The Development Motivation and Path for Minshuku Under the Rural Revitalization Strategy

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Abstract. With the rapid development of rural tourism in recent years and promotion for the strategy of "rural revitalization", minshuku, one of the most popular economic forms produced in the development of rural tourism, has aroused the attentions of social capitals and started to scale. But it still faces unprecedented challenges. This paper mainly analyzes the current situation of minshuku, finds out the restrictive factors and motive mechanism, as well as puts forward some feasible ways for the future development of minshuku.

Introduction

“Rural revitalization” is the core of the whole party's work to revitalize the rural industry and solve the problem of "agriculture, countryside and farmers." According to the twenty-word guideline of "Rural Revitalization", "industrial prosperity" is the key point to realize rural revitalization. It is the rural tourism among the industries available for developing in rural areas that plays a positive role in promoting employment and raising residents' income. Rural tourism belongs to the tertiary industry. Compared with the first and second industry, it emphases more on protecting rural ecological environment. Therefore, rural tourism is the opportunity [1] for “rural revitalization”. For local residents, the development of minshuku is the most direct way to start a business and increase their income [2]. As minshuku industry is developing, a large numbers of vacant houses in rural areas are effectively used. What's more, as minshuku is spontaneously run by local people, the problem of surplus labours and unbalanced distribution of labors are solved. It is positive to attract young men to return for starting business [3] and has a profound significance to assure rural residents' income, boost regional economy and drive rural revitalization. Increasing the stay time in countryside is a way to make tourists have emotions on rural culture, rural life, pastoral landscape and farm food and also make minshuku as the leisure life style. Exploring the motive mechanism and development path of minshuku with Chinese rural characteristics is a necessary and a positive significance to realize the strategy of rural revitalization.

The Meaning and Situation of Minshuku

Minshuku is a form of tourism originating from rural areas of Europe. At beginning it just provided the “Bed and Breakfast” form. The rural tourism in China mainland started in 1987 when "Nongjiale" produced in Sichuan Province [4]. As a superior product of “Nongjiale”, minshuku should emphasis on "people", not "accommodation". If not, it's hard to compete with a well-developed hotel industry. The introduction of local culture is the essence of the development for minshuku. The urban people intent to "See the mountains, see the water, remember the homesickness" when coming to the countryside. The rural tourism constructions with rural cultures are beneficial to raise tourists’ homesickness" and win their emotional resonance. "Homesickness" is an emotional state of missing hometown. For people growing up in city, "homesickness" is a fuzzy emotion. They just know rural culture superficially. The feeling of homesickness needs to be raised when tourists are living in minshuku.

However, the concept of minshuku in the rural areas is still unclear due to the late start in our
country. After just beatifying the environment, the private house only can provide the dinner and accommodation. It’s just an upgraded version of "Nongjiale" [5] without the travel experience of regional culture. According to repeated surveys on 30 minshukus in Mogan mountain, Shen (2017) found that 70% of the minshukus were designed in the style of nostalgia and retro. Although this style is not suitable for everyone, the operators insist on it just because of its current popularity [6]. The minshuku starts first in Mogan mountain in China. Nevertheless most of the operators' understanding of minshuku is still limited to its basic characteristics. Few operators realize that minshuku needs to be spread along with the local culture in which the emotional resonance of tourists can be awakened. In addition, most of the operators and employees were local residents in the rural areas. Their education level was limited and their sense of service was weak. Seeing others benefitting from businesses by using their own idle houses, they just follow blindly and ignore the essence of services. Instead of the poetic feeling, the tourists only experience the rude local style, causing a bad impression on tourists and negative impacts on the reputation of minshuku.

The Restrictive Factors of Minshuku

The Limited Supervisions by Laws and Regulations and Industry Associations

Firstly, the relevant management laws and regulations are incomplete, and the competent authorities are not confirmed. The management of minshuku involves many departments including development of tourism, industry, commerce and health. The cross-department collaboration is necessary for management. At present, except for the laws and regulations formulated by the local governments, there is only one national regulation "basic requirements and evaluation of minshuku". Secondly, the function of associations has not yet worked. Nangjiale associations, Mogan league, Minshuku school and other associations have been successively established in Mogan mountain. But according to the survey, less than 50% operators actually join these associations. Even some operators have never heard of the above mentioned organizations [7]. Some people joining the associations think that the training is not enough to satisfy their learning needs.

The Lower Management Level of Operators

The minshuku industries in Taiwan and Japan are developing rapidly and become mature after 30 years. Their qualified practitioners played a very important role in the development. With the growth of rural tourism the minshuku develops. Many well-educated Taiwan operators return to their hometown because they have emotions on rural areas. While under the guidance of government policies, the main development motivation for minshuku in China mainland is to increase local resident’s income from renting and selling houses. The lack of education and weak service consciousness are the key factors obstructing the development of minshuku.

Insufficient Stamina after Capital Introduction and Rapid Expansion

The popularity of minshuku attracts a lot of social capitals. However, it’s the quick production of profits that the social capitals care. It causes the weak cultural foundation for minshuku. Take Mogan mountain as an example, the newly built minshuku are almost all replicas of adobe houses, wood and cobblestones, all of which are in the same style. The disappearance of “feelings” is inevitable because of the commercial development model and the rapid expansion of minshuku. The "feelings" of the minshuku are a combination of the rustic simplicity and the soft services provided by the host. The commercialization quickly covers up the local atmosphere. If operators only rely on the geographical advantages of "see the mountains, see the water", but ignore the most important advantage of "homesickness", the minshukus will be real hotels without emotion. It will be replaced by standardized hotels, and eventually eliminated by the market.

Unclear Definition on the Relationship between the Standard and Non-standard

Pan (2013) pointed out that the concept of minshuku, the number of rooms, safety, sanitation, and environmental protection are other important bottlenecks in defining the standards of minshuku [8].The personalized service and the rural environment created by the host drive the sudden rising
of minshuku. The report on the development of minshuku 2017 shows that the major clientele of minshuku mainly are 80s-90s, who are passionate about pursuing individuation and displaying self-style. However, the operators cannot neglect the standardized references to fully cater to their individualized preferences. There is no absolute contradiction between personalization and standardization. Standardization refers to the standards introduced to the hardware facilities including fire protection, safety, sanitation, environmental protection and so on. But for style design, management and service, the minshuku should build its own brand image and different styles for individuals.

**The Motive Mechanism of Minshuku**

**National Policies Inclined to Rural Development**

In order to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas and promote the development of rural tourism, the "Rural Revitalization" has been promoted to a national strategy and the various favorable policies for the development of rural tourism are issued by local governments as well. With these policies to promote the revitalization of rural tourism, minshuku can forward in a healthy and stable path.

**Diversified Market Demand**

From the perspective of macro-environment, the rapid development of urbanization worsens the urban air quality and fast life style makes urban citizens want to have leisure in rural areas. In 2017, the per capita GDP in China is over US $ 8000[9] and the economic conditions are improved. Because of the increasing abundant travel experiences the traditional sightseeing tourism can’t satisfy tourists’ needs. People began to pursue a leisure tour [10] with higher level. Depending on the geographical advantages, the surroundings of city are chosen as the major areas for rural tourism. The demands of macro market and micro tourists promote the development of rural tourism and minshuku industry.

**Mature Supply Conditions in Rural Areas**

In recent years, the rural tourism grows continuously and minshuku abstracts a lot of investments. As a result the infrastructures for rural tourism have been equipped and some areas developed earlier become mature for rural tourism... The diversified products attract a large number of people, fundamentally assure the development of minshuku. The utilization of idle houses also effectively reduces the operating cost and the pressure of the operators in early investment [11]. Different from the early stage, the operators have a deeper understanding of minshuku. They begin to focus on returning the rural characteristics and integrating the rural feelings through the design of rural atmosphere. Under the great background of policies and market demand, the development of minshuku is promoted through these conditions.

**The Development Path of Minshuku**

**Strengthened Minshuku Characteristics and Centralized Development**

Minshuku and hotel have different characteristics. If the quantity of room extended to hundreds, it is not minshuku, but the Villaggio Boutique Hotel. The minshuku is "small but complete." The development of minshuku cannot without the participation of the host. The blind expansion for increasing the short-term profits is not suitable for minshuku because it will cause the loss of family feeling, sense of belonging and the feeling of rural life. Since the power of “small but complete” is fragile, to keep sustained popularity and income, minshuku must develop in a centralization way by gathering the individual forces and forming the regional development. The minshuku image of regional development should be built for advertising toward outside.
Harmonious Development between Standards and Non-standards

Although minshuku plays the same role as hotels in the tourism industry, it is a derivative of hotels. The standards of minshuku and hotels are different. Hotel is designed according to the star rating and hotel chain management strategy, which provides guests a standardized accommodation experience. While since the beginning to prosperity, minshuku provides the individual living experiences depending on the local characteristics. Although a series of industrial standards on safety and fire protection must be set for observation, the operators shall fully know its advantages and show its personalization, characteristic and humanization on the operation and service.

Integration for Multi-industry Development, Formation of “Minshuku+”

As a single industry, the scale of minshuku must be limited. Minshuku can refer to the current cross-field development and form the “minshuku+”. Through combing the minshuku industry, policy-oriented industry and the future trend industry, stabilizing own industry and introducing other competitive industries, the development chain of regional industry will be established, which will promote the diversified development of rural industry. Since the aging society is coming, making use of the geographical, environmental and entertaining advantages and integrating the pension industry, the model of "minshuku+old-age" and the leisure space for the aged can be formed. As minshuku works in the development chain of regional industry, it changes the vulnerable situations as the tertiary industry and explores a cross-field development path.

Innovation of Marketing Model and Promote Brand Benefit

Marketing innovation is required in minshuku industry. Combining the online and offline methods, a variety of marketing models can be created. The online short rental platforms and OTA are the main marketing means at present. Through the combination of the online and offline methods, and some offline promotion activities, the public have a better understanding of rural tourism and minshuku, and their recognition of the rural culture is strengthened. The centralization characteristic of our minshuku cannot be ignored. Thus, we can make use of the collected forces obtained in regional form to promote the establishment of minshuku brand in all sides through regional alliances and refer to Denmark internet alliances for mutual assistance, which is the significant part for the development of regional industrial chain and change the minshuku development path of single product feature to the path of regional industry development.

References


