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Development Path for Rural Tourism of Henan Province from the Perspective of Innovation

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Abstract According to innovation theory and research on innovation of rural tourism development, innovation theory is of great guiding significance for rural tourism development of Henan Province. At present, rural tourism development in Henan Province has made outstanding achievements, but there are still problems: innovation concept of rural tourism is not scientific; product lacks consolidation, industrial chain is not perfect, and public service level of tourism is relatively low. In order to realize optimization and upgrade of rural tourism in Henan Province, it is recommended to make innovation of development path and take development paths such as innovation of development concept, product innovation, industrial structure innovation of rural tourism, and public service innovation for rural tourism.

Key words Innovation theory, Rural tourism, Henan Province

1 Introduction

In recent years, driven by reform and opening-up and consumption, rural tourism realized considerable growth in both the volume and size. According to *Report on Tourism Investment of China in 2014*, the number of rural tourism reception reached 1.2 billion tourists in 2014, accounting for 1/3 of total domestic tourism reception. Henan Province is a large traditional agricultural province. There are 38902 units of tourism resources in Henan Province, and 70% of these are in rural areas. In Henan Province, there are 1863 towns, near 50000 villages, and rural tourist resources are abundant^[1]. To boost development of rural tourism, Henan Province Tourism Administration issued *Opinions on Accelerating Development of Rural Tourism* in 2013, to realize annual tourism income up to 137 billion yuan in 2020 and direct employment people up to 1.1 million, build Henan Province into an important rural tourist destination of the whole country. In recent years, Henan province has made outstanding achievements in rural tourism, but there are still problems in rural tourism development, tourist product design, tourist environment protection, and infrastructure construction. In the new period, rural tourism should get rid of traditional rigid model that pursues only quantity and size, and change to enhancing tourist product quality, improving tourist experience, and increasing service efficiency. These require innovation in development concept, product design, industrial development, and public services. Through these, it is expected to realize sustainable development of rural tourism.

2 Innovation theory and innovation researches of rural tourism development

In 1912, Austrian economist Joseph Alois Schumpeter firstly put forward the innovation theory in his *Theory of Economic Development*. According to Schumpeter, innovation is determined by es-

sence of economic development, and the growth brought by population and capital is not equal to development. The essence of development consists in the introduction of innovations into the system of production. The concept of 'new combination' is often associated with Schumpeter's work and with his approach to economic development. This concept covers the following five cases: introduction of a new good; introduction of a new method of production, opening of a new market, conquest of a new source of supply or raw materials, carrying out of the new organization of any industry^[2]. Schumpeter also pointed out entrepreneur is the intellectual foundation promoting innovation. China started researches of innovation theory later. In 1991, the Commercial Press published the Chinese version of *The Theory of Economic Development* and stated in the preface that the theory of innovation is the core of Schumpeter's theory of economic development. In 2005, *Opinions of the Central Committee and State Council on Formulating the Outline of the 11th Five-year Guidelines* set forth comprehensively implementing the outlook on scientific development and improving independent innovation ability. From then on, researches on theory of innovation are rapidly increasing, and there are new understandings of importance of innovation. According to inquiry results in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), articles about tourism innovation firstly appeared in 2000. Gong Zhen stated that the essence of innovation is constantly upgrading tourist products and changing limited life of tourist resources to limitless life cycle^[3]. Bao Gongmin believed that tourism innovation is a decisive factor for tourism growth and development of tourism operating enterprises and regions^[4]. Yang Ying and Zhuang Delin studied construction and elements of tourism innovation system and considered tourism innovation involves three levels, enterprise, network, and system. Enterprise is the fundamental and core unit of innovation activity, network provides element flowing path for cooperative innovation, and system concerns macro environment, such as external economic, cultural and legal environment^[5]. Song Huilin and Song Haiyan summarized domestic and foreign

tourism innovation achievements in recent 20 years by literature review method and concluded five basic types of tourism innovation: product / service innovation, market innovation, management innovation, process innovation, and system innovation, and stated that tourism innovation conforms to trend of modern tourism development and has outstanding realistic significance. Tourism innovation is an inevitable path for solving many challenges faced in the process of tourism modernization^[6]. As for innovation of rural tourism, Zhu Dan and Yuan Li advocated integration of agriculture and tourism in creative field, to promote deep development of rural tourism^[7]. Sun Meihong studied innovation strategies of China's rural tourism development and pointed out government should strengthen supervision over environmental pollution, develop diversified tourist products, attach great importance to application of marketing strategies, and cultivate rural tourism talents in many ways^[8]. Chen Xuejun established a rural tourism innovation path model from product innovation, operation innovation, market innovation, supply chain innovation, and organization innovation^[9].

From the above research achievements, we are known that academic circle of tourism has formed profound understanding of rural tourism development and also came up with specific strategies and methods for innovation of rural tourism development. However, tourism is different from traditional manufacturing industry and other service industries. As an essential part of tourism, rural tourism should be developed according to its characteristics from innovation concepts, micro level of tourist products, meso-level of rural tourism, and macro level of government management. In normal trend of tourist life and diversification of tourist demands, new tourist demands are constantly appearing. Rural tourism of Henan Province is already unable to fully satisfy diversified and individualized demands of tourists. In the historical opportunity of building beautiful countryside and central plain economic zone, it is required to make innovation of rural tourism and bring into play important role of rural tourism in building modern agriculture and promoting urbanization.

3 Current situation of rural tourism development in Henan Province

3.1 Constant increase of investment scale, tourism income and farmers' income of rural tourism In 2012, Henan Province invested about 8.711 billion yuan in rural tourism, cultivated 51 characteristic tourist villages, developed 12784 farm houses, and provided jobs for 514000 farmers. In 2013, Henan Province received rural tourists about 71.3233 million, growing 13.5% compared with the same period in the previous year, creating income of 34.028 billion yuan, growing 29.9% compared with the same period in the previous year. Taking Luanchuan County of Luoyang City as an example, it energetically develops rural tourism with building "Panoramic Luanchuan" as basic concept. Through deeply launching "clean house and beautiful countryside" event, it invested a total of 1.53 billion yuan, and greatly improved rural

production and living environment. In Chongdu Village, reputed as the first village of rural hotel, the per capita income of villagers was lower than 400 yuan in 2000. Now, relying on Chongdu Ditch Scenic Spot, about 90% villagers are engaged in rural tourism and the per capita income reached 30000 yuan. In 2014, Luanchuan County developed 132 new hotels, and increased more than 6000 beds, received more than 9.51 million tourists, and realized total tourist income up to 5.07 billion yuan.

3.2 Project of enriching a hundred villages and 10000 households through tourism

In February, 2010, Henan Province launched the project of enriching a hundred villages and 10000 households through tourism, supporting 100 characteristic tourist villages and 10000 farmer households to carry out rural tourism, which provides 100000 jobs for farmers. Since the implementation of the project of enriching a hundred villages and 10000 households through tourism, it has obtained precious experience in rural tourism plan, distribution, and management, and rapidly promoted development of rural tourism through increasing input in infrastructure construction of rural tourism, training of rural tourism operating personnel, and formulating Service Quality Grading and Management Regulation of Rural Tourism in Henan Province, and demonstrating rural travelling routes of 100 villages and 10000 households. Lankao County of Kaifeng City actively promotes construction of farmhouse projects in the project of enriching a hundred villages and 10000 households through tourism. It effectively increased overall benefits of rural tourism through increasing repair and building of rural highways, expanding apple planting area, and introducing new cherry varieties, and presenting rural ecological sightseeing, rural custom experience tourism, and agricultural product picking tourism.

3.3 New form of rural tourism constantly emerging

With the advent of post-industrial age and independent tourist travel, rural tourist demands are changing from traditional sightseeing, picking and angling to recreation, education, experience, popular science and health care. Driven by new demands of rural tourists, there appears new tourist form such as car campsite, wine estate, education manor, forest SPA, family farm, and rural business club, etc. In 2013, Huixin Sweet Fragrance World of Gongyi City in Henan Province received 80000 tourists in the first half of 2013, and recreational agriculture realized sales income of more than 30 million yuan with its modern rural tourist sightseeing park integrating the whole industry chain including food and beverage service, recreational, farming experience, agricultural product processing, and wedding photo. These new vigorously developing forms greatly enrich rural tourist product system of Henan Province and promote optimization and upgrade of rural tourism in Henan Province.

3.4 Significant typical demonstration effect of rural tourism

In recent years, Chongdugou Village of Luanchuan County in Luoyang City, Haotang Village in Xinyang City, Chejiagou Village in Jiaozuo City, Nanjie Village in Luohe City, and Guoliang Village in Xinxiang City have become well-known rural tourist desti-

nations. In these, Luanchuan Model has become an important representative and learning model for county-wide tourist economic development. From developing Jiguan Cave as start point in 1992, with more than 20 years of rapid development, Luanchuan County has become a well-known strong tourist county from a national poverty-stricken county. On March 19, 2005, Luanchuan Model tourist development seminar was held in Beijing, which attracted more than 60 news media organizations to report. Once being introduced, Luanchuan Model was learned and studied by more than 100 counties and cities^[10]. In March of 2013, Luanchuan County issued Opinions of Building Panoramic Luanchuan. Panoramic Luanchuan is innovative development of Luanchuan Model and provides new idea and approach for local economic transformation and breaking the bottleneck of rural tourism development. In 2015, Panoramic Luanchuan was included into the typical cases of national master of tourism management (MTA) collection. It provides high quality source material for researching rural tourism and county-wide tourist economy and also further raises reputation of Luanchuan tourism.

4 Existing problems in rural tourism development of Henan Province

4.1 Innovation concept of rural tourism is not scientific

With more than two decades of development, China's rural tourism has entered a new historical stage. However, as soon as rural tourism is mentioned, there will be construction of farmhouse. In Henan Province, there are also common phenomena such as building scenic spots, paving cement roads, and building restaurants. When conducting rural tourism development, it only cares about visual experience of tourists, stresses beautifying rural natural environment, but neglects attraction of overall cultural atmosphere and service level to tourists. Besides, in the process of new socialist countryside construction, abandoning traditional village pattern that conform to nature, ecology and harmony, but arranging unified rows of rows buildings and European villas, fail to manifest regional agricultural characteristics and cultural characteristics, and original local landscape and primitive features lose. These not only deviate from original essence of beautiful countryside construction, lead to homogeneous and simplified rural tourist landscape, and also influence tourist experience, so they are not favorable for sustainable development of rural tourism.

4.2 Rural tourist products lack consolidation At present, rural tourist products of Henan Province have advantages in both quantity and type, but there are still problems of homogeneity, low brand popularity, and weak cultural connotation and experience, and need further consolidation. From the overall development trend, sightseeing tourist products are still dominant, and segmented and diversified product pattern is not established yet. As a result, demands of tourists are not satisfied in recreation, health care, business conference, survey and research. In addition, rural tourist scenic spots have high dependence on ticket income, relevant supporting products and auxiliary products are scarce, and

some rural tourist operators have difficulty in providing high quality service experience for tourists, leading to short stay, low consumption, and low repetition of tourists.

4.3 Development of rural tourism industrial chain is not perfect Rural tourism industrial chain takes core enterprises as foundation and provides value creation function of different recreational demands, and it gathers information flow, tourist flow, and material flow, and forms interconnected relation (complementation, competition, and cooperation)^[11]. Rural tourism enterprise is development foundation of rural tourism industrial chain. However, most rural tourism enterprises in Henan Province take decentralized operating model and the overall scale is small. Operators are mainly local farmers, and they have relatively low educational level, lack modern management and brand construction concept. Rural tourism enterprises have low ability of resisting market risks, and overall competitive power is low, and it is difficult for them to become leading enterprises. The structure of rural tourism industrial chain in Henan Province indicates that rural tourism is still mainly traditional catering, lodging, trade and business, and the added value is relatively low. The industrial chain is too short and narrow, cooperation and interaction between upstream and downstream sectors, which weakens driving function of rural tourism.

4.4 Public service level of rural tourism is relatively low

Public service of tourism is the general name of public products and services provided by government or other social organizations not for seeking profit^[12]. In the process of rural tourism development of Henan Province, there is still a great gap between demands of rural tourists and supply of public information elements, infrastructure guarantee elements, public safety elements, and marketing elements. Taking the supply of public information elements as an example, tourist website of some cities provide out-of-dated information, and the information is incomplete and even lacks telephone number and address. Some hyperlinks can not be connected or even it directly influences information collection of tourists. Besides, rural rubbish collection, sewage treatment, wireless network, and modern logistics are relatively backward. This also influences experience quality and satisfaction of rural tourists.

5 Development path for innovation of rural tourism in Henan Province based on innovation theory

5.1 Guiding innovation of rural tourism development concept

At present, the national consumption based mass tourism is evolving from primary stage to middle and high stages. In this stage, the overall characteristics can be described as: tourism economy is walking from a closed system to an open world^[13]. In this trend, development concept of rural tourism should also be opened, and it is required to break through traditional and narrow rural tourist resources outlook. Rural tourism is in essence the recombination and transformation of agricultural, rural environment, and cultural resources in accordance with demands of urban resi-

dents, to explore development potential of rural areas^[14]. In the development of rural tourist resources, it is recommended to attach great importance to explore production, living, and ecological functions, and include the overall rural environment into the tourism planning, and build "whole region tourism" and "panoramic tourism". In addition, it is recommended to guide development of rural tourism with ecological concepts. Furthermore, it is recommended to develop circular economy in accordance with 3R principle (reuse, reduce, and recycle), build natural and harmonious rural tourist environment with green foods, ecological living, green transportation, and clean energy, and enhance attraction of rural tourist products to tourists, to realize coordination and integration of social, economic and environmental benefits.

5.2 Implementing innovation of rural tourist products In recent years, there have great changes in subjects of tourism consumption and demands. Young people born in the 1980s and 1990s have become major groups of rural tourism consumption, and they care about experience and participation in tourism. Besides, there are new diversified tourist demands such as family recreation, health care, research and survey. Therefore, innovation of rural tourist products in Henan Province should be based on natural landscape, agricultural production and farming, and traditional folk customs, orient towards tourist demands, design and develop products of tourist demands. Firstly, upgrade original products; secondly, integrate with modern creativity and develop rural inns, cinemas, self-driving camp, photographing, and rural exercise bases; thirdly, deepening integration with agriculture, industry and modern service industries, building the sixth industry, develop new rural tourism form, and increase added value of rural tourist products.

5.3 Accelerating structural innovation of rural tourism Industrial structure of tourism is the interrelation between tourism economic sectors, regions, economic activities and mainly includes regional structure, organization structure, product structure, ownership structure, and industrial structure^[15]. It is recommended to accelerate structural innovation of rural tourism in Henan Province, formulate group development plan of rural tourism on the basis of building perfect rural tourist product system, attract participation of different levels and types of rural tourism enterprises, and form rural tourism industrial clusters with large-scale effect and aggregation effect, so as to raise overall competitive power of rural tourism in Henan Province. Besides, it is recommended to attach great importance to proportion of food, living, transportation, travel, shopping, and recreation in rural tourism, introduce new elements such as "commerce, health care, leisure, custom, and wonder", to extend industrial chain of rural tourism. In addition, it is recommended to cultivate scientific and technological innovation ability of rural tourism enterprises, increase scientific and technological content of rural tourist products, and build "production, learning, and research" coordinated innovation system, to promote optimized allocation of rural tourist resources, and boost structural innovation of rural tourism in

Henan Province.

5.4 Promoting innovation of public services for rural tourism Developing public services of rural tourism is not only favorable for improving quality of rural tourism, but also favorable for promoting rural economic construction, improving quality of rural environment and villagers' living conditions, and promoting integrated urban and rural development^[16]. In the process of public service innovation for rural tourism, government and tourism administrative departments should adapt to demands of tourists in Internet Plus times and promote construction of intelligent rural tourism. It is recommended to realize coverage of wireless network, set up WAP network, APP terminal facilities, establish rural tourism e-commerce platform, and provide comprehensive, swift, and convenient information services for tourists and rural tourism operators. Besides, it is recommended to increase fund input in infrastructure construction of rural tourism, and manifest innovation and creativity in infrastructure construction and transformation. Also, it is recommended to improve transportation and satisfy demands of tourists for hiking, cycling, and self-driving; attach importance to safety facility construction in rural tourist destinations, promptly issue extreme weather, geological disaster, and accident information; reinforce fire protection and food safety monitoring and inspection effort of rural tourism operating enterprises, to provide safe environment for tourists. Furthermore, it is recommended to hire related experts to provide training for rural tourism operators in fire protection, modern management, and service etiquettes, strengthen ecological education for rural tourism operators, and improve their service level and environmental protection awareness.

6 Conclusions

Tourism is an essential indicator of improvement in people's living conditions. Developing rural tourism is helpful for realizing the expectation of "seeing mountains and rivers and keeping eternal hometown dream". Henan Province, as a large agricultural province of China, should grasp historical opportunities and take advantage of resources, suit measures in accordance with local conditions, optimize and upgrade rural tourism through concept innovation, product innovation, product structure innovation, and public service innovation. Besides, Henan Province should coordinate development with urban construction, and bring into play functions of rural tourism in beautifying environment, increasing farmers' income, and passing on culture of Central Plain in the urbanization process.

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