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Strategy of Agritourism Entrepreneurship to Determine the Abilities of Entrepreneurs for Entrepreneurial Success in China

Abstract: - Agritourism entrepreneurship is an important measure to revitalize the rural economy, but the entrepreneurial success rate of agritourism entrepreneurs is generally low. How to succeed as an entrepreneur is a complex problem many rural agritourism entrepreneurs face. Therefore, based on the Entrepreneurial Process Theory, this study focuses on agritourism entrepreneurs in Sichuan, China. By collecting 794 valid sample data through a questionnaire survey, the study empirically examines the impact of recognition, resource acquisition, and networking ability on agritourism entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial success. The empirical analysis results show that 1) recognition ability, resource acquisition ability, and networking ability all have a significant positive impact on agritourism entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial success; 2) recognition ability and networking ability can effectively drive agritourism entrepreneurs to acquire resources; 3) a chain mediation effect exists between recognition ability, resource acquisition ability, networking ability, and agritourism entrepreneurial success. The study provides a new perspective on the paths and mechanisms influencing agritourism entrepreneurial success. It proposes measures such as improving entrepreneurial training systems, building communication platforms, and increasing support to enhance agritourism entrepreneurial success, which is of great practical significance.

Keywords: agritourism entrepreneurial success, agritourism entrepreneurship strategies, Entrepreneurial ability, Rural Revitalization

1. Introduction

In academic research and development practice, the agritourism industry has become one of the preferred measures for governments to implement industrial cross-border integration, transform urban-rural dual structures, and enhance farmers' income and living standards. It has received global recognition as an effective means to prosper rural economies, promote farmers' wealth, and transform rural mono-economic structures (J. M. Campbell & Kubickova, 2020). In this context, agritourism entrepreneurs, as the main actors in the agritourism market, play a crucial role in the direct and indirect collaboration necessary for developing the agritourism industry (Vendramini et al., 2002). Successful entrepreneurial endeavors further revitalize rural industries(Gary Bosworth & Atterton, 2012; Klien, 2016; Zollet & Qu, 2019). Therefore, agritourism entrepreneurs are essential in

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implementing rural revitalization strategies and sustainable rural development, garnering significant attention in tourism and entrepreneurship studies(Kader et al., 2009; Hernandez-Maestro & Gonzalez-Benito, 2011). Despite the continuous improvement of the entrepreneurial environment in rural areas and the increasing number of entrepreneurs, the entrepreneurial success rate still needs enhancement. Agritourism entrepreneurs, as a primary type of rural entrepreneurs(Q. C. Li et al., 2022), face the challenge of achieving agritourism entrepreneurial success in the rapidly changing external market environment with high uncertainty, making it a crucial research topic.

Given that agritourism is considered a form of rural agricultural entrepreneurship(Carla Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Tew & Barbieri, 2012), agritourism entrepreneurship is understood as entrepreneurs leveraging rural agricultural resources, employing local labor and services (while providing new services), offering tourists agritourism-related educational, entertainment, homestay, and traditional cultural experiences as tourism operations, thereby creating income for the region through entrepreneurial activities(Arroyo et al., 2013; G. Bosworth & McElwee, 2014; Dorocki et al., 2015). Similar to most European countries and countries in Southeast Asia(Martins et al., 2013), agritourism enterprises in China are mainly private micro and small businesses, and the entrepreneurial success of such enterprises largely depends on the entrepreneurial key abilities of entrepreneurs during the entrepreneurial process(Q. C. Li et al., 2022). Entrepreneurial Process Theory focuses on exploring various levels of abilities in the entrepreneurial process(R. A. Baron & Shane, 2007), that is, the key aspects of the entrepreneur-centered entrepreneurial process, which includes the coordinated dynamic balance among elements such as networks, resources, and opportunities, where entrepreneurial abilities influence the choices of entrepreneurial behaviors, ultimately impacting entrepreneurial success.

As a core element and fundamental support driving the high-quality development of agritourism, agritourism entrepreneurs play an important role in the development and revitalization of rural areas(Hernández-Maestro & González-Benito, 2014). However, existing research on agritourism entrepreneurial success mainly focuses on the impact of external factors such as policies, markets(Doh et al., 2017; Andehn & Decosta, 2021; Liang et al., 2021; B. Ferreira et al., 2022), diversified operations(Arru et al., 2021; Choo & Park, 2022), social roles of entrepreneurs(Pettersson & Cassel, 2014; Mottiar et al., 2018; Khazami et al., 2020), and the uniqueness of businesses(Morrison & King, 2002; Getz & Carlsen, 2005; Q. C. Li et al., 2022). Although the performance of agritourism enterprises is closely related to their performance and the economic revitalization of destinations, there is relatively little research on entrepreneurial success capabilities from the perspective of the entrepreneurial process. To fill this research gap, this paper emphasizes and proposes the following research questions: first, the relationship between recognition ability, resource acquisition ability, networking ability, and agritourism entrepreneurial success; second, the relative strengths and reasons for the impact of recognition ability, resource acquisition ability, networking ability on agritourism entrepreneurial success in the Chinese context; third, how do recognition ability, resource acquisition ability, and networking ability influence each other to promote agritourism entrepreneurial success?

2. Literature and hypotheses development

2.1 Theory of the Entrepreneurial Process

Entrepreneurship is a process concept, and the success of entrepreneurship is considered to be affected by the process of entrepreneurship (Shane & venkataraman, 2000; R. A. Baron & Shane, 2007; R. A. Baron & Henry, 2011). Since the 1980s, entrepreneurship research based on a process perspective has gradually emerged. (Gartner, 1990) suggests that the entrepreneurial process should include all the processes associated with opportunity identification and the creation of a new organization, i.e., opportunity identification, business definition, Resource evaluation and acquisition, organizational restructuring, and business innovation. Entrepreneurial Process Theory (Wickham, 2006) emphasizes systematic and staged processes, from opportunity identification, resource acquisition, team building, business planning, implementation, and operation to growth and expansion. Entrepreneurs must assess opportunities, acquire and allocate resources, assemble diverse teams, develop strategic plans, operate flexibly, and continually learn and improve through feedback to successfully address risks and challenges, achieving sustained business growth. (Shane & venkataraman, 2000) Proposed that the conceptual framework of entrepreneurship research, which focuses on the identification, evaluation, and development of entrepreneurial opportunities, attempts to build a unified theoretical platform for the field of entrepreneurship research by defining entrepreneurship as the process of identifying, evaluating, and developing entrepreneurial opportunities, which leads to the creation of goods and services. (Ardichvili et al., 2003) pointing out the roles of entrepreneurial personality traits, prior knowledge/experience, social networks, and type of opportunity, and emphasizing the importance of prior knowledge/experience, social networks, personality traits, and entrepreneurial alertness, suggesting that the confluence of contextual differences and individual differences influences entrepreneurial opportunities to be identified and developed. (Timmons et al., 2004) believed that the main factors for the success of a business are resources, opportunity, and team and that it is important to ensure a balance and match between these. (R. A. Baron & Markman, 2000; R. A. Baron & Shane, 2007) Identified social networks as one of the crucial factors contributing to entrepreneurial success, emphasizing how entrepreneurs can acquire resources, information, and support through social relationships. This perspective surpasses the conventional entrepreneurial theories that narrowly focus on individual capabilities and resources, highlighting the critical role of social relationships in the entrepreneurial process.

The above entrepreneurial process models are all based on a balanced model of entrepreneurial abilities, emphasizing the coordination and balance of various elements, especially key aspects of the entrepreneurial process such as opportunity recognition(Eckhardt & Shane, 2003), resource acquisition (Wickham, 2006) and social networks(R. A. Baron & Markman, 2000), which are constantly being proposed and explored. Therefore, research on the entrepreneurial activities of agritourism entrepreneurs must be based on the entrepreneurial process, exploring the factors influencing the entrepreneurial success of agritourism entrepreneurs from the perspective of Entrepreneurial Process Theory is an objective and requirement.

2.2 Agritourism Entrepreneurship Success

2.2.1 the concept of Agritourism Entrepreneurship success

Agritourism entrepreneurial success has unique non-standard characteristics compared to other entrepreneurial activities. (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000) Proposed that agritourism entrepreneurs often have economic and non-

economic motivations for entrepreneurship, making it challenging to measure entrepreneurial success. The application of subjective and objective indicators has been suggested and discussed. However, more research indicates that agritourism entrepreneurs do not necessarily equate success with economic indicators such as wealth growth. Economic motivations are not a strong reason for entrepreneurs to engage in agritourism entrepreneurship, and the expected outcomes of entrepreneurship are not solely financial(Alstete, 2008; Teodoro et al., 2017; Q. C. Li et al., 2022). Furthermore, since the scope of business operated by agritourism enterprises varies depending on local agricultural resources, objective data cannot be compared between agritourism enterprises of different business types. Therefore, Agritourism entrepreneurial success is typically subjective and should consider entrepreneurs' self-reported satisfaction with multidimensional goals.

Since Agritourism entrepreneurial success is not only based on individual business success but also includes personal contributions to rural areas(JEffery M Campbell et al., 2010), Agritourism entrepreneurial success is understood to encompass the entrepreneur's contributions to society(Butler & Hansen, 1991; Walker & Brown, 2004; Shu et al., 2018), business performance(Buttner & Moore, 1997; Brush et al., 2001; Walker & Brown, 2004), and family development(Eddleston & Powell, 2008; Q. C. Li et al., 2022). These factors shape the perception of agritourism entrepreneurial success, which includes the entrepreneur's self-assessment of their contribution to society, business performance, and family development(Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Santeramo & Barbieri, 2017; Nazariadli et al., 2019). Research indicates that this systematic evaluation method defines three types of entrepreneurial success in agritourism (i.e., financial outcomes, "personal" outcomes of entrepreneurs, and outcomes for the "destination"). Evaluations of Agritourism entrepreneurial success from preserving local agricultural sustainability and obtaining recognition from others have also received more research attention (Polo-Peña et al., 2012; C Barbieri, 2017). Building on this, this study adopts a three-dimensional self-reporting method composed of business performance, family well-being, and self-fulfillment to investigate the entrepreneurial success of agritourism entrepreneurs. Business performance refers to the perceived results of enterprise management, including profitability, survival, and competitiveness. Family well-being relates to improving the quality of life perceived by entrepreneurs through their business operations. Self-fulfillment refers to entrepreneurs' belief that through agritourism entrepreneurship, their potential for physical and mental development is realized in rural area's revitalization.

2.2.2 Recognition Ability, Resource Acquisition Ability, Networking Ability, and Agritourism Entrepreneurial Success

Based on the Entrepreneurial Process Theory, Recognition Ability, Resource Acquisition Ability, and Networking Ability are all key aspects that help entrepreneurs achieve entrepreneurial success.

Recognition Ability and Agritourism Entrepreneurial Success

Recognition ability is the entrepreneurs' ability to identify suitable entrepreneurial opportunities, providing them with specific directions and initiating entrepreneurial activities, which is an indispensable first step for entrepreneurs(Masoomi & Rezaei-Moghaddam, 2023), particularly crucial for the establishment of new enterprises (Zampetakis & Kanelakis, 2010; Song et al., 2017). Recognition ability is the initial factor in agritourism entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial behavior, where identifying entrepreneurial opportunities and forward-

thinking identification of entrepreneurial resources are two inseparable processes. Therefore, in agritourism entrepreneurship, recognition ability should include the identification of entrepreneurial opportunities and resources(van Burg et al., 2012; Nikraftar & Hosseini, 2016), being an essential entrepreneurial skill for successful entrepreneurs(Man et al., 2002), In the process of identifying opportunities and resources, entrepreneurs can better understand new knowledge, thereby inspiring innovative ideas and applying previous knowledge resources in new ways, contributing to the success of new enterprises. Due to the limited opportunities for rural environment identification, possessing recognition ability will help reduce the difficulty for agritourism entrepreneurs to engage in rural areas(Rosairo & Potts, 2016), increasing the likelihood of entrepreneurial success. This paper proposes the following hypotheses.

H_1: *Recognition ability directly affects agritourism entrepreneurial success*

Resource Acquisition Ability and Agritourism Entrepreneurial Success

Acquiring entrepreneurial resources is important for the survival and competitiveness of small and medium-sized rural tourism enterprises (Hernández-Maestro & González-Benito, 2014). It encompasses all elements or combinations of elements enterprises invest in entrepreneurial activities, with resource acquisition being the premise and foundation for utilizing resources(Mosakowski, 1998; Brush et al., 2001). Successful entrepreneurs understand how to acquire resources to achieve entrepreneurial goals and realize entrepreneurial success. Therefore, resource acquisition ability is an essential capability needed by agritourism entrepreneurs(J. Sun et al., 2019), which is crucial for agritourism entrepreneurial success(Che et al., 2005). (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2003) argue that entrepreneurial resources mainly consist of asset resources and knowledge resources. Asset resources are a collection of various tangible resources, while knowledge resources are a sum of resources that facilitate innovation and development for enterprises. These resources have been widely acknowledged as critical in achieving business performance in agritourism startups and shaping entrepreneurs' expectations for entrepreneurial goals. Hence, this paper interprets resource acquisition as encompassing both asset-based resource acquisition and knowledge-based resource acquisition. This paper proposes the following hypotheses.

H_2: *Resource acquisition ability directly affects agritourism entrepreneurial success*

Networking Ability and Agritourism Entrepreneurial Success

Networking ability is a capacity and disposition to engage in continuous interactions and communication with others to exchange crucial information, foster personal growth and development, and maintain the capacity for potentially crucial relationships in the future(Ritter & Gemünden, 2003; Johanson & Vahlne, 2011). (Rycroft & Kash, 1999) pointed out that establishing and maintaining an effective network is a key stage for entrepreneurial success; entrepreneurs must possess networking ability to enhance the likelihood of entrepreneurial success. In agritourism entrepreneurship set in rural areas, entrepreneurial activities are typically based on resources in local rural regions and are rooted in local communities and local social networks(Gary Bosworth & Farrell, 2011). Several studies, such as, (Lerner & Haber, 2001; Phelan & Sharpley, 2012; Kline et al., 2013; Kc et al., 2019) have confirmed in various geographical contexts that networking ability is an essential skill for farm tourism entrepreneurs in rural community entrepreneurship. The Network Configuration within networking ability is crucial for establishing long-term relationships with stakeholders and achieving success. Network building and

network coordination facilitate cooperation between individual entrepreneurs and external networks, thus leading to success. This paper proposes the following hypotheses.

H_3: *Networking ability directly affects agritourism entrepreneurial success*

2.3 Networking Ability, Recognition Ability, and Resource Acquisition Ability

Agritourism entrepreneurs must possess Networking, recognition, and resource acquisition abilities (Phelan & Sharpley, 2012; Q. C. Li et al., 2022). According to the Entrepreneurial Process Theory's explanation of key entrepreneurial aspects; there exists a relationship among these three abilities.

Networking Ability and Resource Acquisition Ability

networking ability and Resource acquisition ability have a deep relationship(Nalebuff & Brandenburger, 1997), and the ties that entrepreneurs build with organizations and partners give them opportunities and access to resources that are not readily available in the network (Morais et al., 2017; Bruno Ferreira et al., 2020). networks provide a platform for accessing information and resources, and cognition, information, etc., facilitates the optimal use of these connections by promoting cooperation between network relationships(Kc et al., 2019), thus favoring entrepreneurial success. (R. A. Baron & Tang, 2011; Obi-Anike et al., 2022) I also agree that entrepreneurs' networking ability can provide unique access to Resource acquisition ability. In summary, Networking Ability influences Resource Acquisition Ability. This paper proposes the following hypotheses.

H_4: *Networking ability directly affects Resource acquisition ability*

Recognition Ability and Resource acquisition ability

Entrepreneurship begins with identifying opportunities(Shane et al., 2003). In this process, enterprises continuously generate diverse resource demands and evaluate new opportunities by screening acquired resources, followed by resource development. The concept of opportunity-resource integration as a research framework suggests that entrepreneurial identification and resource acquisition significantly positively impact the economic performance of entrepreneurial ventures(Shen et al., 2020). Based on the above research, it is evident that opportunities and resources have interactive and mutually influential relationships in different stages of new venture development. The abilities of opportunity identification and resource acquisition, as two typical capabilities of entrepreneurial activities, have been extensively studied by scholars. This paper proposes the following hypotheses.

H_5: *Recognition ability directly affects Resource acquisition ability*

Networking Ability and Recognition Ability

By building relationships with others, Agritourism entrepreneurs gather information from entrepreneurial networks to more thoroughly identify and evaluate new opportunities (Taleb et al., 2023). This implies that individuals perceive differences in Opportunity Alertness based on the different networks (Arenius & Clercq, 2005). Typically, agritourism entrepreneurs can only discover potential opportunities and resources embedded in these relationships by actively engaging in network connections (Morais et al., 2017; Ying & Norman, 2017). Networking ability can enhance market agility, help agritourism entrepreneurs identify market demands and

opportunities promptly, understand market needs and trends better, and thus adjust products and services quickly to meet customer demands and promote product innovation(Utterback & Suárez, 1993). Therefore, Networking Ability promotes the expression of Recognition Ability. This allows us to put forward the following hypotheses.

H_6: *Networking ability directly affects Recognition ability*

2.4 The Mediating Role of Resource Acquisition Ability

Resource acquisition ability plays a bridging role between recognition ability and agritourism entrepreneurial success. Identifying opportunities and resources is a prerequisite for acquiring and utilizing resources in the entrepreneurial process (Barney et al., 2010). Acquiring high-quality entrepreneurial resources can further enhance the likelihood of entrepreneurial success(Shen et al., 2020). Therefore, entrepreneurs with more vital recognition ability can more effectively obtain resources targeted based on identifying opportunities and entrepreneurial resources, thereby driving resource acquisition and influencing entrepreneurial success.

Resource acquisition ability plays a mediating role between networking ability and agritourism entrepreneurial success. The quantity of network support that entrepreneurs receive and the strategic construction, operation, and configuration of broad social and organizational networks are crucial for successful entrepreneurship and sustained competitive advantage(Butler & Hansen, 1991). Possessing networking ability enables agritourism entrepreneurs to obtain the resources they need from others(Obi-Anike et al., 2022), allowing them to develop new products and services that may address entrepreneurial challenges. Therefore, networking ability influences the channels entrepreneurs obtain entrepreneurial information and resources, subsequently impacting entrepreneurial success. This allows us to put forward the following hypotheses.

H_7: *Recognition ability indirectly influenced Agritourism entrepreneurial success through Resource acquisition ability*

H_8: *Networking ability indirectly influences agritourism entrepreneurial success through Resource acquisition ability*

2.5 The Mediating Role of Recognition Ability

Recognition ability plays a vital role in networking ability and resource acquisition ability. The networking ability of agritourism entrepreneurs enables them to more effectively build and maintain a wide network of relationships(Campón-Cerro, 2015), thereby more comprehensively identifying and evaluating new opportunities as well as positioning entrepreneurial resources, to some extent optimizing resource allocation in the agritourism entrepreneurial process(Yu et al., 2021).

Recognition ability plays a crucial role in networking ability and Agritourism entrepreneurial success. The networking ability of agritourism entrepreneurs facilitates opportunity and resource identification and utilization, providing them with a clear entrepreneurial direction, abundant resource support, and effective risk management strategies(Kc et al., 2019). These factors collectively impact the entrepreneurial process, thereby driving the achievement of agritourism entrepreneurial success(Kline et al., 2013). This allows us to put forward the following hypotheses.

H9: *Networking ability indirectly influences Resource acquisition ability through recognition ability*

H10: *Networking ability indirectly influences agritourism entrepreneurial success through recognition ability*

2.6 The Chain Mediation Role of Recognition Ability and Resource Acquisition Ability

Due to the dynamic nature of the agritourism entrepreneurial process, according to the Entrepreneurial Process Theory, this paper argues that agritourism entrepreneurs can enhance their identification of opportunities and resources by building and coordinating relationship networks. Subsequently, they can more purposefully acquire asset-based and knowledge-based entrepreneurial resources, increasing the likelihood of agritourism entrepreneurial success. This leads to the hypothesis being put forward.

H11: *The chain double intermediary composed of recognition ability and Resource acquisition ability has an intermediary effect between Networking ability and agritourism entrepreneurial success.*

The research model was constructed based on the above analysis, as shown in Figure 1.

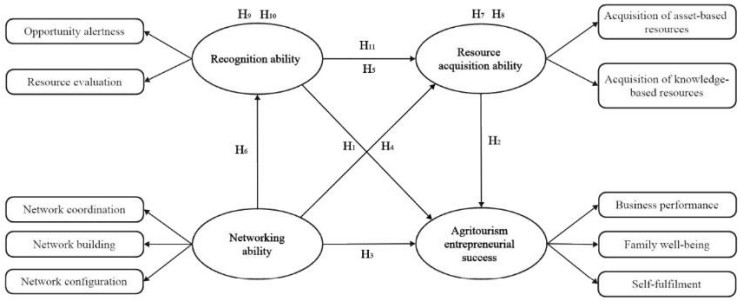

Figure 1. Research model

3. Research Methods

3.1 study sites and sampling

This study examines agritourism entrepreneurs in Sichuan, the birthplace of China's agritourism industry. Sichuan Province is a hub for agritourism and rural entrepreneurship in China, consistently leading the development of the agritourism industry. Moreover, Sichuan Province has the highest number of agritourism enterprises and operating income in China. This demonstrates that agritourism entrepreneurs in Sichuan have more successful experiences in founding and sustaining agritourism businesses. This undoubtedly provides a solid background for empirical research.

Based on the research experience of (Coad & Karlsson, 2022), five years is considered the boundary between new and mature enterprises. Therefore, entrepreneurs who have established agritourism enterprises for 2 to 5 years are selected for this study. According to (Hair, 2009), the desired level for sample size is between 15 to 20 observations for each independent variable. In this study 39 parameters were used, the ratio between sample size and parameters should be 20:1, so the minimum sample size should be 780. Therefore, to cover a sufficient number of samples in this study, a response rate of 40% was estimated based on other studies. The calculation is 1092. Finally, to ensure the study's validity, a total of 1092 questionnaires were distributed in this study.

Research data was collected in two ways, online and offline, between February and April 2024. The study

employed a random sampling procedure for the survey. To ensure the effectiveness of the online questionnaire survey, this paper used response time as a uniform standard, screening and deleting questionnaires with response times of less than 120 seconds. 794 valid questionnaires were collected, with an effective recovery rate of 72.7%. Among the 794 recovered questionnaires, males accounted for most respondents, representing 47.9% of the total population, 15.8% more than females. Regarding age, the surveyed digital entrepreneurs were mainly aged between 45-54 years old, with the age group of 25-54 accounting for 71.1%, dominated by middle-aged and young entrepreneurs. Regarding education, individuals with high school and college degrees accounted for 78.9%, with education mainly distributed among college and above. Concerning the years of entrepreneurship, the highest proportion of respondents engaged in agritourism entrepreneurship for 2-3 years, at 70.8%. In terms of entrepreneurial investment, 500,000 RMB accounted for the highest proportion. Regarding the number of employees, the highest proportion was within 20 employees, at 56.6%. In terms of average annual income, the highest proportion was in the range of 200,001-500,000 RMB.

3.2. Variable Measurement

All variables were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree", 5 = "strongly agree").

3.2.1 Recognition Ability

Recognition Ability is evaluated from two perspectives: Opportunity Alertness and Resource evaluation. Firstly, Opportunity Alertness is mainly based on the research of(R. A. Baron & Markman, 2003; Ozgen, 2003). A scale for entrepreneurial opportunity recognition is designed, including specific measurement items such as "Particularly alert to new opportunities" and "Recognizes good entrepreneurial opportunities through various means," totaling five items. Resource evaluation, adapted from the theory of (Y. B. Sun et al., 2020; Sánchez-Arrieta et al., 2021), a scale for entrepreneurial resource identification is designed, including specific measurement items such as "Recognizing potential sources of resources for starting a business" and "Expert in assessing the value of pot ential resources," totaling 3 items.

3.2.2 Resource Acquisition Ability

Due to the stability of agritourism entrepreneurial resources based on industry characteristics, and since Resource Acquisition does not involve changes in resources, this article operationalizes tangible resources and knowledge-based resource acquisition as respondents' evaluations of the difficulty or challenge of acquiring resources, following the study by(Q. C. Li et al., 2022). Firstly, Asset-based resource acquisition uses 4 items, including "I Obtained the business premises at a lower cost" and "Obtained equipment at a lower cost." Knowledge-based resource acquisition includes 4 items: "Received information on agricultural production techniques" and "Gained information on management systems."

3.2.3 Networking Ability

this research draws on(Birendra et al., 2018; Sánchez-Arrieta et al., 2021) to evaluate Networking Ability from three perspectives: network coordination, Network Configuration, and network building. Network coordination measurement, according to the findings of (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006), includes “Possessing a strong

ability to communicate information" and "Having a strong ability to manage partner conflict," among three items. Network Configuration, according to (Zhao et al., 2011), includes "Acquiring new product concepts from family networks" and "Obtaining important information about consumer preferences from family networks" among 4 research items. Network building, based on the research by (Sheng et al., 2011), includes "At the center of a social network" and "Discuss the progress of collaboration with partners" among 3 research items.

3.2.4 Agritourism Entrepreneurial Success

Based on the preceding discussion, the evaluation of Agritourism Entrepreneurial Success can be classified into three perspectives: business performance, family well-being, and self-fulfillment. Based on the research proposed by (Haber & Reichel, 2007; Q. C. Li et al., 2022), 6 items are used to measure, including "Has strong profitability," "Most customers are satisfied with services," etc. Family well-being refers to the subjective sense of happiness the owner perceives towards immediate family members after engaging in agritourism entrepreneurship. It is measured using 4 items from(Q. C. Li et al., 2022), including "Family is better off now than anyone else in the area," and "Satisfied with family's life now." Self-fulfillment is the sense of achievement pursued by agritourism entrepreneurs in the context of rural areas regarding personal entrepreneurial activities revitalizing rural communities. It is measured using 3 items adapted from the theory of (J. J. Li et al., 2008), including "Made more tourists love countryside through agritourism venture," "Improved environment of rural areas through agritourism business," etc.

4. results

4.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on aspects such as maximum value, mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of the samples. From Table 1, it can be considered that the shape of the data from a large sample approximates a normal distribution, meeting the basic requirements of the data analysis for this study.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Level of agreement
Opportunity Alertness	3.525	1.184	-0.720	-1.006	Accepted
Resource evaluation	3.624	1.157	-0.809	-0.637	Accepted
Asset-based resource acquisition	3.605	1.141	-0.785	-0.780	Accepted
Knowledge-based resources acquisition	3.559	1.152	-0.757	-0.831	Accepted
Network coordination	3.776	1.107	-1.169	0.182	Accepted
Network Configuration	3.828	1.048	-1.236	0.335	Accepted
Network building	3.775	1.150	-1.158	0.103	Accepted
Business performance	3.749	1.044	-0.875	-0.771	Accepted
Family well-being	3.594	1.186	-0.785	-0.843	Accepted
Self-fulfillment	3.613	1.221	-0.865	-0.589	Accepted

4.2 Reliability and Validity Test

Reliability test

Before conducting data analysis, this study conducted reliability tests on all variables to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement results and to examine them. The findings indicate that the reliability of the overall variables is 0.949. This coefficient validates the dependability of the questions and is appropriate for utilization as a tool for gathering data in the study.

Validity Test

This study determines validity through convergent validity and discriminant validity analysis. Table 2 illustrates the result of convergent validity and discriminant validity. The results indicate that the composite reliabilities (CR values) are above 0.7, demonstrating satisfactory construct reliability. Convergent validity is assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) index. The AVE values for all reflective constructs are above 0.5, indicating good convergent validity.

Table 2 Validity Test result

	OA	RE	ABR	KBR	NCD	NCG	NBD	BP	FW	SF
OA	0.664									
RE	0.666	0.641								
ABR	0.431	0.412	0.652							
KBR	0.434	0.400	0.700	0.649						
NCD	0.439	0.402	0.431	0.401	0.640					
NCG	0.357	0.399	0.366	0.378	0.597	0.632				
NBD	0.479	0.388	0.463	0.442	0.638	0.585	0.655			
BP	0.477	0.418	0.369	0.404	0.396	0.366	0.413	0.609		
FW	0.476	0.440	0.413	0.424	0.435	0.380	0.468	0.700	0.670	
SF	0.432	0.375	0.358	0.423	0.401	0.304	0.438	0.546	0.627	0.700
CR	0.908	0.842	0.882	0.881	0.842	0.873	0.851	0.903	0.89	0.875
AVE	0.66	0.64	0.65	0.65	0.64	0.63	0.65	0.61	0.67	0.70
AVE square root	0.815	0.801	0.807	0.806	0.800	0.795	0.809	0.780	0.819	0.837

Note: AVE square root value > correlation coefficient of this factor with other factors.

REA=Recognition Ability; OA=Opportunity Alertness; RE=Resource Evaluation; RAA=Resource Acquisition Ability; ABR=Asset-Based Resource Acquisition; KBR=Knowledge-Based Resources Acquisition; NWA=Networking Ability; NCD=Network Coordination; NCG=Network Configuration; NBD=Network Building; AES=Agritourism Entrepreneurial Success; BP=Business Performance; FW=Family Well-Being; SF=Self-Fulfilment

4.3 Hypotheses Testing

After ensuring the measurements' reliability and validity, the model's fit indices were examined using Amos 26.0.

Table 3 illustrates that all indices meet excellent standards, indicating a good fit between the data and the model. Furthermore, considering the Squared Multiple Correlations (R-Square) of the observed variables, the reliability of the observed variables ranges from 0.34 to 0.70, confirming that this structural equation model is suitable for further analysis.

Table 3 goodness-of-fit-statistics

Index	χ^2/df	RMSEA	RMR	GFI	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
statistical value	1.204	0.016	0.042	0.950	0.958	0.954	0.993	0.992	0.993
Suggest value	1-3	＜0.08	＜0.05	＞0.9	＞0.9	＞0.9	＞0.9	＞0.9	＞0.9

4.3.1 Results of Direct Effects between Variables

The analysis of the direct impact of variables on Agritourism entrepreneurial success indicates that the corresponding p-values are less than 0.01, showing statistical significance. It is influenced by recognition, networking, and resource acquisition ability, with effect sizes of 0.371, 0.290, and 0.182, respectively. The results suggest that emphasizing Opportunity Alertness and Resource evaluation in agritourism entrepreneurs can increase the likelihood of Agritourism entrepreneurial success. Agritourism entrepreneurs who emphasize Asset-based and knowledge-based resource acquisition are more likely to achieve Agritourism entrepreneurial success to a greater extent. Furthermore, the study results indicate that strengthening network coordination, Network Configuration, and network building abilities contribute to the entrepreneurial success of agritourism entrepreneurs. These details align with research hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, indicating that recognition ability, networking ability, and resource acquisition ability directly influence Agritourism entrepreneurial success.

Analysis of the Resource acquisition ability variable indicates that its corresponding p-value is less than 0.001, showing significance. It is influenced by recognition and networking ability, with effect sizes of 0.416 and 0.342, respectively. The results suggest that agritourism entrepreneurs focusing on Opportunity Alertness and Resource evaluation will enhance their Resource acquisition ability. Agritourism entrepreneurs who prioritize network coordination, Network Configuration, and network building are more likely to enhance their Resource acquisition ability. These details align with research hypotheses 4 and 6, indicating that recognition ability and networking ability directly impact Resource acquisition ability.

The analysis of recognition ability indicates that its corresponding p-value is less than 0.001, showing significance. It is influenced by networking ability, with an effect size of 0.646. The results demonstrate that agritourism entrepreneurs prioritizing network coordination, configuration, and building will enhance recognition ability. This detail aligns with research hypothesis 5, which states that networking ability directly impacts recognition ability. See Table 5.

Table 5 Summary of direct impact analysis

Research hypotheses （Direct impact）		Standardized path coefficient	S.E.	C.R.
H1: Recognition ability	→Agritourism entrepreneurial success	β3=0.37***	0.057	5.705
H2: Resource acquisition ability	→Agritourism entrepreneurial success	β6=0.18**	0.054	3.091
H3: Networking ability	→Agritourism entrepreneurial success	β3=0.29***	0.065	4.564
H4: Networking ability	→Resource acquisition ability	β2=0.42***	0.072	6.399
H5: Recognition ability	→Resource acquisition ability	β1=0.34***	0.061	5.297
H6: Networking ability	→Recognition ability	β2=0.65***	0.064	11.784

Note: *** P < 0.001, **P < 0.01, *P < 0.05

4.3.2 Test of Mediating Role

This study examined the mediation effect by adopting the Bootstrap method approach, proposed by (Preacher et al., 2004; Hayes, 2017), which is a supplement to the causal step regression method suggested by (R. M. Baron et al., 1986), used for testing the mediating effect, The results of the analysis are as follows:

Recognition ability indirectly influenced Agritourism entrepreneurial success through Resource acquisition ability. In this mediating path, the direct effect value is 0.246 ($p<0.05$), indicating that Recognition ability directly influences agritourism entrepreneurial success; the indirect effect value is 0.297 ($p<0.05$), the total effect value is 0.543 ($p<0.05$), and the confidence intervals for each effect value do not include 0. This suggests that Resource acquisition ability partially mediates between Recognition ability and agritourism entrepreneurial success. Hypothesis 7 is accepted.

Networking ability indirectly influences agritourism entrepreneurial success through Resource acquisition ability. In this mediating pathway, the direct effect value is 0.253 ($p<0.05$), indicating that Networking ability directly influences agritourism entrepreneurial success; the indirect effect value is 0.442 ($p<0.05$), the total effect value is 0.677 ($p<0.05$), and the confidence intervals for each effect value do not include 0. This suggests that Resource acquisition ability partially mediates between Networking ability and agritourism entrepreneurial success. Hypothesis H8 is accepted.

Networking ability indirectly influences recognition ability through Resource acquisition ability. In this mediation pathway, the direct effect value is 0.078($p<0.05$), indicating that Networking ability directly influences Resource acquisition ability; the indirect effect value is 0.297 ($p<0.05$), with a total effect value of 0.375($p<0.05$). The confidence intervals for each effect value do not include 0. This implies that Recognition ability partially mediates between Networking and Resource acquisition abilities. Hypothesis H9 is accepted.

Networking ability indirectly influences agritourism entrepreneurial success through recognition ability in this mediation pathway: the direct effect value is 0.055 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that Networking ability directly influences Agritourism entrepreneurial success; the indirect effect value is 0.326 ($p < 0.05$), the total effect value is 0.380 ($p < 0.05$), and the confidence intervals for each effect value do not contain 0. This suggests that

Recognition ability partially mediates between Networking ability and Agritourism entrepreneurial success. Hypothesis 10 is accepted.

The chain mediating role of recognition and Resource acquisition ability between Networking ability and agritourism entrepreneurial success was tested. In this mediation pathway, the direct effect value is 0.341 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that recognition ability and Resource acquisition ability play a chain intermediary role between Networking ability and agritourism entrepreneurial success. The indirect effect value is 0.297 ($p < 0.05$), the total effect value is 0.639 ($p < 0.05$), and the confidence intervals for each effect value do not contain 0. Indicating that recognition ability and Resource acquisition ability partially mediate the role of Networking ability and agritourism entrepreneurial success, and H11 is proved. All mediated effects test results are summarized in the following Table 6:

Table 6 Summary of tests for mediation effects

Mediation path	Effect type	Estimate	LLCI	ULCI	P value
H7: Recognition ability => Resource acquisition ability => Agritourism entrepreneurial success	Direct effect	0.246	0.133	0.368	0.012
	Indirect effect	0.297	0.158	0.545	0.004
	Total effect	0.543	0.400	0.756	0.004
H8: Networking ability => Resource acquisition ability => agritourism entrepreneurial success	Direct effect	0.235	0.140	0.401	0.005
	Indirect effect	0.442	0.295	0.603	0.012
	Total effect	0.677	0.545	0.828	0.012
H9: Networking ability => recognition ability =>Resource acquisition ability	Direct effect	0.078	0.019	0.166	0.009
	Indirect effect	0.297	0.158	0.545	0.004
	Total effect	0.375	0.250	0.603	0.003
H10: Networking ability => recognition ability=> Agritourism entrepreneurial success	Direct effect	0.055	0.019	0.125	0.003
	Indirect effect	0.326	0.170	0.492	0.009
	Total effect	0.380	0.243	0.535	0.009
H11: Networking ability =>recognition ability y=> Resource acquisition ability => agritourism entrepreneurial success	Direct effect	0.341	0.217	0.572	0.003
	Indirect effect	0.297	0.158	0.545	0.004
	Total effect	0.639	0.451	0.894	0.005

5. Conclusions and Discussion

5.1 research conclusion

Based on the Entrepreneurial Process Theory, a theoretical model was constructed using a sample of 794 agritourism entrepreneurs to systematically explore the key capabilities influencing entrepreneurial success among Chinese agritourism entrepreneurs. The study's main conclusions are as follows: 1. Recognition ability, resource acquisition ability, and networking ability contribute to the entrepreneurial success of agritourism entrepreneurs; 2. Recognition and networking ability can effectively drive agritourism entrepreneurs to acquire resources; 3. The networking ability of agritourism entrepreneurs has a crucial positive impact on recognition ability; 4. There is a chain-mediated effect between networking ability and agritourism entrepreneurial success.

5.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretical Implications

The study defines the essential conditions influencing agritourism entrepreneurial success. To address research question 1, this study, based on Entrepreneurial Process Theory, conducted an extensive literature review and defined three essential abilities influencing agritourism entrepreneurial success: recognition ability, resource acquisition ability, and networking ability. The study also internally delineated the relationships between the three variables, expanding new research areas for defining factors influencing the entrepreneurial success of agritourism. Moreover, it revealed the pathways through which recognition, resource acquisition, and networking ability impact agritourism entrepreneurial success. In addressing research question 2, it found a chain-mediated effect between networking ability and agritourism entrepreneurial success. The study results indicated that networking ability can influence recognition, which impacts resource acquisition ability, ultimately leading to the entrepreneurial success of agritourism. Lastly, the study obtained methods and tools to measure variables such as recognition ability, resource acquisition ability, networking ability, and agritourism entrepreneurial success.

Practical Implications

Entrepreneurs in agritourism can utilize the conclusions of this study to engage in entrepreneurial activities more effectively. Throughout agritourism entrepreneurship, founders should focus on developing acute recognition ability, honing networking ability, resource acquisition ability, and other relevant skills to help them address problems, enhance efficiency, make correct decisions, and ultimately increase the likelihood of entrepreneurial success. Additionally, agritourism entrepreneurs should consciously control their entrepreneurial behaviors. Based on the research presented in this article, it is recommended that entrepreneurs identify valuable entrepreneurial opportunities in agritourism, formulate feasible plans, and gradually execute these opportunities to ensure their successful implementation. Regarding resource acquisition in agritourism entrepreneurship, it is recommended that entrepreneurs consciously gather government entrepreneurial support policies in their daily lives and pay attention to cultivating social networks to help them obtain the necessary resources. Governments can use this data to either encourage or develop specific policies to enhance agritourism entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial abilities. Therefore, this approach will be more favorable for developing rural economies and contribute to promoting rural revitalization.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study makes a particular contribution to enriching the research on agritourism entrepreneurship, but it still has certain limitations, as follows:

1) Limitations of variable measurement. The research scale can be further optimized and improved. Although based on developed mature scales, the measurement of recognition, resource acquisition, and networking ability used in this study was adaptively adjusted according to the qualitative interview results in the context of agritourism entrepreneurship. The scale has passed tests of reliability and validity, as well as exploratory factor analysis. However, due to the limited sample size, the scale still needs data validation and further improvement. Therefore, in future research, more detailed structural measurements can be used.

2) Limitations of research methods. This study employed structural equation modeling (SEM) as a method. Still, SEM belongs to a confirmatory means, which requires the constructed structure and relationships to be strictly based on existing theories and research, which may constrain the breadth and adjustment space of the study during modeling. Therefore, in future research, different research methods can be attempted.

3) Limitations of research subjects. This study was conducted in Chinese rural areas, with all research locations within China. This characteristic may affect the broad applicability of the research results. Therefore, this study suggests that researchers carry out similar studies in diversified cultural backgrounds to validate further and expand the findings of this study.

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