particularity and cross-regional nature of its market demand, sports tourism resources determine that the development of sports tourism must take the path of regional cooperation^[8]. To achieve big development of regional sports tourism in Southern Jiangxi Province, it is required to explore and establish collaboration mechanism and expand multi-level, multi-form and multi-field

collaboration. Firstly, it is recommended to develop the six elements involved in tourism (restaurant, accommodation, transportation, travelling, purchases and entertainment) in overall, strengthen the relationship of sports tourism with other industries. Secondly, it is required to rely on natural resources and human resources, take current well-developed red tourism as guide and conduct joint development of Hakka culture tour, landscape sight-seeing tour and leisure vacation tour to develop rural sports tourism in Southern Jiangxi Province region, so as to improve the overall power of rural sports tourism in Southern Jiangxi Province region. Thirdly, it is proposed to strengthen cross-regional joint cooperation, make use of location advantages of Southern Jiangxi Province that is located in the border of Hunan, Guangdong, Fujian and Jiangxi, conduct joint cooperation by the methods of joint development of cross-regional sports tourism route, co-marketing of tourism products and overall planning of regional sports tourism and bring connected effect of rural sports tourism into play, thus maximizing the benefits of rural sports tourism resources.

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