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RURAL TOURISM INDEX FRAMEWORK FOR SHAANXI PROVINCE, CHINA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Rural tourism is often described as a vital tool in developing the tourism industry and it has the strong potential to accelerate social and economic development in rural areas. Accordingly, rural tourism has become a popular topic in both reality and academic areas in recent decades. With its economy developing rapidly, China has proposed new national policies and strategies to guide and support rural tourism development. The concept of “high-quality development” is one that regulates and advances the rural tourism development. To provide an efficient tool for grasping the current situation of high-quality rural tourism development, evaluation index systems show great importance. However, there has been little research constructing scientific, reasonable and comprehensive evaluation index systems of high-quality development reflecting the current situation of rural tourism in China to precisely respond to the requirements of this new era of high-quality development in all aspects. Therefore, this research will identify possible index system indicators for rural tourism development and construct an initial evaluation index framework based on high-quality development for further quantitative assessment work to reflect the situation of the rural tourism industry at a provincial level. By reviewing relevant literature, 38 potential indicators were selected and categorised under the criteria of five development concepts. Two rounds of Delphi method expert consultation were utilised, with 33 indicators selected for the rural tourism evaluation index framework for Shaanxi from the perspective of high-quality development.

Keywords: rural tourism, high-quality development, evaluation index framework, evaluation indicators

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INTRODUCTION

China's rural tourism development has reached at a stage of unprecedented development, driven by the increasing market demands and policy guidance (Jia et al., 2022). Rural tourism is often described nowadays as a vital tool in the development of tourism industry and has the strong potential to accelerate social and economic development as well as to revitalise the declining rural productivity in rural areas (Kortoci & Kortoci, 2017). As the rapidly developing economy and society face new challenges, China has proposed new national policies and strategies to provide guidance and support for developing rural tourism in China. The concept of "high-quality development" is one of those that could regulate and advance rural tourism development. More specifically, there are five sub-concepts under high-quality development: innovation, coordination, green, openness and sharing. These five sub-concepts are termed as "five development concepts" and cover five dimensions of high-quality development, widening the connotation and content of high-quality development.

Rich rural tourism resources can be found in Shaanxi province in terms of natural scenery, cultural heritages, festivals, traditional customs, local specialty, etc. (Xu et al., 2021). Therefore, Shaanxi province, one of the most historical and with various rural tourism resources, has been selected as the target to be discussed in this study. Although tourism is a pillar industry in Shaanxi province and has brought benefits for the entire development of the province, insufficiency issues and problems, such as homogenisation, environmental pollution, unbalanced income, lagging rural infrastructure and unscientific management, still exist in the industry and has dragged the development process (Qi et al., 2022).

To provide an efficient tool for grasping the current situation of high-quality rural tourism development, an evaluation index framework needs to be taken into serious consideration. According to Chu and Zhang (2022), researchers should focus on constructing scientific, reasonable and comprehensive evaluation index systems of high-quality development and identify the current situation of high-quality development in China to precisely respond to the requirements of this new era of high-quality development in all aspects. An effective rural tourism performance evaluation framework could comprehensively reveal the effect and outcome of rural tourism development, which is conducive to improving the quality of rural tourism development (Qi et al., 2022). However, less attention has been given to establishing more quantitative measurements for evaluating the efficiency and performance of rural tourism in China (Zhu et al., 2022), especially within the current trend of achieving high-quality development.

Therefore, it is crucial to identify possible indicators and then establish a corresponding evaluation index framework for the rural tourism industry to evaluate the industry performance and measure how policies and strategies are

implemented in practice. Correspondingly, this study aims to identify possible index system indicators for rural tourism development with the criteria of five development concepts (innovation, coordination, green, openness and sharing) of high-quality development, and to construct a preliminary evaluation index framework to accurately illustrate the situation in the rural tourism industry at a provincial level for further quantitative assessment work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rural Tourism

The definition and scope of rural tourism vary across countries and regions. This study adopts Lane's (1994) widely recognised definition, which describes rural tourism as being "located in rural areas, functionally rural, set in rural scale, traditional in character, representing the complex pattern of rural environment, economy, history and location." This operational definition provides a comprehensive foundation for the current research as it is the one most adopted and covers a relatively wide range of the characteristics of rural tourism.

Although rural tourism has been widely examined, much of the literature has focused on tourism activities, rural industries, development challenges, and corresponding countermeasures (Xue et al., 2017). As the industry matures, scholars highlighted increasingly emerging issues such as environmental pollution, inefficient resource use, and lack of innovation (Butler, 2018). Key problems include product and service homogeneity and lack of distinctiveness (Shen et al., 2019); insufficient infrastructure and investment, inadequate scientific management, and shortage of qualified personnel (Deng & Pan, 2019); pronounced environmental impacts; and low levels of community participation, internal competition, disputes over benefit distribution, disorganised management, and inconsistent governance (Deng & Pan, 2019).

High-Quality Development Policy

The concept of high-quality development was first introduced at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2017, marking a policy shift from prioritising economic growth speed to focusing on qualitative improvement (Sun et al., 2021). Since then, it has become the central theme for economic and social development during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021–2025), with the ultimate aim of enhancing national welfare and improving residents' quality of life (He et al., 2021). With this policy direction, the notion of high-quality tourism development has also emerged. Existing research primarily follows two aspects: one focuses on using high-quality development principles to assess tourism at the regional level (Tang et al., 2021), while the other concentrates on evaluating the quality of specific tourism sectors or activities from a micro-level perspective (Pai et al., 2019).

Five Development Concepts

The five key concepts underpinning high-quality development—innovation, coordination, green, openness, and sharing—were put forward at the 19th CPC National Congress and serve as a strategic framework: (1) Innovation: emphasises scientific and technological advancement as a driver of competitiveness (Liu et al., 2021); (2) Coordination: seeks to promote social equity and justice by improving access to education, healthcare, elderly care, and other essential services (Qi et al., 2022); (3) Green: addresses environmental concerns, advocating for sustainable resource use and ecosystem protection in response to growing public expectations for a higher living standard (Li et al., 2018); (4) Openness: aims to deepen integration with the global economy, facilitating alignment between domestic and international development efforts (Wang & Ye, 2022); (5) Sharing: Sharing promotes inclusive development by reducing urban–rural disparities and ensuring that all citizens benefit from the achievement and outcome of development to meet their new eagerness for a better life.

Evaluation Index Framework for Rural Tourism

Indicators play a crucial role in evaluating industry performance, providing objective measures to inform both theoretical analysis and policy design (Blancas et al., 2017). With the rapid development of rural tourism, scholars have increasingly underscored the sector's persistent challenges, including environmental degradation, inefficient resource use, and lack of innovation (Butler, 2018). Various frameworks have been developed to assess these issues. For example, Rui (2018) proposed evaluation criteria encompassing tourism resource attractiveness, infrastructure, location, and resource development, while Wei (2018) focused on resource factors, development conditions, and management practices.

Nonetheless, few existing frameworks explicitly align with the five development concepts, despite their growing relevance in the current policy landscape. To address this gap, the present study draws on an extensive review of literature published between 2018 and 2022, alongside a thorough analysis of the five development concepts, to construct a more comprehensive and policy-relevant evaluation index framework. The development process also builds upon prior work (Zheng et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2023; Zhang & Wu, 2023). The resulting preliminary framework is designed to assess how effectively rural tourism development in Shaanxi Province meets the objectives of high-quality development. The detailed framework is presented in Table 1.

Table 5: Preliminary High-quality Rural Tourism Evaluation Index Framework

	Indicators	Citation
Innovation B1	C11 Proportion of R&D expenditure	Ming & Wang, 2022
	C12 Proportion of R&D personnel	Lin et al., 2022
	C13 Average expenditure on R&D of rural tourism enterprises	Xu, 2018
	C14 Expenditure on education	Wang & Pan, 2022
	C15 Number of authorized patents applications	Xu, 2018; Wang & Pan, 2022
	C16 Rural tourism technical market turnover	Lin et al., 2022; Wang & Pan, 2022
Coordination B2	C21 Ratio of disposable income of urban and rural residents	Lin et al., 2022
	C22 Infrastructure construction network density	Ming & Wang, 2022
	C23 Number of tourist toilets	Zheng et al., 2021
	C24 Highway mileage	Ming & Wang, 2022; Wang & Pan, 2022
	C25 GDP per capita Gini coefficient	Lin et al., 2022
	C26 Proportion of rural tourism in the tertiary industry	Wang et al., 2022
	C27 Level of catering and accommodation facilities	Wang et al., 2022; Hui, 2019
Green B3	C31 Green coverage rate in built-up areas	Lin et al., 2022
	C32 Water quality regular rate	Ming & Wang, 2022
	C33 Good air quality days	Zheng et al., 2021
	C34 Land utilization rate	Ming & Wang, 2022
	C35 Industrial pollution control investment	Lin et al., 2022
	C36 Local expenditure on environmental protection	Ming & Wang, 2022; Wang & Pan, 2022
	C37 Harmless treatment rate of domestic waste	Zheng et al., 2021; Wang & Pan, 2022
	C38 Ecological construction and protection investment	Zheng et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2018
Openness B4	C41 Proportion of foreign capital utilized	Lin et al., 2022
	C42 Number of international tourists received	Lin et al., 2022
	C43 International tourism income	Wang et al., 2022
	C44 Level of cultural propaganda	Ming & Wang, 2022
	C45 External investment and cooperation	Wang et al., 2022
	C46 E-commerce sales of rural tourism products	Wang et al., 2022
	C47 Foreign contracted project turnover	Wang et al., 2022

Indicators		Citation
Sharing B5	C51 Per capita disposable income of rural residents	Wang & Pan, 2022
	C52 Residents' happiness level	Ming & Wang, 2022
	C53 Number of rural tourism employment	Wang & Pan, 2022
	C54 Local expenditure on culture, sports and media	Wang & Pan, 2022
	C55 Engel coefficient ratio of urban and rural households	Ming & Wang, 2022
	C56 Urbanisation rate	Lin et al., 2022
	C57 Number of tourism agencies	Wang et al., 2022
	C58 Tourists' satisfaction level	Ming & Wang, 2022
	C59 Tourist revisit rate	Ming & Wang, 2022
	C510 Number of literary and artistic activities organized by mass cultural institutions	Wang et al., 2022

Source: Xu, 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Hui, 2019; Zheng et al, 2021; Lin et al., 2022; Ming & Wang, 2022; Wang & Pan, 2022; Wang et al., 2022

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Application of the Delphi Method

This study employed the Delphi method as the principal tool for refining the evaluation index framework for high-quality rural tourism in Shaanxi Province. The Delphi method is a well-established technique for integrating expert knowledge and building consensus on complex multidimensional issues (Donohoe & Needham, 2009; Mukherjee et al., 2015). It was considered particularly appropriate for this research objective, as it provides a systematic approach to expert consultation, ensuring methodological rigour. The initial phase involved a comprehensive literature review to identify an set of 38 potential indicators, organised according to five development concepts: innovation, coordination, green, openness, and sharing (Xu, 2018; Liu et al., 2018; Hui, 2019; Zheng, 2021). An expert panel of 15 members was assembled through purposive sampling. The selection criteria ensured that participants possessed advanced expertise in rural tourism and high-quality development, drawing from academia, government, and industry sectors (Chen et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2020). All panel members were briefed in detail on the study's objectives and conceptual framework.

Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

The Delphi questionnaire was structured in two parts. The first section utilised a 5-point Likert scale, an approach widely employed in similar Delphi studies (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019; Zhao et al., 2023), to assess the perceived importance of each proposed indicator. The second section gathered demographic information and self-assessments of expertise and familiarity with the subject

matter. This additional data enabled assessment of the authority and consistency of expert responses, thereby enhancing the methodological robustness of the process.

Expert Consultation Rounds and Data Analysis

In line with recommended Delphi practices (Zhang & Wu, 2023), the study conducted two rounds of expert consultation. Questionnaires were distributed to the panel both in person and via WeChat. In the first round, experts evaluated each indicator based on their professional judgment. The responses were analysed using SPSS and Excel to assess item reliability and overall framework coherence. Based on the first-round findings, indicators that failed to meet the predefined criteria were revised or removed. A second round of consultation was then conducted with the same expert panel to verify the stability of the framework and achieve final consensus. The result of this process was a rigorously validated, expert-informed evaluation index system for assessing high-quality rural tourism development in Shaanxi Province.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Experts' profiles, Positive Coefficient and Degree of Expert Authority (Cr)

In this research, 15 experts with different background were recruited as the panel for the consultation. These experts all met the inclusion criteria to guarantee they all have the authority and knowledge to make consultation decisions. The summary of assembled experts' profiles for this research is collected and shown below in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of the Basic Information of Experts

Variable	Category	Number of Experts	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	7	46.7%
	Female	8	53.3%
Degree	Master	7	46.7%
	Ph.D.	8	53.3%
Working Years	10-15years	7	46.7%
	15-20 years	7	46.7%
	Above 20 years	1	6.6%
Job Sector	Academia	6	40.0%
	Government	2	13.3%
	Tourism industry sectors	7	46.7%
Position/Title	Associate professor and above	6	40.0%
	Section chief and above	5	33.3%
	Manager and above	4	26.7%

Source: Author's Calculation

The positive coefficient of experts is the degree of experts' interest and the effectiveness of their responses (Zheng et al., 2020). During the consultation

and scoring process, 15 questionnaires were distributed either via Wechat application or in person to 15 assembled experts in each round. All 15 experts responded with effective and valid feedback in each round, so that the positive coefficient in both the first round and second round is 100%, which is relatively acceptable.

The degree of expert authority (Cr) is calculated with two self-assessment scores collected in the questionnaire given by experts themselves in each round to reflect the reliability of experts' decisions. The formula is $Cr = (Cs + Ca) / 2$, in which Cs represents the judgement basis of experts, while Ca is the experts' familiarity with the given content. Below in Table 3. is the summary of collected scores of experts' self-assessment of Cs and Ca. It can be calculated that the Cr of this research is 0.987, which is over 0.7. Therefore, the consultation result in this research is considered reliable.

Table 3. Quantitative Self-assessment Scores of Cs and Ca

Judgement Basis (Cs)	Degree of influence of each of the sources in their criteria					
	High		Medium		Low	
	Weight	Expert	Weight	Expert	Weight	Expert
Theoretical analysis	0.3	13	0.2	2	0.1	0
Practical experience	0.5	15	0.4	0	0.1	0
Referring to literature	0.1	7	0.1	8	0.1	0
Expert intuition	0.1	0	0.1	0	0.1	0
Familiarity (Ca)	Very familiar			Weight	Expert	
				1	14	
	Familiar			0.8	1	
	General			0.5	0	
	Not very familiar			0.2	0	
	Unfamiliar			0	0	

Source: Author's Calculation

Selection of Indicators in the First Round

In the first round of scoring, 38 indicators in total in the preliminary evaluation index framework were judged by experts. Scores given by the experts were processed with SPSS and Excel. According to the inclusion criteria, indicators met all the following criteria: (a) mean score (MS) >3.5 (Asmelash and Kumar, 2019); (b) coefficient of variation (CV) <0.25 (Zhang and Wu, 2023); (c) full score rate (FSR) >0.2 (Wang and Si, 2011) would be retained in the questionnaire until the second round, while indicators that meet neither of these criteria would be removed directly. Meanwhile, indicators that only met some of the above criteria were left pending and asked for extra focus from experts in the second round consultation. It can be seen in Table 4. that three indicators, including "C16 Rural tourism technical market turnover", "C25 GDP per capita Gini coefficient" and "C510 Number of literary and artistic activities organized by mass cultural institutions", did not meet any of the criteria and have been removed from the

framework for next round. Indicators like “C15 Number of authorized patents applications”, “C36 Local expenditure on environmental protection”, “C38 Ecological construction and protection investment”, “C41 Proportion of foreign capital utilized” and “C54 Local expenditure on culture, sports and media” did not reach experts’ consensus on their importance, but were retained for further consideration in the next round. Other indicators have reached a consensus and have been retained in the framework. The result of the selection of indicators in the first round is illustrated below in Table 4.

Selection of Indicators in the Second Round

After the first round, new questionnaires with revised indicators were developed and distributed to the same 15 experts. The second round of expert consultation focused mainly on repeated scoring of the indicators’ importance, especially with extra focus on those indicators retained from the first round for further consideration. Results can be identified in Table 4. below, in which two more indicators, “C36 Local expenditure on environmental protection” and “C54 Local expenditure on culture, sports and media”, failed to meet the criteria and have been removed, while other indicators all reached a consensus among experts. Ultimately, 33 indicators have been proven to be important in constructing the framework when evaluating rural tourism from the perspective of high-quality development.

Table 4. The Result of Selection of Indicators in the First and Second Round

First Round					Second Round				
	MS	CV	FSR	Result		MS	CV	FSR	Result
C11	5	0	100	Retain	C11	5	0	100	Retain
C12	4.4	0.17	53.3	Retain	C12	4.6	0.11	60	Retain
C13	4.27	0.14	33.3	Retain	C13	4.47	0.12	46.7	Retain
C14	3.73	0.24	26.7	Retain	C14	4.27	0.11	26.7	Retain
C15	3.53	0.26	26.7	Pending	C15	3.87	0.22	26.7	Retain
C16	2.47	0.3	0	Remove	C16 Removed				
C21	4.87	0.07	86.7	Retain	C21	4.87	0.07	86.7	Retain
C22	4.93	0.05	93.3	Retain	C22	4.87	0.07	86.7	Retain
C23	4.93	0.05	93.3	Retain	C23	4.87	0.07	86.7	Retain
C24	4	0.19	26.7	Retain	C24	4.27	0.11	26.7	Retain
C25	3.13	0.27	13.3	Remove	C25 Removed				
C26	3.73	0.24	26.7	Retain	C26	3.8	0.23	26.7	Retain
C27	3.93	0.22	33.3	Retain	C27	4	0.21	33.3	Retain
C31	5	0	100	Retain	C31	5	0	100	Retain
C32	4.4	0.12	40	Retain	C32	4.4	0.12	40	Retain
C33	4.47	0.12	46.7	Retain	C33	4.47	0.12	46.7	Retain
C34	4	0.23	40	Retain	C34	5	0	100	Retain
C35	3.73	0.24	26.7	Retain	C35	3.87	0.22	26.7	Retain
C36	3.67	0.27	33.3	Pending	C36	3.13	0.27	13.3	Remove
C37	4.07	0.22	40	Retain	C37	4.07	0.22	40	Retain
C38	3.67	0.27	33.3	Pending	C38	4.13	0.15	26.7	Retain

First Round					Second Round				
	MS	CV	FSR	Result		MS	CV	FSR	Result
C41	4.13	0.09	13.3	Pending	C41	4.27	0.11	26.7	Retain
C42	4.73	0.1	73.3	Retain	C42	4.67	0.1	66.7	Retain
C43	3.93	0.2	26.7	Retain	C43	4.27	0.11	26.7	Retain
C44	4.27	0.11	26.7	Retain	C44	4.27	0.11	26.7	Retain
C45	3.93	0.22	33.3	Retain	C45	4.33	0.11	33.3	Retain
C46	3.87	0.24	33.3	Retain	C46	4.33	0.11	33.3	Retain
C47	4.47	0.12	46.7	Retain	C47	4.47	0.12	46.7	Retain
C51	4.8	0.09	80	Retain	C51	4.8	0.09	80	Retain
C52	4.73	0.1	73.3	Retain	C52	4.73	0.1	73.3	Retain
C53	4.87	0.07	86.7	Retain	C53	4.87	0.07	86.7	Retain
C54	4	0.13	13.3	Pending	C54	3.13	0.27	13.3	Remove
C55	4.8	0.09	80	Retain	C55	4.8	0.09	80	Retain
C56	4.4	0.12	40	Retain	C56	4.33	0.11	33.3	Retain
C57	3.73	0.24	26.7	Retain	C57	4.27	0.11	26.7	Retain
C58	4.93	0.05	93.3	Retain	C58	5	0	100	Retain
C59	4.53	0.11	53.3	Retain	C59	4.53	0.11	53.3	Retain
C510	2.87	0.32	6.7	Remove	C510 Removed				

Source: Author's Calculation

Coordination Coefficient (W) Test

The coordination coefficient test (W), also called Kendall's coefficient of concordance test, is essential for assessing whether the results of the scoring by experts coordinate with each other. In other words, it is used to judge the consistency of indicators and degree of expert coordination. The value of W ranges from 0 to 1, with the higher value indicating the greater degree of expert coordination and the higher consistency of experts' decisions. At the meantime, P-value is considered statistically significant when it is smaller than 0.05. This study conducted a coordination coefficient test after each round's consultation, and the result of each round (Table 5.) passed the coordination test, indicating that two rounds of experts' consultations in this study were coordinated and consistent.

Table 5. The Result of Coordination Coefficient Test in the First and Second Round

First round		Second round	
W	P-value	W	P-value
0.481	0.000	0.426	0.000

Source: Author's Calculation

The Established Evaluation Index Framework

After two rounds of indicators selection using Delphi method, the ultimate evaluation index framework has been built on the basis of high-quality development to provide a tool for evaluating rural tourism in Shaanxi province. It can be used as a reference for rural tourism service providers to identify problems in innovation, coordination, green, openness and sharing. More

importantly, it could help to assess whether the rural tourism industry has met the requirements of high-quality development, which is the current trend in China. The established evaluation index framework can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. High-quality Rural Tourism Evaluation Index Framework for Shaanxi Province

Innovation B1	C11 Proportion of R&D expenditure
	C12 Proportion of R&D personnel
	C13 Average expenditure on R&D of rural tourism enterprises
	C14 Expenditure on education
	C15 Number of authorized patents applications
Coordination B2	C21 Ratio of disposable income of urban and rural residents
	C22 Infrastructure construction network
	C23 Number of tourists toilets
	C24 Highway mileage
	C26 Proportion of rural tourism in the tertiary industry
Green B3	C27 Level of catering and accommodation facilities
	C31 Green coverage rate in built-up areas
	C32 Water quality regular rate
	C33 Good air quality days
	C34 Land utilization rate
	C35 Industrial pollution control investment
	C37 Harmless treatment rate of domestic waste
Openness B4	C38 Ecological construction and protection investment
	C41 Proportion of foreign capital utilized
	C42 Number of international tourists received
	C43 International tourism income
	C44 Level of cultural propaganda
	C45 External investment and cooperation
	C46 E-commerce sales of rural tourism products
Sharing B5	C47 Foreign contracted project turnover
	C51 Per capita disposable income of rural residents
	C52 Residents' happiness level
	C53 Number of rural tourism employment
	C55 Engel coefficient ratio of urban and rural households
	C56 Urbanization rate
	C57 Number of tourism agencies
	C58 Tourists' satisfaction rate
	C59 Tourist revisit rate

Source: Author's Calculation

Compared to the preliminary framework (Table 1.), 5 indicators in total were removed. Indicator “C16 Rural tourism technical market turnover”, representing how much benefit rural tourism brings to the innovation, was removed, possibly due to the experts considering the technical innovation development in rural Shaanxi as being generally weak. When the average status of this aspect is low, the significance of using this indicator to evaluate is

unnecessary. “C25 GDP per capita Gini coefficient” was considered for removal by experts most likely because of the practical circumstances in rural Shaanxi and also the low data availability when doing data collection in the future. The Gini coefficient is rarely calculated in rural administrative divisions in Shaanxi province. “C510 Number of literary and artistic activities organized by mass cultural institutions” was also removed considering its insignificant representation by experts when assessing the sharing outcome of high-quality development. Indicator of “C36 Local expenditure on environmental protection” was removed due to the repetition with indicator “C38 Ecological construction and protection investment”, as C38 covers a wider range. Lastly, “C54 Local expenditure on culture, sports and media” seems less important than other indicators due to its narrow representation of the development potential of cultural industries rather than the status of sharing outcome. Assembled experts all reached a consensus on removing the above indicators from the preliminary framework and proved the low importance of these indicators when evaluating the development of rural tourism from the perspective of innovation, coordination, green, openness and sharing.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to establish an evaluation index framework from the perspective of high-quality development for Shaanxi province, as few studies have been conducted on identifying proper and comprehensive indicators for rural tourism. This research adopted the Delphi method to identify and select potential indicators. After two rounds of the expert consultation, 33 relatively important indicators were selected from the 38 initial indicators by 15 experts and have reached consensus among them. These indicators contributed to realizing how high-quality development is actually implemented in terms of innovation, coordination, green, openness and sharing in the rural tourism industry. Moreover, this research has to some extent filled the research gap of a lack of comprehensive evaluation index framework on the basis of high-quality, and using the five development concepts as the criteria has provided practical reference when establishing assessment tools to measure the performance of rural tourism industry in practice. However, limitations still exist in this research, such as: (1) more potential indicators could be employed at the initial stage of building the framework so that they cover more aspects when evaluating the rural tourism development performance; (2) weighting for each indicator could be allocated so that the framework can transform into an evaluation index system for actual evaluation process rather than just a theoretical reference. Hopefully, scholars will consider this research’s limitations and fill the research gaps in this field.

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