Explosion Of Emerging Tourism Cities in China and The Inspirations for The Development of Tourism Industry in Fuzhou

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Abstract. With the high popularity of travel, a large number of new "internet celebrity cities" have emerged one after another, becoming the new favorites of social media and sparking social discussions. It has also sparked a lot of thinking from city propaganda offices. This research studies the reasons for the popularity of emerging tourism cities, represented by Zibo and Harbin, in the post-pandemic era, as well as the marketing strategies behind them. By comparing the two cities, and analyzing the commonalities of IP marketing, internet checkpoint, destination image, and government actions, several necessary conditions for building a tourism city can be identified. Then, this paper analyzes the potential and shortcomings of the development of the tourism industry in Fuzhou and combines these conclusions with the actual situation of Fuzhou to draw inspiration for tourism in Fuzhou. Then, it proposes suggestions from the aspects of creating local characteristic IPs and comprehensively ensuring the satisfaction of tourists.

Keywords: Tourism industry; Marketing strategy; New media operation; Destination image; Tourist satisfaction.

1. Introduction

After three years of the pandemic, China's national economy suffered a heavy blow. Long-term home quarantine has suppressed various economic activities. Fortunately, in the post-pandemic era, some tourist cities suddenly became popular and have caused a nationwide tourism boom, such as Zibo and Harbin. The recovery of the tourism economy is of great significance for the overall revitalization of the economy. Some cities with the potential to develop tourism may be able to draw on these successful experiences. Fuzhou, the capital city of Fujian Province, with a history of over 2200 years since its establishment, has beautiful scenery and profound cultural heritage. However, compared with other cities, there is still a certain gap in many aspects of its tourism industry.

Previous studies have explored some tourist cities like Harbin and Zibo. Many of them hold that the promotion of new media is a key factor in the popularity of tourist cities. Zhang and Zhao have pointed out that the Harbin Tourism Bureau has reached strategic cooperation with multiple new media platforms to form a new media matrix, laying a solid foundation for the promotion of urban tourism in the city [1]. When it comes to Zibo, Li has thought that entertainment-based communication is the foundation of the explosive popularity of internet celebrity cities [2]. The trend of the new media era is that entertainment-oriented information is gradually becoming mainstream [2]. Pease W and Rowe M also concluded that the Internet has driven tourism revenue due to its rich and circulating information, wide audience, fierce competition, and other factors [3]. However, there is controversy over how to use new media for promotion and the content of the promotion. For instance, Sun once mentioned, that the emergence of tourism methods can be seen as a manifestation of social development, which echoes the fiercely competitive fast-paced social environment of today [4]. A travel method that challenges physical stamina and time pursuit, with the lowest cost and the most scenic spots, is quietly emerging [4]. However, Wang and Zhang have proposed that the essence of tourism lies in experience [5]. Farewell to the task-based check-in of popular scenic spots and return to the deep experience of destination lifestyle has become an important way for urban tourists to seek personalized travel experiences [5]. Nevertheless, most viewpoints believed that the government played a significant role in shaping tourist cities. There were many similar standpoints.

Some said the rise of internet-famous cities is not a stroke of luck, as it is closely related to the local government's planning and meticulous arrangements [6]. At the beginning of the emergence of Zibo barbecue, the government and relevant departments decisively seized the opportunity, mobilized multiple resources, and actively guided the healthy development of the barbecue industry [2]. In addition, it has become a consensus to focus on local characteristics rather than blindly imitating others. The operation of IP requires the creation of distinctive landscapes, which cannot blindly cater to information flow and only stay at the superficial expression of visual stimuli from internet celebrities [2]. Instead, it is necessary to pay more attention to the landscape and city identity and strengthen the cultural attributes of the landscape and the expression of urban culture [2]. The advantages of Harbin's ice and snow tourism mainly focus on the uniqueness, artistry, and richness of the landscape [7]. Thinks of the problem in Fuzhou city. The innovation awareness in various regions of Fujian Province is relatively weak, and there are fewer attractive characteristic products [8]. As of now, the Fujian government has issued relevant documents indicating the development of the tourism industry, including the planning for Fuzhou. Relevant literature has provided measures around it. Accelerate the construction of a demonstration zone for the integration of cultural and tourism development across the Taiwan Strait [8]. Building a world-class tourism brand with strong consensus and wide dissemination [8]. When shaping cultural tourism brands, attention should be paid to exploring their historical and cultural connotations and promoting their unique cultural characteristics [9]. When developing natural tourism resources, attention should be paid to ecological protection, and the development of green tourism, ecotourism, etc. should be continuously promoted [9]. Despite this, some strategies still have problems that are too grand and not specific enough, as well as not in line with current trends and not innovative enough. In summary, the current research has a gap between the lack of research subjects and the lack of comparison between cases.

Using comparative analysis of tourism development cases in Zibo and Harbin to explore the strategies that can be adopted for the development of tourism in Fuzhou city.

2. Similarities in the Reasons for the Emergence of Tourism Cities

2.1. IP Marketing

IP originally refers to intellectual property rights, which are extended on the Internet to a highly attractive symbol that can generate effects and traffic on multiple platforms, such as cultural and creative works or a representative phrase. IP should not only be interesting and innovative but also closely linked to urban characteristics and deeply bound to urban culture. For example, Zibo once created IPs about barbecue and other delicacies, while Harbin's IP mainly focuses on ice and snow culture and different nicknames given to tourists from all over the country. The concise and innovative form, combined with repeated promotion on various platforms, makes these IPs easy to leave a deep impression on users.

2.2. Internet Famous Checkpoint

Checkpoint has become a common behavior on online platforms and a mainstream trend in current media consumption culture. After seeing the sharing on social platforms, users will want to follow in the footsteps of information disseminators, extending themselves from receivers to processors of information, to gain social attention. It is important to clarify the meaning of checkpoints and make popular checkpoint destinations a way to attract tourists, rather than overly emphasizing fast paced and superficial tourism, to prevent tourists from ignoring the city's inherent culture.

2.3. Destination Image

Tourist cities have made every effort to improve the destination image. Cities provide tourists with many conveniences in transportation, accommodation, and dining. By leveraging the power of technology and utilizing smart service systems, tourists can make online reservations and be provided with online explanations. Faced with complaint information, the local government actively rectified

and promptly remedied to restore the city's image. Through many online evaluations, merchants strictly adhere to clear pricing and even offer discounts to tourists. The price of the product does not rise, and the quality is guaranteed. The above actions all reflect a consensus among the people of the whole city, which is to “put tourists first”.

2.4. Government Actions

At the first moment of the urban boom, the government took control of public opinion and made positive propaganda as close to the real situation as possible. Then the government continuously improved facilities, enhanced public service capabilities, and reduced tourism costs. During the process of tourists visiting, the government always paid close attention to the supervision of various departments and online suggestions.

3. The Potential and Shortcomings of Fuzhou Tourism Development

3.1. Development Potential

Fuzhou, as a city with a history of thousands of years, has unique and charming traditional customs, such as ‘Wandering Gods’, a folk activity that imitates the march of deities, aimed at praying for blessings and eliminating disasters. During the activity, people can admire exquisitely shaped deities and appreciate performances with unique local characteristics. The colorful fireworks, festive drums and gongs, and spectacular procession can bring unparalleled shock to visitors. During the 2024 Spring Festival, the popularity of videos about the ‘Wandering Gods’ in Fujian continued to rise on various platforms, with related topics frequently appearing on plenty of hot search lists. The live broadcast of ‘Wondering Gods’ had a viewership ranging from a few thousand to over a hundred thousand and a single short video could have up to 400 million views. According to statistics, topics on TikTok have reached 9.47 billion views. Driven by the Internet effect, 6.295 million people came to Fuzhou during the Spring Festival. In the list of popular cities in China for population migration during the 2024 Spring Festival, Fuzhou saw a year-on-year increase of 30%, surpassing Harbin and ranking first in the country. From these data, it can be seen that by making good use of the passenger flow brought by ‘Wondering Gods’, Fuzhou has the potential to become the next phenomenal tourist city.

3.2. Shortcomings

As is well known, there are multiple long and short holidays throughout the year, but the ‘Wandering Gods’ activities are only held during the Spring Festival period. Moreover, the largest ‘Wandering Gods’ event is only held in specific areas of Fuzhou. However, currently, during other peak tourist periods of the year, other attractions in Fuzhou are not enough to attract a large number of tourists. In short, ‘Wandering Gods’ can enhance the visibility of Fuzhou, but it cannot maintain its popularity and bring long-term benefits. Therefore, how to build Fuzhou into a tourist city that is suitable to visit multiple times and spaces, and how to continuously attract tourists are important issues in the development of the tourism industry.

4. Suggestions

Firstly, creating a mainstream IP as the development core and promotional focus. Zibo was once extremely popular, but its popularity soon faded. One of the reasons was that it had too many chaotic types of IPs, which gradually dispersed the traffic. For most Web users, concise and single keywords are the easiest to remember. As for Fuzhou, it is the only city in the country named after ‘Fu’, which means good luck in Chinese. Local mainstream media can strongly promote the ‘Fu’ cultural IP, linking other small IPs with the ‘Fu’ culture, and forming a marketing pattern with clear priorities which will be multiple but not complicated. The purpose of "Wandering Gods" is to pray for blessings, which precisely aligns with the culture of ‘Fu’. For other aspects, such as Fuzhou cuisine, its beautiful

meaning of fortune and happiness can be promoted. The design of related souvenirs can also be inspired by the word ‘Fu’. The ancient buildings, parks, and other scenic spots in Fuzhou can also be adorned with "blessing" elements everywhere. The process of the trip is the process of constantly discovering and collecting clues about ‘Fu’. The main goal of Fuzhou's tourism and cultural design is to understand the connotation of Chinese blessing culture in the new era through the process of gathering ‘Fu’. Showcasing unique characteristics rather than blindly imitating other cities is the key to the sustainable development of the tourism industry. Marketers should focus on promoting the unique personality of the destination based on emotional components [10].

Secondly, comprehensively improve the tourist experience. The impression a city brings to tourists depends not only on its various attractions but also on its quality of life and local customs. The needs of tourists for food, clothing, accommodation, and transportation need to be guaranteed. Among them, experiences that are both fresh and comfortable tend to be the most popular among tourists. For example, regarding the taste adjustment of local snacks. There is a local specialty drink called ‘Bean Soup’ in Beijing, the capital of China. This beverage has an extremely strange taste, which makes many tourists try it out, but most people cannot accept it, and even find it difficult to swallow. In the end, ‘the first time’ became ‘the last time’. In contrast, in Harbin, the local people used to only eat salty jellied bean curd, but since a large number of Southerners came to travel, local chefs made sweet, jellied bean curd according to their taste, causing a lot of praise. The inspiration for Fuzhou from these cases is that making appropriate adjustments to local snacks can enable tourists to enjoy them better, thereby bringing more sustainable economic benefits. Fuzhou people tend to have a sweet taste, and many outsiders cannot accept adding too much sugar to their dishes. Therefore, the dishes in the scenic area can be cooked with less sugar, but without changing the raw materials and cooking methods. Moreover, Fuzhou is located along the southeastern coast of China, with unusually hot summers and humid winters. Therefore, hotels and scenic spots should take measures to avoid heat and moisture.

Thirdly, build a tourism pattern with multiple times and regions. Fuzhou not only has ‘Wandering Gods’, but also many unique attractions. For example, the natural phenomenon called ‘blue tears’ occurs on Pingtan Island from April to August each year which gives people infinite romantic imagination. In addition, there are also ancient architectural complexes, beautiful coastal scenery, boundless high mountains, and bustling shopping streets here. The local cultural and tourism bureau can connect these scenic spots into complete tourism routes for joint marketing. Multiple tourism routes with different themes can allow tourists to experience the fascinating fusion of ancient and modern, nature and culture, and mountains and seas here. Not only that, the Cultural and Tourism Bureau should also focus on creating a seasonal tourism theme. Utilizing the unique mild climate, promote natural summer resorts in the summer, and hot spring resorts in the winter. This cross-time and space marketing pattern ensures the volume of commuters in various regions throughout the year, thereby achieving significant prosperity in the tourism industry.

5. Conclusion

This research compares the entire process of the marketing of Zibo and Harbin and discovers the principle of shaping internet famous cities. The operation of internet celebrity cities cannot be separated from the novel and suitable IPs, the construction and correct utilization of internet-famous check-in points, the shaping and maintenance of the destination image, and timely government regulations. Then, based on the analysis of the current situation in Fuzhou, it is concluded that ‘Wandering Gods’ has become the greatest potential of Fuzhou's tourism industry. Fuzhou's tourism can take ‘Wandering Gods’ as a breakthrough point, vigorously promote the ‘Fu’ cultural IP, decorate the entire city with elements related to ‘Fu’, and make Fuzhou stand out from many coastal cities, becoming the only ‘blessed city’ in the country. In addition, the government should start from various levels of tourist travel experience, increase construction investment, improve service quality, and make appropriate improvements to food, accommodation, etc. As is known to all, the prosperity of

the tourism industry is a concentrated reflection of cultural exchanges, local economic growth, and the improvement of people's happiness index in various regions. Every Fuzhou person hopes that this city can seize the opportunity, showcase its characteristics, and benefit from the tourism industry in the post-pandemic era, becoming the next major tourist city.

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