

Research on Marketing Strategies of Macao Parent-child Tourism under the Influence of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

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Abstract. The increasingly close communication between Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao has brought funds and opportunities to the tourism industry in Macao. With the continuous development of tourism, the drawbacks of gambling being the dominant industry and the potential of other industries are also constantly emerging. The Macao Tourism Bureau proposed the "tourism+" concept and advocated for the diversified development of the tourism industry. This article adopts the PESTEL model to analyze the marketing strategies of Macao's parent-child tourism industry under the influence of the Greater Bay Area. There were four basic issues, including the negative impact of the gambling industry, resource scarcity, the need for improvement in tourism technology innovation, and similarities with Hong Kong. To solve the above problems and promote its advantages, some solutions have been proposed, including improving the image of Macao, preferential policies, making good use of local cuisine and cultural heritage, increasing the utilization of space, innovating tourism technology, and distinguishing itself from Hong Kong. These suggestions can utilize the opportunities brought by the Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Greater Bay Area and develop the marketing of Macao's parent-child tourism industry.

Keywords: Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area, marketing strategies, Macao, parent-child tourism

1. Introduction

The Chinese government points out that Macao is supposed to deepen its linkage with other cities in the Greater Bay Area and clarify its growth positioning as a world center for tourists to go for entertainment and relaxation. As one of the pillar businesses in Macao, tourism has made significant contributions to its economy. To continue developing the diversity of tourism, the "tourism+" concept is proposed by Macao [i]. The development speed of parent-child tourism in China cannot be ignored. As a place with rich history, unique attractions, diverse cultures, well-developed transportation, and abundant cuisine, Macao should be suitable for developing parent-child tourism. However, Macao's unique gambling nature will also have a negative impact on the development of parent-child tourism industry. Faced with such high domestic demand for parent-child tourism, under the connection and promotion effect of the Greater Bay Area, Macao can employ its rich historical, cultural, culinary, and entertainment resources to enhance the marketing of parent-child tourism to pursue future development.

2. Literature review

In general, the researches on Macao's tourism industry mainly reflect in three aspects. First, it analyzes the advantages of urban cooperation and development in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area from the overall view [2] and argues that they should adopt a regional cooperation plan so they can coordinate and stabilize the level of each city [5]. The second is to study how Macao can further develop its tourism industry and attract more customers based on its own advantages [6]. The third is to study the obstacles to the future growth of Tourism and development opportunities in this overall environment [8].

Specifically, the research related to this topic is mainly about “Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area” and “Macao parent-child tourism”. Macao and Hengqin jointly develop tourism, strengthening intergovernmental cooperation, guiding Macao funds to invest in Hengqin tourism projects through policies, focusing on developing high-end tourism projects with high relevance to the gambling industry, strengthening and promoting the cultivation as well as employment of high-end service talents [3]. However, the important position of the gambling industry plays a significant role which helps us to consider the marketing strategies of Macao's parent-child tourism industry from a comprehensive perspective. In the tourism sector, specialization or diversification: no matter how Tourism in Macao develops, it should maintain the development of gambling tourism. However, other related industries have also developed rapidly in recent years, indicating the importance of diversified development [7]. Macao itself has rich historical and cultural resources, so each industry should utilize this advantage in the process of innovation [9]. In addition, technology plays a significant role in promoting tourism in Macao. For example, communication and the internet can enhance interaction [11], smart technology can enhance experience [12], and smart platforms built using social media can amplify marketing effectiveness [14]. When doing related marketing work, it is necessary to explore these shining points as content to attract customers.

While the above topics have made progress, they also highlight some problems. When describing the positive impact of the Greater Bay Area on Macao, they show the cities there should cooperate with each other from the overall level without a specific analysis of Macao; The second is to simply describe the role of Hengqin in Tourism in Macao, ignoring the coordination and help role of other cities. While focusing on a specific aspect of Macao's tourism industry, most of the papers only discuss the internal environment of Macao, ignoring the impact of policies and the external environment. Third, when describing the Developmental disorder to the development of Tourism in Macao, it did not relate to a specific tourism industry, but only from the macro level. In addition, no researcher has studied the marketing strategy of parent-child tourism in Macao under the influence of the Greater Bay Area policy, whether from the macro level or the micro level. Hence, this paper has a large space for elaboration.

In past studies, there was a lack of specialized and specific research on the development of Macao under the Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Greater Bay Area, or when introducing the role of Hengqin Island, the role of the Greater Bay Area and the " Belt and Road" at the macro level was ignored. At the same time, while the Macao government hopes to diversify tourism, there is also a lack of research on the parent-child tourism industry in Macao. Therefore, this article will focus on studying the current situation and the obstacles to the development of the parent-child tourism industry using the PESTEL model. It will also analyze the opportunities brought by the policies of the Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Greater Bay Area to Macao's parent-child tourism industry from both macro and micro perspectives and provide corresponding marketing suggestions based on these opportunities.

3. PESTEL Model Analysis of Macao Parent-child Tourism

3.1. Politics (P)

As an important project, the Hong Kong Zhuhai Macao Bridge links Zhuhai, Macao, and Hong Kong, radiating nine important cities in the delta region. It facilitates transportation between cities, makes communication between cities easier, promotes the exchange of technology among enterprises, shares resources, and develops toward nearby areas, while also facilitating people's travel and tourism. Besides, the Greater Bay Area is a regional concept proposed under the " Belt and Road" policy, an important bridge in the strategy, and a window for foreign exchanges. The policies of the Greater Bay Area also create many conveniences for domestic and foreign enterprises' trade activities, such as the preferential policies for enterprises in the Hengqin Free Trade Zone. It can help expand international trade, attract international investment, improve competitiveness, and integrate into the global stage [ii]. The participation and cooperation of domestic and foreign enterprises can bring more funds, talent, and technology to Macao, inject new blood, and provide more opportunities for tourism.

The primary positioning of Hengqin International Leisure Tourism Island is to "promote a new carrier for the moderate and diversified development of Macao's economy" to help government and enterprises jointly participate in the investment, develop the diversification of Macao's industries, and provide development factors including human resources, land, energy resources so that Macao can obtain actual benefits from the development of Hengqin ^[iii].

Whether it is the overall policy of the Greater Bay Area, or the Hengqin International Leisure Tourism Island built for the diversification of Macao's economy, they can bring more resources, ideas, and chances to the development of tourism. Additionally, it has given Macao access to a bigger marketing platform.

3.2. Economy (E)

In 2021, the total income of local residents in Macao was 2392.4 mop^[iv]. Among the cities in the Greater Bay Area of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, Macao has the second highest level of regional economic development, second only to Hong Kong ^[v], all of which are sufficient evidence of the prosperity of Macao's economy. Gaming and tourism are the pillar industries of Macao's economy, accounting for over 80% of the local GDP. Gaming tourism and sightseeing tourism together constitute Macao's tourism industry at a ratio of 7-3 ^[vi]. Macao has considerable economic data, and the problem of a single tourism industry structure is also very significant ^[vii]. Macao must follow the route of a diverse tourism business if it wants to properly develop its industry and pursue long-term development. The Macao Government stated in the "Overall Plan for the Development of Tourism" that the "tourism+" concept must be firmly implemented, and it also indicates that exploring the diversification of the tourism industry will be the future economic development trend. However, in the entertainment and tourism industry, the returns of non-gaming projects are far lower than those of gaming projects, leading many companies to enter markets for higher returns, while non-gaming projects are unable to obtain a large number of investments ^[viii]. Therefore, to market Macao's tourism industry to a wider audience, it is necessary to recognize the vastness of the gambling industry and seek non-conflicting development paths in this situation.

3.3. Society (S)

In terms of culture, the Historic Center of Macao has 22 buildings and 8 adjacent frontiers. With the old urban area as the core, including ancient monuments and city squares, Macao was recognized as a World Cultural Heritage site by UNESCO in 2005 ^[ix]. Macao's cultural customs not only include ancient Chinese traditions but also incorporate Western cultural customs, such as Christmas and Easter which allow mainland tourists to experience unique exotic customs. Due to the unique historical experience of Macao, there have been many diverse cultural backgrounds that combine Chinese and Western cultures. Therefore, while the cultural attractions are rich and unique, mainland tourists do not lose their sense of familiarity. However, the image of a "gambling city" makes people mistakenly think that Macao only has a gambling industry and overlook its unique culture. It is also important to pay attention to how to enable children in parent-child travel to experience and understand complex cultures. Macao has rich cultural resources, but further research is needed on how to enable parents and children to experience diverse cultures in an environment dominated by the gambling industry.

In terms of population composition, data from the Bureau of Statistics of Macao shows that in 2022 the population of Macao was 672800, making it the least populous provincial-level administrative region in China and the most densely populated provincial-level administrative region in China. The report released by the Census Bureau shows that the proportion of the population aged 65 and above is 13.3% in 2022, indicating an aging population ^[x]. Due to the impact of a relatively small population and aging, Macao's labor resources are scarce. And the extremely high population density has led to traffic congestion and urban congestion in Macao.

3.4. Technology (T)

Regarding the integration of museums and technological innovation, Macao has a lower level of richness than mainland China. Many museums in mainland China have set up WeChat official accounts, which often send interesting and fashionable articles. WeChat is an app that almost everyone uses in China, and it will be more widely used as a marketing platform. Most museums also set up online shopping malls on WeChat mini programs, with tickets, guided tours, and creative products available for sale, making it very convenient for tourists to use. With the support of communication and internet technology, the interactive experience has also been enhanced, promoting the upgrading of the tourism industry^[xi]. During the epidemic, some museums even launched cloud exhibitions, scanning cultural relics, and 3D modeling, so visitors can see all angles of cultural relics. People can experience a high-quality exhibition hundreds of kilometers away on their phones. Although the experience was worse than being on-site, it attracted huge popularity for the museum during the epidemic, and after the epidemic ended, many customers flocked to the museum, because Chinese tourists pursue novel and interesting travel experiences, ordinary perceptual intelligence technology will not affect their experience^[xii]. Mainland museums will also use technologies such as light and shadow to achieve an interesting effect of communicating with ancient people and engaging in cross-time and space dialogues, with a strong sense of immersion. In contrast, museums in Macao are more traditional and do not make good use of developed social media, nor are they adept at using technology to enhance fun and immersion.

Although museums are relatively inadequate, there are still some exquisite performances in Macao that utilize high technology. For example, The House of Dancing Water, with an investment cost of over HKD 2 billion and world-class light and shadow performance^[xiii], there is sufficient capacity during the performance, making it an exquisite performance with high-tech equipment. However, due to the significant income from gaming entertainment, investments in non-gaming entertainment such as this are relatively small.

Macao's tourism technology innovation has some surprises and problems. Under the influence of the current Greater Bay Area, more and more enterprises of all types and colors are entering Macao, hoping that they can enrich Macao's industry, bring opportunities for tourism technology innovation, and enhance its competitive advantage.

3.5. Environment (E)

In terms of the cultural environment, there are convenient light rails in the Taipa Island area of Macao, leading to various popular hotels, such as the Sands Resort, MGM, and Galaxy Resort. Each hotel also has free buses leading to various ports, the Peninsula of Macao, Hong Kong, and Macao airports, which are very convenient for tourists to travel. Considering children, parent-child transportation must be convenient, and as a city with an extremely developed tourism industry, Macao's infrastructure is already very well-established, which can provide great convenience to tourists. However, due to limited land and high population density, the city as a whole is relatively congested, with poor transportation conditions. In addition to transportation, the environmental atmosphere for tourism in Macao is excellent. There are also a large number of merchants engaged in the tourism industry, with a variety of products and rich content, providing tourists with a good sense of experience. Cantonese cuisine, Portuguese egg tarts, and a variety of cultural products are all very suitable for families who travel with their children.

In terms of the natural environment, Macao is the smallest provincial-level administrative region in China, but with a high population density and developed economy, land resources are extremely scarce. As an island city with many people but a small area, water, and electricity are mostly provided by the mainland, and the dependence on resources is relatively high.

3.6. Law (L)

The Macao Tourism Regulations clearly state the need to protect the rights and interests of tourists, shape an orderly market, provide high-quality services, and create a charming city. Clear regulations provide a comfortable and secure travel environment, leaving a good impression on tourists.

4. Problems of Macao Parent-child Tourism

4.1. Gambling industry

The gambling industry in Macao has a high rate of return, leading to many capitals choosing to invest in the gambling industry. Other industries do not receive sufficient funds and their development is restricted. The image of a gambling city in Macao is deeply ingrained in people's hearts. Some gambling tourists often carry a large amount of cash and may engage in conflicts with others by exchanging or borrowing money. At the same time, areas, where gambling is prevalent, are also prone to criminal activities. Due to concerns about safety and education, parents do not choose to bring their children to Macao. At the same time, gambling is too developed, making it easy for tourists to overlook Macao's other rich tourism resources when choosing their destination.

4.2. Scarcity of resources

Macao has a small population, and the problem of aging continues to worsen, while its economy and industries are constantly developing, resulting in a relative shortage of labor resources. Most of Macao's energy comes from the mainland and its independence is poor. What's more, Macao has a small land area and extremely scarce land resources. Compared to Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou, Macao with scarce resources does not have a large entertainment facility and is not attractive enough for children.

4.3. Lack of integration with technology in the tourism industry

Not utilizing social media platforms well to promote and market Macao tourism, and not having sufficient understanding of the behavior of mainland customers. The integration of technology and tourism is also insufficient, lacking the development of 3D scanning technology, light, and shadow technology, and slightly lacking in innovation.

4.4. Similar to Hong Kong

Hong Kong and Macao, as two special administrative regions under China's "one country, two systems" policy, both have unique cultures, attractive scenes, and similar cuisine. At the same time, Hong Kong has world-class large-scale amusement parks such as Disneyland and Ocean Park, larger airports, and more convenient transportation, as well as a richer variety of commercial types. Macao needs to differentiate itself from Hong Kong and develop its own characteristics to attract more parent-child tourists.

5. Suggestions on the marketing of family travel in Macao

5.1. The Image of Macao City

First, it is very important to develop other images of Macao to dilute its gambling image. Because Macao's gambling industry has long been famous around the world, and it is a pillar industry of Macao, so the best way to dilute the impression of Macao's gambling industry and attract tourists is to increase the number of images of Macao. What's more, Macao was the second safest city in China in 2021, and the government should widely publicize Macao's urban security to correct the public's impression of a gambling city. At the same time, Macao should also continuously strengthen its crackdown on criminal activities and improve urban safety.

5.2. Government policies

Macao should make good use of its own mainland communication convenience in the Greater Bay Area and its Belt and Road foreign communicating convenience to attract guests. The government attaches great importance to Macao's tourism development and gives Macao many platforms for tourism. Macao should give more convenient tourism policies to the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area and Portuguese-speaking countries. At the same time, Macao should create tourism cooperation with relevant regions in exchange activities to promote the image of the city.

5.3. Making good use of local cuisine and cultural heritage

Macao needs to vigorously develop its own image of the city of gastronomy. In view of its special historical background and inclusiveness, Macao has food from all over the world, and this food blends here to form new cuisine, so food can be called Macao's signature and attract both adults and children. The parent-child theme restaurant can be the carrier to promote Macao food to the parent-child travel families.

In view of the special historical background, Macao has a rich and colorful culture, but for children, the culture is more difficult to understand. Macao can use cultural and creative products as the carrier to not only attract children but also pass on Macao's cultural atmosphere and historical attractions to them. In addition to the physical stores, online sales sent from around the world can attract more parent-child tourists to Macao. Macao's cultural and creative products can extract special elements from the culture, and join the co-branded with the cultural heritage, which can not only attract tourists but also drive the development of related industries.

5.4. Theme amusement facilities

In the marketing of parent-child tourism in Macao, there is a lack of a crucial project. Although there are many indoor adventure theme parks in Macao, people will not come to Macao for them. There is a lack of special amusement facilities that can really attract more families, such as Disneyland and Universal Studios. To distinguish them from the amusement parks in Hong Kong and Shenzhen, the amusement parks in Macao need to have their own theme. Due to the scarcity of land resources in Macao, amusement parks can be built by filling in the sea and making land. Or building rides indoors and on roofs, which has a good precedent for some roofs and indoor playgrounds abroad, such as in Japan and South Korea. The manpower and energy required to operate entertainment facilities require assistance from cities in the Greater Bay Area. Only when Macao's entertainment facilities have their own characteristics can related marketing truly shine. The lack of this part requires the development of tourism projects.

5.5. Technology and innovation

The tourism industry in Macao should apply more internet technology, communication technology, and social media to enhance the tourism experience and marketing. Using social media as a platform to receive feedback, establish a sustainable smart tourism service platform, and mobilize tourism enterprises to cooperate in building a smart tourism platform^[xiv], effectively utilizing the advantages of internet popularization. In addition, 3D scanning technology, data collection and processing, modeling, and other technologies can also be used to open "cloud exhibitions" to attract customers. Through light and shadow technology, tourists can immerse themselves in the past. Cross-time and space dialogue with past people allows children to understand Macao's history and culture in the most direct way. Under the influence of the Greater Bay Area, more enterprises of all sizes join in cooperation with Macao, bringing new technologies to Macao and occupying different parts of the industry, so non-entertainment projects can be developed. Macao's parent-child tourism should seize the shining points of these tourism innovations and use digital platforms to market.

5.6. Distinguishing from Hong Kong

In view of the similarity between Macao and Hong Kong, Macao must pay attention to the distinction from Hong Kong in its future publicity. Macao is supposed to well protect its own unique cultural heritage and promote its own special food and historical attractions, take them as symbols of Macao, and integrate these symbols into carriers like cultural and creative products and parent-child themed restaurants, so as to better promote them to the world.

6. Summary

Under the influence of the Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Greater Bay Area, parent-child tourism in Macao has great potential for development. The policy promotes a "tourism+" model and follows a diversified industrial route. The cooperation with other regions has also injected fresh blood into Macao, which can help other industries further develop under the dominance of the gambling industry. Due to its unique historical background and abundant cultural and food resources, Macao should make good use of social media as a medium of communication and use cultural and creative products as carriers of culture. The development and marketing of the tourism industry complement each other, and to attract more children, Macao needs to have unique and interesting entertainment facilities. Finally, to enhance its competitiveness in parent-child tourism, Macao must use its unique culture and heritage to embark on its own path so it can attract more tourists.

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