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## Research on the Development Strategies of Rural Tourism in Suzhou Based on SWOT Analysis

XueMing Zhang

*Department of Education and Human Sciences, Suzhou Vocational University, Suzhou, China  
zxm@jssvc.edu.cn*

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### Abstract

Rural tourism can make full use of tourism resources in rural areas to adjust and optimize rural industrial structures, extend the agricultural industrial chain, develop rural tourism services, promote nonagricultural employment, increase the incomes of farmers, and create a better economic base for the new rural construction. This paper uses the method of SWOT analysis to make a comprehensive evaluation and analysis on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the development of rural tourism in Suzhou. Through the combination of internal resources and external environment, this paper clearly determines the advantages and disadvantages of Suzhou rural resources, comprehends the opportunities and challenges to be faced, and also proposes the corresponding countermeasures. At last, this paper hopes to provide a decision reference for the development of rural tourism in Suzhou, and promote the sustainable development of rural tourism in Suzhou.

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*Keywords:* rural tourism, SWOT, development strategies

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### 1. Introduction

Originating from Europe in the mid-19th century, rural tourism is a new form of tourism, which takes the nature and humanities objects with the rurality as tourist attractions, depends on the beautiful landscape, the natural environment, architectures, culture and other resources in rural areas, and expands and develops projects such as meeting affairs, holiday-makings and leisure activities based on traditional rural leisure travels and experience tours. In China, rural tourism began in the 1950s. During the middle and later period of the 1990s, the rural tourism model began to be introduced, and obtained its rapid development, which also had a broad market prospect. In recent years, under the right guidance of the government, the development of rural tourism in Suzhou gives full play to the main role of the agricultural production operators, gets active support from all sectors of the community, and obtains participation and

interaction of related industries. Currently, Suzhou has more than 300 new rural tourist attractions and 14 national agricultural tourism demonstration sites. It develops 316 “pleasure-in-farmhouse” tourism areas and sites with the Moon Bay of Xishan as the representative, and forms more than a dozen brands of agricultural festival tourism activities. In the continued expansion, the rural tourism market in Suzhou is moving to maturity.

SWOT analysis (also known as TOWS analysis, Dawes matrix) was put forward by the management professor Weihrich at the University of San Francisco in the early 1980s, and is a method which can objectively and accurately analyze and study the current state of a unit. The four letters of SWOT respectively represent: Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat. Overall, SWOT can be divided into two parts: the first part is SW, mainly used to analyze the internal conditions; the second part is OT, mainly used to analyze the external conditions. With this method, we can find out those factors to our advantage and worth promoting from the development status of rural tourism in Suzhou, and avoid those unfavorable. We can also discover problems, find out solutions, and then make clear the future development direction.

## 2. SWOT analysis on rural tourism in Suzhou

### 2.1. Advantages of rural tourism

- Resource-rich rural tourism

Suzhou rural areas account for 75% of its administrative region, where water area accounts for 42.5%. Its tourism resources are not only very rich, but also have three distinct characteristics:

High grade resources—a batch of high grade rural tourism resources has formed a brand.

In the whole city, there are 22 national agricultural tourism demonstration sites, 6 historic and cultural towns of China, 7 provincial-level historic and cultural towns, 2 historic and cultural villages of China, one 5A state-level scenic spot, 7 4A state-level scenic spots, one national tourist resort, and 3 national forest parks.

Category diversification—including all the six main categories.

It includes rural natural landscape, rural scenery, the landscape of architectural heritage, agricultural products and rural crafts, human activities and folk culture, and the artistic conception of rural landscapes (bridge, water, people).

The rich cultural deposits—a long history of Wu culture.

Suzhou has rich cultural deposits, with a history of 2500 years. Wu culture formed from the history is an important component of the traditional Chinese culture, and is an important element in the development of rural tourism in Suzhou, highlighting in its intangible cultural heritage. At present, Suzhou has two world-class tourist attractions and 16 state-level tourist attractions, and still many are listed in the provincial and municipal protection lists.

Excellent geographical position

Suzhou is located in the center of the hinterland of the Yangtze River Delta urban agglomeration, adjacent to Shanghai, and is easy to receive a large city’s radiation, which thus has an active tourist market.

### 2.2. Disadvantages of rural tourism

- Obviously inadequate infrastructure. Due to the relatively short time for the development of rural tourism and insufficient capital investment, there are large differences among some rural tourist spots in transportation, accommodation, health and so on, which restricts the further development of rural tourism.
- Weak market consciousness. Although the scalization, branding and marketization of rural tourism are prevailing, most of the rural tourism operators do not have strong market awarenesses,

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