

Research on Impacts of Local Transfer of Surplus Rural Labor Force by Homestay Industry

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Abstract:

With the acceleration of country revitalization and urban-rural integration, there is a transfer backflow of rural labor force in China. It means less and less rural labor force will transfer to the city looking for a job while more and more of them will choose to return to hometown and start up business there. The development of rural tourism is a key factor of upgrading rural industrial structure and absorbing surplus labor force. The development of homestay industry promotes the trend of localization employment of surplus labor force effectively. This paper selects four homestays in two regions as examples. The case investigation and interview are made about homestay owners, homestay employees and customers. It uses observation method and test method to sort data and serial number method to analyze and test effect variables. It is found that there are both driving path and influence mechanism on the transfer of surplus rural labor force in industry attribute elements, economy profit elements and career selection elements by homestay industry. And the hindering elements show a slightly higher trend than the dynamic effect. This paper discusses how to improve dynamic effect of homestay industry and reduce its hindrance factors by changing local farmers' endogenous demand, strengthening external guarantee and combining activities of three industries. On the basis of literature review and theoretical framework, this study points out the promotion and restriction paths of rural homestay industry on the transfer of surplus rural labor force in industry attribute elements, economy profit elements and career selection elements. It has certain value and significance for developing rural economy and solving issues related to agriculture, rural areas, and rural people. Due to the limitations of sample size and attention groups, the conclusion framework is confined to obtained data. The further study could focus on multi-factor composition and path of promotion path and effects in theoretical and practical methods.

Keywords: *Surplus rural labor force, Homestay industry, Employment.*

As an important part of new agriculture industry, rural tourism influences the employment of rural labor force greatly. The development of rural tourism can further broaden farmers' income increment channel, improve farmers' income effectively and narrow income and life gaps between town and city. Being resource-oriented and market-oriented, rural tourism industry not only promotes large-scale and

intensive development of rural tourism, but also helps farmers remove from poverty and solve regional poverty problems. Comparing with farming or working in the city, the development of rural tourism could offer local employment for farmers and have advantages in improving farmers' sense of contentment and employment security. It is also of great significance for rural revitalization. There are many forms and paths on the transfer of labor force in rural areas. Different forms and paths will bring different effects. For farmers in the new era, finding a job in public institutions, township enterprises or private and individual enterprises near the hometown is much better than leaving hometown to work in the city. This will promote rural economy, improve the level of rural urbanization and maintain the vitality of rural development.

I. RELATED RESEARCH ON RURAL TOURISM AND EMPLOYMENT OF RURAL LABOR FORCE

Rural tourism is one of the important paths for local transfer of rural labor force. At present, many scholars research the problem on rural tourism and the transfer of surplus rural labor force. [1,2] Some papers find out that rural tourism could transfer labor force notably. It has advantages on the absorption of labor force, precedence of vulnerable groups, such as female group and retaining country affection of migrants. Teare says rural tourism is of great significance in reducing unemployment rate and increasing per capita income. Liu Baiping points out that there are serious contradictions between supply and demand of rural labor force in rural tourism. The development of rural tourism has periodic characteristic which leads to weak labor transfer capability. Accompanying with changed transfer motivation of rural labor force, the previous economy motivation was gradually changed into comprehensive consideration of economy factors and value factors [3]. Yao Haiqin's study focuses on employment substitution effect of rural tourism and impacts on female employment. It indicates that there is no significant substitution effect on self-employment but certain substitution effect on employment in rural tourism. [4]. Li Min points out rural tourism has promoting effects on the employment of land-lost farmers. She also shows that land policy and the abuse of public resources may restrict the employment promotion of land-lost farmers by rural tourism [5].

As an important form of rural tourism, homestay industry has gradually led the development of rural tourism and played an important role in local transfer of rural labor force because of its close local transfer and rich industrial chain. Some researches point out that the development of homestay industry can effectively promote the transfer of rural labor force. Rural tourism has advantages on good development prospect, convenient employment of vulnerable groups and prominent absorption of labor force [6]. However, some studies reflect on this approach in practice and point that many factors may limit the transfer efficiency of rural labor force transferring to rural tourism industry, such as labor force's lower capacity, lack of relevant regulation and training system and higher demands for labor quality in service industry [7]. Liu Guangrong points out that there are two influence mechanism paths on the transfer of rural labor force by homestay industry: the development of homestay industry promotes the transfer of labor force while the transfer of labor force restricts the development of homestay industry. These two paths interact and influence each other [8].

There are many domestic and overseas researches are on the transfer of labor force by rural tourism. But the influence mechanism on the transfer of surplus rural labor force by homestay industry is still at the stage of theoretical deduction. There are fewer researches on specific influence mechanism on positive effects and practical difficulties in actual transfer.

II. PRESENT SITUATION OF RURAL LABOR FORCE SUPPLY IN CHINA

2.1 Concurrence of the Surplus and Shortage of Rural Labor Force

On the one hand, there is potential surplus of rural labor force. In China, agricultural mechanization level and large-scale production degree is not high. A large number of agricultural productions are done by family. That causes low utilization efficiency and a waste of plenty of potential labor force. On the other hand, there is significant seasonality of agricultural production. In most areas of China, agricultural production is concentrated from April to October every year. Thus there is seasonal imbalance on labor force demand in agricultural production. Plenty of surplus rural labor force can't be effectively utilized in off season. For the income of agricultural production based on family unit is relatively low, a large quantity of rural labor force transfers seasonally.

2.2 Appearance of Aging Trend on Rural Labor Force

In recent years, the proportion of aging people is rising while the birth rate is declining in the country in China. It aggravates the increase of average age of rural labor force. And migration movement in the country is quite common due to imbalance between rural and urban economy development. Most migrant population are the young and the middle-aged. According to the statistics of "Chinese Population and Employment Statistics Yearbook 2020", people aged 45 to 54 accounts for 17.6 percent in rural areas. That is the highest proportion among all age groups. Since they lack enough education and ability to search for employment information on the Internet, they have to find jobs relying on their relatives and friends rather than government or intermediary agencies.

2.3 Lower Educational Level and Professional Skills Absence of Rural Labor Force

A survey which is done by Institute of Sociology in Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 2019 shows that education level of bulk of rural population is lower than junior school level. And the percentage reaches 87.9%. Among them, 10.7 percent of the population have never been to school. And there are significant gender differences on education level. The proportion of men who have never attended school is 14 percent lower than that of women. And at other educational levels, the proportion of men is higher than that of women. The percentage of having senior high school education or vocational college education is less than 10 percent. Only 2.4 percent of rural labor force has technical secondary school education. Due to education level restriction, the overall quality of rural labor force is lower. So their jobs are mostly related with physical labor other than technology-based ones. The job intensity and job risk is much

higher. Since the labor market needs labor force with higher quality, the employment scope for rural labor force has further reduced.

III. BASIC PATH OF INFLUENCE MECHANISM ON THE TRANSFER OF SURPLUS RURAL LABOR FORCE BY HOMESTAY INDUSTRY

This paper studies transfer mechanism on surplus rural labor force using the method of case study on the basis of the review of related literature. Considering case typicality and data availability, this paper chooses two farm stays in rural areas of Beijing and Heilongjiang province separately as the objects of case study. The information and statistics are shown in Table I. From the perspective of typical elements, farm stay is a form of rural tourism which is operated by family with the advantages of high participation of local residents, flexible operation and independence. It can provide multi-dimensional travel experience of eating, drinking, lodging and sightseeing for tourists. It is one of the important forms of rural tourism and a typical representative of the development of homestay industry.

TABLE I. Basic information and main data sources of four farm stays

No. of Farm Stays	Location	Operation Characteristics	Operator	Staff Size	Data Sources
Farm Stay A	Miyun, Bei Jing	farmyard, traditional cuisine, natural landscape	locals	8	two owners, four employees, two tourists
Farm Stay B	Huairou, Bei Jing	historical scenery, Huanghuacheng Great Wall, natural scenery, river rafting, mountaineering	locals	3	one owner, two tourists
Farm Stay C	Acheng, Heilongjiang	natural scenery, leisure activities, farmyard, Manchu culture	locals	3	two owners, one tourist
Farm Stay D	Shangzhi, Heilongjiang	Snow County scenery, combination of eating, lodging, sightseeing	locals	3	one owner, six employees, three tourists

The data of four farm stays was collected through in-depth interviews and field survey. Farm stay owners, employees and tourists give feedback from different points of view. Based on disposal data, this paper shows that there are three basic path elements of influence mechanism on surplus rural labor force by homestay industry, namely industry attribute elements, economy profit elements and career selection elements. In the process of data encoding, F represents path elements. So F1, F2 and F3 stand for industry attribute elements, economy profit elements and career selection elements respectively. And A, B, C and D are on behalf of four selected farm stays and one, two and three are for farm stay owners, employees and tourists. (For example, F1-C2 represents the evidence provided by employees in C farm stay on industry

attribute elements). This paper will elaborate on specific promotion and restriction path of three kinds of elements and analyse their interactive value.

3.1 Industry Attribute Elements

The characteristics on the development of homestay industry are similar to that of rural tourism, such as the quality and transfer amount of labor force. Actually, low entry barrier of rural homestay industry means high inclusiveness and minimum requirements on employees' quality. Thus it attracts plenty of surplus rural labor force to involve in the development of the industry. And since the degree of industrial correlation is high, homestay industry expands and promotes the extension and development of agricultural value chain to tertiary industry. So the related aspects of homestay industry, such as eating, lodging, traveling and sightseeing, may have employment positions for promoting the transfer of labor force. For example, car-hailing industry which generates from the development of homestay industry grows remarkably. Moreover, the need for food and beverage and the development of related supply chain promotes the development of local farming and breeding industry. The information and statistics are shown in Table II.

TABLE II. The evidence, promotion and restriction paths of industry attribute elements

Path Element	Path Attribute	Main Content	Typical Example
industry attribute elements	promotion path	high inclusiveness	F1-C1: "There is no educational requirement for the job. Everyone could apply for it." F1-A2: "There is no training at all. We just work directly."
		minimum employment requirements	F1-A1: "The staff only needs to cook dinner and clean up rooms. No more skills are needed for the job." F1-D1: "We have some more employment positions. The applicants may find jobs here."
		high degree of industrial correlation	F1-A2: "If I'm not busy, I occasionally show tourists around by tricycle."
	restriction path	low quality	F1-B1: "Some employees' service consciousness and service quality is not satisfying."
		scattered working period	F1-A2: "We go back farming in busy farming season."
		limited employment positions	F1-C1: "The employees are all relatives."

However, in the process of investigation and interview, it shows that restricting factors also generate from industry attribute elements. First, high inclusiveness caused employee' uneven quality in homestay

industry. This affects tourists’ experience and long-term development of industry badly. For example, attendants’ low service quality reduces tourists’ lodging experience greatly. Second, working period is scattered since employees may go back home for farming in busy farming season. In the interview, some employees said that farming in busy farming season is their first priority. Last, homestays are mostly operated by families. In case study, business model of farm stays is also self-operated by families. Therefore, the employment positions are very limited and most of them are for their own family members. Non-family employees in many homestays are just 2 to 5 people.

3.2 Economy Profit Elements

One of the important reasons on engaging in homestay industry for surplus rural labor force is economy profit. On the one hand, being an employee in homestay industry at idle time of farming may cushion against survival pressure of depending on the land in rural areas. The information and statistics are shown in Table III. Also, it may improve the overall revenue of the whole rural family. So the surplus rural labor force usually has great motivation to engage in the development of homestay industry (F2-A2). Talking about the motivation and reasons of engaging in homestay industry during the course of in-depth interviews, many homestay owners may also mention economy elements. On the other hand, the development of homestay industry improves the industrial structure in rural areas gradually. The industrial structure is from single agriculture industry to the coexistence of agriculture industry and service industry. This is good for the development of rural areas from the long-term point of view (F2-B3) since economy structure with single agriculture industry demands more for opportune time and geographic advantage in order to get harvest. The development of homestay industry further enhances employment resilience of rural labor force and broadens employment scope. And diversified industry layout also provides diversified employment options for rural labor force.

TABLE III. The evidence, promotion and restriction paths of economy profit elements

Path Element	Path Attribute	Main Content	Typical Example
economy profit elements	promotion path	higher income	F2-A2:“The income of farming is lower. Urban people like to come here for leisure. This is also the market opportunity.”
		improvement of industrial structure	F2-B3:“Farm stay is a good chance for farmers to do something extra besides farming.”
	restriction path	change of employment motivation	F2-D2:“If I can earn more money, I’d like to live in the city. The living condition is better in the city.”
		change of employment intention	F2-B2:“The salary is less here. I’d like to find a job in the city.”

Whereas, working motivation of modern farmers has switched from caring economy factors to value factors. It means that they pay more attention on their self-worth and high quality of life rather than economy benefits. This may also inhibit rural residents’ occupational aspirations (F2-D2) and prompt concept transformation of local labor force. The infrastructure, education, medical care, transportation and commerce in urban areas attract rural residents more. According to the survey, many rural residents have the plan to live in the city in the future. And some rural residents may consider migrate to the town for more and more young people work in the city. In addition, rural labor force prefers industrial worker to rural tourism employee. This employment intention may restrict local transfer of rural labor force to homestay industry (F2-B2). In the survey, most employees worked in homestay industry are older residents with reduced working ability. They said that the young prefer to work in the factory in the city while they are willing to work in rural homestays because of lower labor intensity.

3.3 Career Selection Elements

The characteristics of industry attribute and the power of economy profit improves employment impetus of surplus rural labor force to a certain extent. And flexible employment is also a great attraction for rural labor force in the process of career selection. At present, homestay industry is in primary stage of extensive operation and rapid development without standardized management paradigm. So freedom and convenience become important factors in career selection for rural residents (F3-B2). According to the survey, it shows that more freedom of family-run management homestay attracts rural labor force greatly. Furthermore, homestay industry is undoubtedly an ideal way of career selection for elderly population and women in rural areas (F3-D2). It attracts such relative vulnerable groups in rural areas because there is no intense labor and the employment period is flexible. The information and statistics are shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV. The evidence, promotion and restriction paths of career selection elements.

Path Element	Path Attribute	Main Content	Typical Example
career selection elements	promotion path	flexible and free employment	F3-B2:“There are no management regulations. We could manage ourselves consciously. We are family.”
		employment of vulnerable groups	F3-D2:“It’s quite appropriate for women to have this job. It is easy and needs no strength.”
	restriction path	reduction of travel experience	F3-C3:“Some attendants are elderly with less service awareness. The experience is relatively poor. I won’t t come again next time.”
		abnormal employment structure	F3-A1:“The employees are mostly local women, middle-aged and elderly people. Their children work in the city. ”

Nevertheless, the characteristics of such flexible employment make the employees take no count of service quality and service consciousness. The tourists' experience of guest room, food and beverage and service is poor. It is not good for long-term healthy development of the whole industry. It also has negative impacts on the transfer of rural labor force by homestay industry (F3-C3). As we have analyzed the restriction path in industry attribute elements above, low service quality often has negative impacts on sustainable development of the rural homestay industry. It is also unfavorable for employment of homestay industry. Although farmers are the main body of employment in homestay industry in theory, actually elderly population and women are the main body in practice. This abnormal employment structure may restrict the sustainable development of rural tourism from long-term point of view (F3-A1).

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND INSPIRATION

4.1 Research Conclusions

Through the analysis of cases, it can be summarized that three influence path elements reflect homestay owners (industry attribute elements), homestay employees (career selection elements) and the process of interactive exchange between them (economy profit elements) respectively. Although homestay industry plays a positive role in the transfer of surplus rural labor force, it restricts the transfer even more. And such promotion path and restriction path often exist in the same influence factor. First, industry attribute elements are important factors which influence local transfer of surplus rural labor force by homestay industry. The promotion paths include high inclusiveness, minimum employment requirements and high degree of industrial correlation. The restriction paths include low quality, scattered working period and limited employment position. Second, economy profit elements are important factors which influence local transfer of surplus rural labor force by homestay industry. The promotion paths include higher income and improvement of industrial structure. The restriction paths include change of employment motivation and change of employment intention. Third, career selection elements are important factors which influence local transfer of surplus rural labor force by homestay industry. The promotion paths include flexible and free employment and employment of vulnerable groups. The restriction paths include reduction of travel experience and abnormal employment structure.

4.2 Research Inspiration

The research results show that the effects of restriction path are more than that of promotion path from the current development of homestay industry. It has something to do with development stage of homestay industry. In order to expand the impetus brought by promotion path and reduce the obstacles brought by restriction path, this paper puts forward the following suggestions on the development of homestay industry and the transfer of surplus rural labor force.

(1) We need to understand the difficulties and problems of development stage of homestay industry correctly. The development mechanism, function mode, spatial distribution and employment positions and

number of rural tourism industry will appear different characteristics in different stage. It is beneficial to recognize present problems and promote the transfer of rural labor force in the future by understanding current situation of rural tourism industry and homestay industry.

(2) Policy guidance and system construction are important external guarantees. Nowadays, the transfer of rural labor force by homestay industry is quite limited. One of the important reasons is the lack of related policy and system. The government guidance and market complementarity may help the development of rural tourism industry to be mature and standard. And government may play a significant role in designing incentive policy and guarantee mechanism, skills training and guidance to promote healthy growth of homestay industry.

(3) Training is an important foundation of improving rural residents' employment quality in homestay industry. The residents' quality has become an important factor affecting the experience quality of rural tourism in rural areas. One of the key measures to improve local transfer effect of surplus rural labor force is improving employees' quality. But there is still a long way to go since most employees are relatives from the same big family.

(4) Combining activities of three industries is an important industrial form to transfer labor force for homestay industry. Due to the seasonal characteristics of agriculture industry, rural residents can't work for the development of rural tourism and homestay industry all the time. An important measure of enhancing rural tourism effects is realizing that the development of agriculture industry promotes that of tertiary industry and combines activities of three industries. We may combine the development of agriculture industry with tertiary industry, integrate farming culture and tourism experience into rural tourism activities in practice. That will increase tourists' rural experience effectively and relieve employment pressure of agriculture industry during busy farming period.

(5) Policy formulation should be pertinent and effective. From the point of view of industry development, setting industry standard, encouraging industry development and creating opportunity of labor transfer is an important force to promote benign interaction between the development of homestay industry and the transfer of labor force. So policy formulation should consider development stage and current situation of rural tourism in different areas fully. From the point of view of transfer process, improvement of employees' quality, expansion of employment channels and employment economy subsidies are important guarantees to promote the benign transfer of labor force and the sustainable development of rural tourism. Relevant training, guidance and incentive policies are of great value in the process of career selection.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND INSPIRATION

On the basis of relevant literature review and theoretical framework, this paper studies influence mechanism on transfer of surplus rural labor force by homestay industry through case investigation and interviews. It points out promotion and restriction paths from three aspects: industry attribute elements,

economy profit elements and career selection elements. It has certain value and significance for developing rural economy and promoting the solution of problems related to agriculture, rural areas, and rural people. However, there are limitations on typicality and representativeness of this paper for research objects are only four farm stays. And it neglects other data in a wider range. It just focuses on the data from homestay owners, employees and tourists in the investigation and interview. Moreover, the conclusion framework constructed in this paper is only obtained on the basis of obtained data. More influence factors and paths between the transfer of surplus rural labor force and homestay industry are worthy of further theoretical and practical research.

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