

第四核心资源

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The Fourth Core Resource

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Abstract: Productivity is the ability of resource exploitation. The improvement of resource exploitation capabilities forms an important indicator of human social development. At present, human society has already witnessed the three phases of land resource, natural resource and the information resource exploitation, and is entering into the era of service resource exploitation. Service embraces some special functions such as optimizing the allocation of resources, relocating social distribution, reducing trade costs, improving product quality and storing the developing power. Every new growth area in great social change comes from the service field. As informationization increases, the service resource will become the fourth core resource in human society after material, energy and information. The service resource exploitation ability is sure to be a sign of advanced productivity and superiority in social competition.

Key words: the conception of resources; core resource; service competitiveness

Resources are always the basis of human's living conditions. The history of human society's development is also a process of humans improving their ability to explore, discover and expand new resources, and to improve their living circumstances. In other words, social productivity can be understood as human beings' ability to exploit core resources.

In early societies, there was only a simple life for human beings as the materials were very limited as taken from nature, and the concept of resource development did not exist during that time. In agricultural societies, land was exploited as a new and long term resource as a consequence of natural evolution. As a result of this exploitation, more and more people became involved in agricultural production. The importance of land was stated by the 17th Century British economist William Petty: "Land is the mother and labour is the father of all wealth"^[1]. In other words, land became the core resource in agricultural societies.

The constant advances in agricultural civilization

enriched the social wealth much more than that of the primitive society, and also strengthened the ability to develop the resource. The connotation of the term "resource" gradually went beyond the land, and expanded to mining, water conservancy and energy. The Industrial Revolution in the 18th century signaled the movement of core resource development from land resource to material and energy.

The industrial age was the age of large-scale production of machinery. With the development of material resources and of energy resources such as steam, coal, gas, electric power, atomic energy, social productivity developed rapidly. The large-scale production of industrial machinery intensified social competition, specified the social division of labour, expanded the market and complicated the system of production. In order to make these activities operate effectively with each other, there is a large potential information resource which must be explored and used. In the 1940s, the emergence of the computer triggered

the information revolution, which showed that human's ability of information resource development had been raised to a new level, and information - this non-material and non-energy - resource became a rare resource. From then on, human society was supported by three core resources including material, energy and information.

Every age has a process from developing, stabilizing to giving way to a new age, and these processes take place more quickly with the development of human society.

Agricultural society lasted thousands of years, and the industrial age hundreds of years. The information age has already developed for several decades. Until the centre of 1990s, people found that the speed of development of information technology, especially information technology equipment began to slow down or become stable. The contribution of IT to economic growth also tends to be steady. In this situation, people must consider what age will follow the information age. During the centre of 1990s, the leader of the IT equipment field --- IBM--- raised the flag of "Serve for Science", bringing a discussion "welcome service age".

Alvin Toffler, a famous futurist, has raised "service for society" at an earlier time. In the 1970s, he pointed out, in his well-known work "The Third Wave", that the economic form of agricultural societies was a self-sufficient agricultural economy, of industrial societies was the industrial economy of large-scale industrial production and of information age would be a service economy.

The field of economics has taken account of the positive effect of service trade in the development of society from as early as 1930s and put it as a separated industrial sector-tertiary industry. Many people, such as Fischer^[2], Clark^[3], Kuznets^[4] and Bell^[5] have made great contributions to this research and have concluded: the industrial structure formulated a regulated character in the evolution of economic development from low income to high and from low level to high. With economic development, that is, the improvement of per-capita income, the labour force

moves from primary industry to the secondary, and even to tertiary industry with the further increase of percapita income.

As a result, economic fields, futurist and the IT field fix the concept of the next age on "Service". This is the development of human society in the fourth wave.

Service is one kind of, or a series of, invisible activities, which are offered by one party to the other to meet certain needs. For an individual, service could satisfy him/her either psychologically or physically; for the commodities, service might reduce the dealing cost and create a value of the waste; for an organisation, service could help to modulate controlling, promote harmony and improve the general quality; for a certain region or country, service provides more job opportunities and reduces economic vibration so as to stabilize the society; for the whole human society, the realization of the sustainable development lies in the most co-location of material resources and the displacement of "Soft Investment" to "Hard Consumption" of energy and resource in the industrial economic model, and these are all assured by service.

The development of the service sector is an outcome of the development of both productivity and social division of labour. With every adjustment of economic structure and the upgrade of the productivity, there are always some new spaces for service, as well as a part of the labour forces separated from mainstream industry to migrate to the service industry. In agricultural societies, some people joined the ranks of the small handicraft industry as a result of the productivity developing and the land centralizing; in industrial societies, the investment of the big machine led to capital's centralization and the second industry's accelerated development. At the same time, the investment of the big machine also provided a large amount of surplus space for a tertiary industry, such as information, transportation, mending, banking and commencing.

Information industry, a part of service originally, has become increasingly important with its strong penetration and initiative in the whole national economy. With the development of the modern IT industry, the IT service has already integrated into various departments and turned to be a crucial element of modern productivity.

Therefore service has elevated from a supporting role to a leading role.

Productivity is the capacity of development of human society resources. During the agricultural time, the social productivity was decided by the capacity of land exploration; in the industrial age, it depended on the development of the material and energy sources; in the information age, it lies on the development of material, energy sources, information resources; in the service age, it is the ability to develop the material, energy sources, information and service resources. In other words, in the service age, service will be considered the fourth core resource, joining materials, energy sources and information^[6].

“Owing to the diversity of the human’s demands, the human being’s desire is endless.”^[7] When one desire comes true, (maybe it has not even been fully met), the new desire will emerge.”^[7] The unlimited demand for services not only creates more jobs, but also motivates the development of the service industry as a whole.

The development ability of land resources is the advantage of agricultural era, the development ability of energy sources is the advantage of industrial age, the development ability of information resources is the advantage of the information era, and the development ability of service resources is the advantage of the service industry.

The service age comes after the information era. In the information age, IT technology has permeated all aspects of the society deeply, and has allowed the creation of virtual worlds. In these worlds, people can do the things that they can’t do or find hard to do or can not afford to do in the real world. Through this technology, human beings can satisfy themselves either physically or psychologically. All these can offer huge support to the development of service resources.

However, demand for services and the technology are not enough to developing the service resource. If in the agricultural age, the essential factor is land; and in the industry age it is capital; and in the information age it is knowledge, then in the service age, the decisive essential

factor is service consciousness. Namely in the service age, no more discipline or an area of technology would appear and control this era. Science technology will be developed on the way of the integration, coordination and infiltration. Everyone is enjoying themselves while providing services to others^[8].

Individuals must build up the service consciousness if they want to be well served in this society. Based on this premise, and coupled with the spirit of innovation and continuous learning, everyone should be able to find most suitable job by way of self-improvement. Human society will be in a new environment of “I serve everyone and everyone serves me” to open a new era of human civilization^[9].

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