

# Development of Rural Tourism Industry under the Background of New Rural Construction: A Case Study of Henghe of Boluo County in Huizhou City

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**Abstract** Henghe Town in Boluo County of Huizhou is taken as the research object for analysis. The research and analysis on the tourism industry in Henghe Town of Boluo County are conducted, and the basic situation of rural tourism construction in Henghe Town is sorted out. The forms of tourism industry in Henghe Town and the problems in rural tourism development are identified, and some targeted suggestions and countermeasures are proposed. It hopes to provide ideas and references for the construction of beautiful rural areas in mountainous areas of Guangdong Province, and theoretical reference and practical significance for the development of rural tourism in mountainous areas of Guangdong Province.

**Key words** New countryside, Rural tourism, Henghe Town in Boluo County

## 1 Introduction

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the *Opinions on Doing a Good Job in the Key Work of Comprehensively Promoting Rural Revitalization in 2023* in February of 2023, proposing to accelerate the development of modern rural service industry, cultivate new industries and formats in rural areas, and promote high-quality development of rural industries. Rural tourism is one of the important ways to promote rural revitalization and the construction of a new socialist countryside. This study conducts research and analysis on the tourism industry in Henghe Town of Boluo County, Huizhou City, aiming to provide ideas and references for the construction of beautiful rural areas in mountainous areas of Guangdong Province, as well as theoretical reference and practical significance for the development of rural tourism in mountainous areas of Guangdong Province.

## 2 Analysis on the current situation of rural tourism in Henghe Town

**2.1 Development status** With the increasing enthusiasm of urban residents for rural tourism in recent years, Henghe Town has begun to vigorously develop rural tourism. The local government attaches great importance to the development of tourism industry. By tapping into its own natural and cultural resources, it has basically achieved full coverage of rural tourism infrastructure, including roads, drinking water, street lamps, rural sewage facilities, garbage collection pools, rural libraries, leisure squares, etc. Five villages have reached the standard of clean and tidy villages, and eleven villages have been awarded the title of "Guangdong Prov-

ince Health Village". More than 90% of the customers of Henghe homestays are distributed in local cities such as Guangzhou, Dongguan, Shenzhen, and Huizhou, making them the main force of Henghe homestay customer base. The customer base structure is mainly composed of young and middle-aged parent-child tours and leisure tours for the middle-aged and elderly<sup>[1]</sup>.

### 2.2 SWOT analysis of rural tourism in Henghe Town

**2.2.1 Strengths.** (i) Rich and diverse tourism resources. Henghe Town is the only zero industrial pollution town in the Pearl River Delta region, with a forest coverage rate of 80% and a natural landscape tourism resource that integrates streams, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, springs, forests, mountains, countryside, and reservoirs. There are cultural landscape resources such as the Zhangbei She ethnic settlement site, the Garden Drum, the Jingtian Baishuishan mineral water production base, and the Shangliang homestay ecological tourism area. There are planting bases for Chinese herbal medicines such as *Millettia speciosa* Champ., *Aquilaria* spp., and *Melicope pteleifolia*. Through "one village, one product", agricultural resources such as citrus, loquat, cured meat, and mountain tea are created.

(ii) Superior geographical location. Henghe Town is located in the northeast foothill of the Luofu Mountain, which is at the northwest of Boluo County, Huizhou City, Guangdong Province. It is one hour away from Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Dongguan and other living areas, and rural roads have basically achieved hard bottoming. County roads can connect the Luofu Mountain, Guangmei Road, Boluo Central Passage, Guanghui Expressway, Guangshan Road to major cities in the Pearl River Delta, forming a complete transportation system.

(iii) Increasingly improved tourism facilities. There is sufficient water and electricity supply in rural areas, and the communication system has achieved full coverage. Homestays and farmhouses have begun to take shape, and various picking gardens, planting bases, scenic areas, and other facilities such as food, housing, transportation, tourism, shopping, and entertainment

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have been fully equipped. At present, there are nearly 30 homestays, of which 6 homestays are included in the provincial homestay system. Among them, 3 homestays have been rated as "Rural Homestay Demonstration Sites in Guangdong Province", which can improve accommodation security for rural tourism.

**2.2.2 Weaknesses.** (i) The development of tourism resources is lacking, and the tourism benefits are not high. The main source of tourists in Henghe Town is parent-child study tours and elderly health care tours from surrounding cities such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Dongguan. The development of tourism resources is insufficient, and the primary, secondary, and tertiary industries have not yet achieved close linkage. Agricultural resources, industrial opportunities, and tourism resources have not been effectively integrated. The economic benefits of local residents, catering enterprises, homestays, and scenic areas are not high, and a comprehensive tourism industry chain has not been formed. The tourism products are relatively single, and the regional cultural characteristics are not obvious. A series of tourism activities are carried out by relying on and revolving around homestays, but there is no linkage between homestays and other attractions. A series of supporting tourism products have not been formed, and the tourism series supporting facilities are not synchronized but matched. A large number of tourists have a weak willingness to stay, resulting in low tourism benefits.

(ii) Limitations on human resource development. The development of the tourism industry requires specialized human resources. However, young and middle-aged people go out to work, and there is a common phenomenon of hollowing out in rural areas. Rural tourism lacks a group of young and middle-aged people who understand operation and management. Affected by the cold and off-season of the tourism industry, even if some middle-aged and young people return to their hometowns, they still face income instability, and it cannot achieve sustainable development, making it difficult to retain human resources. Some individual entrepreneurs who return to their hometowns for entrepreneurship are facing development difficulties, and there are no typical successful cases in the industry, making it difficult to attract talents to return to their hometowns for entrepreneurship and investment<sup>[2]</sup>.

**2.2.3 Opportunities.** (i) Policy support. With the increasing attention and support from the state for the rural revitalization strategy, the town government of Henghe Town has invested more policy support and funds to provide a good policy environment and financial support for the development of rural tourism. With the goal of fully building a comprehensive tourism demonstration town, natural vacation areas and cultural protection areas have been built. Combining the construction of beautiful countryside with the development of rural tourism, the construction of new rural areas is comprehensively promoted with the focus on building beautiful countryside.

(ii) Market demand. With the increasing attention of urban residents to health, environmental protection, culture, and other aspects, the demand for rural tourism market continues to grow. It has become the main needs of surrounding rural tourism to feel the

spiritual comfort brought by nature, experience exotic customs and traditions, and taste primitive and unique rural cuisine<sup>[3]</sup>. Henghe Town can seize this opportunity and launch more distinctive and attractive tourism activities and projects to meet market demand.

**2.2.4 Threats.** (i) Market competition. The competition in the rural tourism market is fierce, and various regions are launching their own unique and advantageous projects. For example, the construction of characteristic scenic spots in Dongguan is in full swing, which is bound to attract a portion of tourists. Henghe Town needs to find its own positioning and development direction in market competition, while emphasizing innovation and improving service quality.

(ii) Other unfavorable factors. With good resource endowments and strong support from governments at all levels, the construction of beautiful rural areas in Henghe Town has achieved initial results. However, this "blood transfusion" driven development cannot achieve sustainable development, and there is uncertainty in the government's subsequent funding investment. The economic benefits of local catering enterprises, homestays, and scenic spots are not high, making it difficult to obtain foreign investment. The economic benefits of local farmers are not high, and the participation of villagers in regional cultural development is not high, making it difficult to form a unique competitiveness.

### 3 Analysis of rural tourism forms in Henghe Town

Henghe Town is a rural area with abundant natural and cultural resources, and its rural tourism forms exhibit diverse characteristics. Based on the existing tourism resources and the construction of beautiful countryside in Henghe Town, it is suitable to create a tourism oriented beautiful countryside that integrates ethnic customs, characteristic industries, pastoral agriculture, and landscape architecture.

**3.1 Ethnic style** The She ethnic group in Zhangbei Village, which is currently unique in Henghe Town, has attracted some tourists with its unique rural style and cultural customs. Combining the She ethnic group's folk customs, traditional crafts, festival culture, ethnic costumes, mountain songs, and language, it is easy to develop distinctive rural tourism with exotic characteristics. Therefore, Zhangbei Village in Henghe Town is very suitable for carrying out ethnic style tourism activities.

**3.2 Characteristic industrial style** According to the environmental characteristics of each village, Henghe Town has packaged characteristic industries through the linkage development of characteristic industries. The characteristic agricultural products, such as citrus, loquat, preserved ham, *Nymphaea hybrid*, and *Dendrobium nobile* Lindl., have gradually become the bright name card of Henghe. It has created "one village, one product", such as Xiqun *Citrus maxima* cv. 'Sanhongmiyou', Dongjiao *Aquilaria* spp., Huangzhuo Village loquat, Xiahewan *N. hybrid*, and *D. nobile* Lindl., to create a beautiful village with characteristic industrial tourism.

**3.3 Rural agricultural style** The planting industry featuring Chinese herbal medicines such as *M. speciosa* Champ., *Aquilaria*

spp. , *M. pteleifolia* and wormwood has begun to take shape. The beet planting base in Shihu Village, the *D. nobile* Lindl. planting base in Xijiao Village, the *N. hybrid* planting and processing base in Xiahe Village, and the wormwood planting and processing base in Luwu Village are rich in ecological carriers, which are suitable for constructing beautiful countryside of countryside agriculture tourism taking pastoral agriculture, dissemination of agricultural cultural knowledge and participation in agricultural experiences as pleasure.

**3.4 Landscape style** The Longtan Waterfall, the Baima Mountain, the Henghe River Valley, the Olive Garden, and the Xiangang Reservoir in Henghe Town are systemically planned, transformed and upgraded. A series of tourism supporting facilities are developed, including greenway cycling and camping, to create a beautiful countryside of tourism type with unique landscape advantages.

## 4 Suggestions and countermeasures for the development of rural tourism in Henghe Town

**4.1 Strengthen government planning and support** The government should do a good job in top-level design, leverage the role of the digital Henghe platform, and be committed to the rational planning and construction of tourism resources. Relying on the tourism resources of Henghe, with ecological, exquisite, and distinctive leisure vacation as the development direction, fully considering industrial layout, population agglomeration, land use, ecological environment protection, etc. , it should build a complete tourism industry chain around "food, accommodation, transportation, tourism, purchase, and entertainment" , and form a virtuous cycle of the entire tourism environment.

It should build a comprehensive tourism public service system, improve infrastructure, create a beautiful rural environment, and enhance the experience of tourists. Unified planning should be conducted in rural landscape construction, and the unique folk culture of the local area should be promoted, with one village and one appearance, one village and one scenery. Infrastructure problems such as no street lights and no network should be solved. Based on the local tourism resources and the characteristics of homestays, a scientific and operable tourism interpretation system should be uniformly designed. Especially in the presentation manners of maps, road signs, one village and one scenery, and other contents, multiple forms such as LED lights, combination of graphics and text, audio, video, etc. can be selected<sup>[4]</sup>. In terms of transportation construction, it should be consistent with the layout of homestays, with a focus on building tourism and cultural corridors with homestays as the main line, setting up fully functional tourist service centers, and collaborating with homestays to establish characteristic product centers of "one village, one product" to promote more convenient and efficient connection and exchange of tourism resources.

Government policy support and standard guidance create a favorable business environment. Local government departments should actively implement favorable policies to help enterprises

overcome difficulties, and provide policy support in five categories: tax reduction, labor cost reduction, energy cost reduction, rent reduction, and financing support<sup>[5]</sup>. At the same time, technical standards for local homestay construction and service quality should be introduced, and high-standard standardized management should be implemented, and approval procedures for fire protection, public security, and hygiene should be simplified.

## 4.2 Exploring and creating distinctive products, and creating a rural tourism business card

**4.2.1 Exploring distinctive folk activities.** It should transform culture and folk customs into tourism products, and design a batch of iconic cultural and creative products. Utilizing the development of original ecological folk villages, the establishment of folk museums, the organization of folk festival activities, and the restoration of the production process of folk handicrafts, the She ethnic culture, agricultural culture, and red revolutionary culture in Henghe are planned through "culture + theme + activity" to explore characteristic folk activities that integrate with Henghe culture. Targeting study tour groups, it aims to create distinctive agricultural culture, folk customs, and red culture research and learning products, enriching research and learning activities. For parent-child travel groups, folk festival activities, the production of folk handicrafts, the production of traditional specialty foods, brewing tea in a furnace, and She ethnic festival activities are designed to create rural tourism characteristic products.

**4.2.2 Differentiated customized homestay products.** The personalization of homestays is reflected in the personalized hardware facilities such as architectural style and interior decoration, as well as the personalized soft services provided by homestay operators in terms of humanistic care. It should adhere to good characteristics and styles, form one's own core selling points, and highlight the unique humanistic care services of homestay operators, which can better create the charm and value of homestays themselves<sup>[6]</sup>. Weekend close-up tours or weekend close-up parent-child tours are mostly focused on family or friend groups. To attract this group of people, the construction of homestays needs to be classified according to customer characteristics. Focusing on environmental conditions and emotions, it should create one's own "distinctive" theme.

## 4.3 "Three-industry linkage" to increase tourism revenue and innovating diversified product portfolio methods

**4.3.1 Integrating agricultural resources.** It should realize the service industry to drive agricultural development. Utilizing the seasonality of products of "one village, one product", it could break through the limitations of tourism off-season, while increasing farmers' income, and enhancing the participation of local villagers<sup>[7]</sup>. Taking homestays as an example, homestays can collaborate with village farms to promote the concept of green and healthy eating on the basis of their original basic products. This allows retired elderly people in first and second tier cities to visit venues such as vegetables, fruits, flowers, and seedlings, as well as taste, pick, or purchase fresh agricultural and sideline products, providing homestay consumers with a richer travel experi-

ence and increasing the added value of homestay products.

**4.3.2 Innovating diversified product composition methods.** It should cooperate with nearby schools and factories to carry out labor education activities, break through the limitations of the off-season of study tours, and increase the sales of agricultural and industrial products, driving income for farmers and factory owners.

**4.3.3 Strengthening regional cooperation.** Henghe Town can strengthen cooperation and exchanges with surrounding areas, and achieve resource sharing and complementary advantages. Based on geographical advantages, it should integrate surrounding tourism resources, solve problems such as weak tourist "stay intention" and limited "stay time", expand the scope of tourist activities, innovate product structure, and link with scenic spots near the Luofu Mountain to develop package style of tourism routes.

#### **4.4 Accurately analyzing market and innovating marketing strategies**

**4.4.1 Analyzing user profiles and carrying out precise marketing** through the digital Yokogawa platform. Most of Henghe customer base is through referrals from acquaintances, groups for elderly people, and customer groups for study tours and parent-child tours with high satisfaction. The main target group for off-season tourism outside of statutory holidays is retired elderly people, who take advantage of discount hotel and scenic area fees in the off-season tourism season for "staggered" travel. In addition to selecting and creating environmental conditions, it is also necessary to focus on researching and developing dietary combinations suitable for the elderly, or focusing on nutritious meals, nostalgia, and other aspects<sup>[8]</sup>. For elderly travel groups and mom groups with enough friends and high quality, it can regularly push real-time travel consultations to maintain customer relationships and popularity. Consumption can also be stimulated by giving room coupons, free breakfast coupons, and other incentives by drawing the best luck red envelope to attract more new and frequent customers. By collaborating with likes and rewards activities, and inviting friends to like and share, friend resources could be utilized for content dissemination, to achieve the effect of word-of-mouth marketing.

**4.4.2 Creating a media marketing matrix and expanding customer channels.** It should fully tap into the tourism module functions of new media, create new media marketing, and form a scale effect for promotion. Henghe Town should make a unified promotion and planning according to its own selling points. On Tiktok, Xiaohongshu, WeChat platform, Today Toutiao, Ctrip travel website and other platforms, it should combine hot spots for continuous push. But in the process of publicity, distortion and over beautification should be avoided. For some tourist attractions and ways that young people like, it is possible to consider collaborating with KOL (key opinion leader) related to Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Dongguan, invite KOLs to promote, enhance user contact, and drive the growth of new users.

**4.5 Improving professional service level and enhancing tourist experience** The government, schools, enterprises, industry associations, and communities should work together. It

should build talent training models and strategic alliances based on the job requirements of tourism talents, achieve resource sharing of high-level talents, and build a professional talent team for the tourism industry. The government should launch corresponding talent training plans based on the development of local tourism industry, be responsible for evaluating and supervising local education work, and provide guidance and a good environment for the community. The industry association has established a professional teaching team in the field of homestays, consisting of industry experts and professional teachers from universities, to actively contribute wisdom and seek good strategies for the development of the tourism industry. The on-campus incubation base and off-campus practical training base could be integrated into a comprehensive practical teaching model. It could organically integrate with the education and teaching training system in colleges and universities to reconstruct the "double innovation" talent training model.

The government and operators should pay attention to the needs and feedback of tourists, continuously optimize the quality of tourism services, and enhance tourist experience satisfaction. By understanding the needs and preferences of tourists, targeted improvements are made to products and services. At the same time, it is necessary to actively handle complaints and suggestions from tourists, solve problems in a timely manner, and take improvement measures. This can improve the satisfaction and loyalty of tourists, and establish a good reputation and image for rural tourism in Henghe Town.

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