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Study on the Development of Rural Tourism in Liaoning Province

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Abstract As an important old industrial base in Northeast China, Liaoning Province is facing good opportunities for development in the context of rural tourism booming. This paper summarizes the concept and function of rural tourism, analyzes the present situation and characteristics of rural tourism development in Liaoning Province, and points out the main problems. Finally, to make Liaoning's rural tourism develop better and faster and provide a reference for other regions, the following recommendations are made: focusing on the development of experience-based rural tourism products; improving the level of rural tourism service and reception; strengthening the construction and renovation of rural tourism infrastructure.

Key words Rural tourism, Liaoning Province, Experience

1 Introduction

In recent years, with the rapid development of China's economy, the people long living in the steel and concrete jungle have hankered for a kind of comfortable, quiet and peaceful rural life, so rural tourism comes into being. The data from the National Tourism Administration the rural tourists accounted for one third of the country's total visitors in 2014. As for weekend leisure and holiday trips, more than 70% of the urban residents nowadays choose the surrounding rural tourist spots. Liaoning is a large industrial province, with high level of urbanization, and it also has rich rural tourism resources and sound rural infrastructure, so there is a growing market demand for rural tourism. Doing a good job in rural tourism development is not only conducive to the prosperity of rural economy and new countryside construction in Liaoning, but also conducive to the transformation of old industrial base and establishment of a new image of Liaoning tourism.

2 Concept and function of rural tourism

Modern rural tourism is a new mode of travel in the rural areas appearing in the 1980s. Based on the explanation of domestic and foreign scholars, rural tourism can be defined as a tourism form with rural area as the place for activity, urban residents as the main source markets various types of pastoral scene, rural heritage, rural life, rural activities, rural settlements, rural folk customs and ecological environment as the carrier, integrating sightseeing, leisure, vacation, study, investigation, health preserving, entertainment and shopping as a whole. The core of rural tourism is to make full use of urban and rural differences to meet people's needs for returning to nature. The rural tourism functions include leisure, sightseeing, vacation, popularization of science, educa-

tion, shopping and other aspects.

3 Present situation and characteristics of rural tourism in Liaoning Province

3.1 Present situation Liaoning, as a major heavy industrial base in China, is also rich in agricultural resources and diverse rural landscape types, with excellent conditions for development of rural tourism. Now, Liaoning's rural tourism has been fully-fledged, presenting three main development models. (i) "Farm Fun" tourism model. Farmers use their own courts, vegetables and poultry for the development of tourism integrating catering and accommodation, and this model is mainly concentrated in the surrounding areas of big city. (ii) Farm sightseeing and picking model. Farmers use rural orchards, vegetable gardens and flower beds to develop sightseeing and picking, for example, Dandong Fengcheng Dalishu Village uses acres of village orchards and herbal plantations to develop spring flower admiring and fall fruit picking. (iii) Agricultural science and technology tourism model. Farmers rely on modern agricultural parks, agricultural technology demonstration parks and eco-tourism farms to develop tourism, such as students' practice base in Xinmin City. As of January 2015, Liaoning created 1 national key tourism county, 3 national leisure agriculture and rural tourism demonstration counties, 7 national leisure agriculture and rural tourism demonstration sites, and 1 national famous tourism town (Table 1). At the same time, Liaoning's rural tourism revenue is also growing rapidly. Liaoning's rural tourism revenues were 26.565 billion yuan and 43.698 billion yuan in 2010 and 2011, respectively, an increase of up to 64.5%. As shown in Fig. 1, the percentage of Liaoning's rural tourism revenue in Liaoning's total annual tourism revenue increased year by year during 2009–2014, and the annual growth rate of rural tourism revenue was higher than that of total annual tourism revenue.

3.2 Characteristics (i) Obvious characteristics of rural tourism resources. Liaoning's rich natural environments— islands,

Received: February 12, 2017 Accepted: April 18, 2017

Supported by Research Project of Liaoning Provincial Department of Education (2016FRPY02).

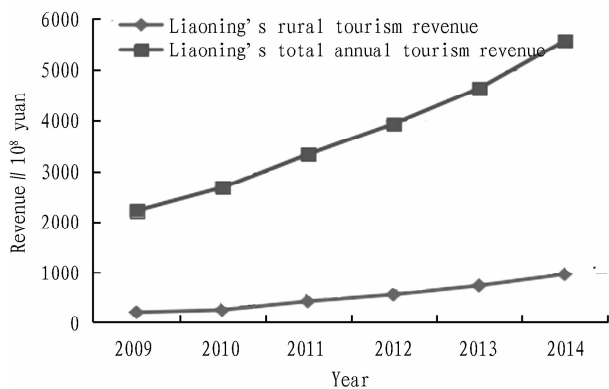
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mountains, coasts and springs contribute to a lot of unusual topographical landscape. It has a complete industry chain of farming, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery, and there is a wide range of crops. Liaoning has a long history and many ethnic minorities, so characteristic national culture becomes an important attraction of Liaoning's rural tourism. (ii) Seasonal features of rural tourism. First of all, the content of rural tourism activities is seasonal, summer dominated by pickings and rafting, winter dominated by hot spring bath and skiing. Secondly, the degree of tourism activity is also seasonal. Generally speaking, in the summer and autumn, there are many visitors in Liaoning's rural tourism market while it is the other around in the winter and spring. Moreover, the visitors are relatively dense in Liaoning's rural tourism market

during holidays. (iii) Unbalanced development of rural tourism. Because of different level of economic development and local support to rural tourism, Liaoning's central regions with Shenyang as the core and Liaoning's southern regions with Dalian as the core have a good development trend of rural tourism, while the development of rural tourism is slow in Liaoning's western regions. (iv) Common individual farmer business model. Liaoning's rural tourism has a large scale, but the individual farmer business model represented by "Farm Fun" and "Fisherman's House Fun" is the commonest business model of rural tourism in Liaoning Province, which is characterized by small scale, single products, limited reception capacity and lack of business cooperation.

Table 1 The main rural tourism sites in Liaoning Province

National key tourism counties	Huanren Manchu Autonomous County
National leisure agriculture and rural tourism demonstration counties	Dawa County, Gaizhou City, Dalian Lushunkou District
National leisure agriculture and rural tourism demonstration sites	Shenyang Xindadi Leisure Agriculture Park, Dandong Xinyi Holiday Villa, Nantianmen Village (Dasuhe Township, Qingyuan Manchu Autonomous County), Gaizhou Meiran Scenery Tourism Resort, Xiaonan Village (Shuishiyang Street, Lushunkou District), Wafangdian Dongmatun Agricultural Ecological Park, Jinbohaian Mayidao International Tourist Resort (Jinzhou District)
National famous tourism town	Wangjia Town, Dawa County



Data source: *Government Information Disclosure Work Report* (2009 – 2013) of Liaoning Provincial Bureau of Statistics; China News Network.

Fig. 1 Comparison of Liaoning's rural tourism revenue and total annual tourism revenue

4 Problems

4.1 Similar tourism products and feature experience insufficiency Many rural tourism products are superficially developed on the basis of the original production basis. The development and utilization is mostly confined to orchard, woodland and other types, and the development projects are mostly focused on sightseeing orchards, fishing parks and sightseeing forest. The development lacks innovative design and deep processing, making it difficult for visitors to really feel and experience unique style of rural tourism. Taking farm courtyard at the foot of Qianshan Mountain in Anshan for example, there are dozens of "Happy Farms", but the services provided are almost identical, which greatly reduces the charm of rural tourism.

4.2 Low quality of rural tourism practitioners Most of the

practitioners engaged in "rural tourism" services are the local villagers who are generally ill-educated, lacking a sense of business and innovation. And their service awareness is weak and the ability to master service technology is also weak, far from meeting the requirements of tourism reception services. In addition, they mostly operate business by experience, and lack strong consciousness of establishing scenic image, thus affecting the sustainable development of rural tourism.

4.3 Poor infrastructure and sanitation conditions Due to the relatively low level of economic development in rural areas, much of the infrastructure is still unable to meet the needs of tourists, thus affecting the quality of visitor experience. In some agricultural sightseeing gardens, there are few available rest areas, pavilions, tea houses and shops, and the inadequate rural road facilities often make tourists get lost. Backward rural infrastructure is one of the main problems restricting the development of rural tourism.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Focusing on the development of experience-based rural tourism products We must pay attention to the development of experience-based tourism products and guide visitors to participate and experience. From the leisure travel, festive tourism and tourism products with special characteristics, it is necessary to give full play to the advantages of resources, and design three-dimensional special rural tourism projects such as the entertainment and leisure products represented by "Farm Fun" and "Fisherman's House Fun", farming experience activities represented by picking, fishing and food tasting, and sightseeing dominated by village photographing. Through the creation of the simulation experience of

rural daily life, we can make the tourists really enjoy the fun of farm life, and get new travel experience.

5.2 Improving the level of rural tourism service and reception

Firstly, it is necessary to enhance the overall quality of community residents. We can invite experts to offer the travel service skill and management training for community residents, in order to increase community residents' awareness and understanding of tourism industry and service industry. Secondly, it is necessary to carry out popularization of management knowledge for rural operators, so as to enhance their service management level. Thirdly, through small-scale service platform transformation, there is a need to build integrated service platforms that serve the farmers, investors and tourists, thereby enhancing the level of tourism service configuration.

5.3 Strengthening the construction and renovation of rural tourism infrastructure

To achieve rapid and healthy development of rural tourism in Liaoning Province, we must increase efforts to improve the construction of roads, communications, utilities and other basic facilities under the unified guidance of government department's planning, fully mobilize farmers' enthusiasm for investing, and focus on tourist village infrastructure building and

renovation of dining rooms, kitchens, parking lots and toilet facilities for rural tourism, in order to provide the visitors with convenient and comfortable travel experience.

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(From page 50)

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