

Research on Marketing Strategies in the Online Tourism Market in the Internet Age

Yidan Wang *

The Hongkong Polytechnic University, China

* Corresponding Author Email: 23042082g@connect.polyu.hk

Abstract. The emergence of online tourism in China can be traced back to 1999. With the gradual popularization of the Internet and technological advancements, it has brought a new opportunity to the domestic tourism market. Following the first Golden Week of tourism, some sharp entrepreneurs recognized the enormous potential of online tourism and established distinctive online travel companies, marking 1999 as the "first year of online tourism." Compared to traditional travel methods, online tourism offers users unprecedented experiences. Travelers no longer need to visit travel agencies for inquiries, comparisons, and bookings. Instead, they can browse various travel routes, hotels, flight tickets, and other information anytime, anywhere using computers or mobile phones, and make reservations, payments, and inquiries online. Moreover, enterprises can collect user data, analyze user needs, formulate precise marketing strategies through online platforms, and apply this information to product development, service improvement, and brand promotion, thereby enhancing marketing effectiveness and user satisfaction.

Keywords: Internet Age, Online Tourism, Marketing.

1. Definition and Development History of Online Tourism

1.1. Definition of Online Tourism

Online tourism, based on Internet platforms and technological means, provides users with travel-related services, changing traditional travel methods and significantly enhancing the convenience and efficiency of travel services. Internet technology is the core of online tourism, integrating various aspects of travel resources such as search, booking, payment, and evaluation on one platform, enabling travelers to easily obtain necessary information and manage the entire travel process. Whether it's searching for destination travel guides, booking hotels, flights, scenic tickets, or checking transportation routes and local cultures, everything can be done online [1-5]. Additionally, online tourism provides personalized travel recommendations and customized services through technologies like big data analysis and artificial intelligence, enriching the travel experience and promoting continuous development in the tourism industry.

1.2. Development History of Online Tourism

The rise of online tourism undoubtedly represents a significant innovation in the operational models of the traditional tourism industry. With its unique advantages, such as rapid, convenient, and efficient channels for booking travel products, online tourism quickly gained popularity among travelers. Today, online tourism has become the preferred way for most travelers to plan their trips. Major online travel business platforms with significant internet marketing efforts, such as Ctrip, Qunar, Lvmama, Fliggy, Meituan, and Mafengwo, have successfully established a significant presence in the market. Since the establishment of Alibaba in 1999 and Baidu in 2000, the rapid development of Internet technology has injected new vitality into China's online tourism industry, propelling it into a rapid development stage. From the nascent stage to the initiation stage, and then to the boom stage and maturity stage, as shown in Figure 1, China's online tourism industry has gone through four stages of development [6-8]. Despite starting relatively late, with the assistance of Internet technology, China's online tourism industry is accelerating, demonstrating immense development potential and broad market prospects.

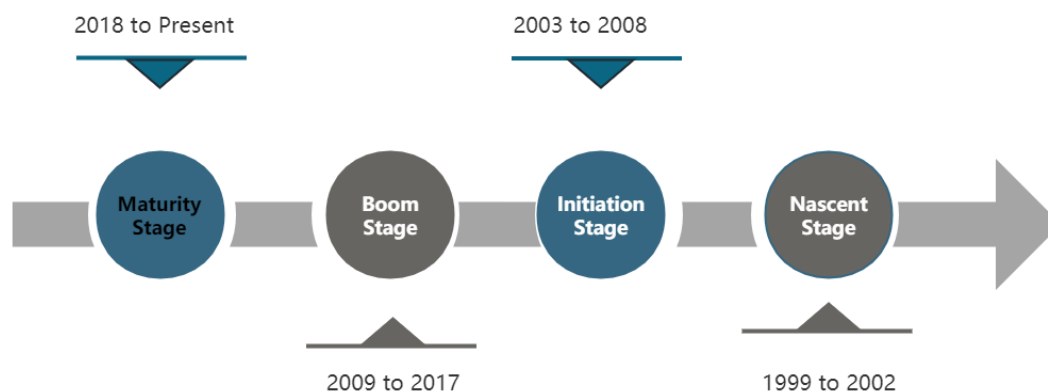


Figure 1. Development Stages of the Online Tourism Market

2. Characteristics of the Online Tourism Market

2.1. Meeting Individualized Needs of Travelers

As living standards rise, people's pursuit of quality of life continuously increases, leading to changes in lifestyle and consumption concepts. In the field of tourism, travelers no longer settle for traditional, standardized travel itineraries but seek more personalized, customized travel experiences. They hope that every trip meets their interests, needs, and pace, rather than being constrained by fixed itineraries. More and more travelers seek personalized custom services in travel experiences, preferring exclusive travel routes tailored to their needs. They want to enjoy more freedom, comfort, and pleasure during their travels, thereby truly enhancing the quality of their travel experiences.

2.2. Rich Allocation of Tourism Resources

Online tourism platforms, with their unique advantages, completely break the geographical restrictions of traditional tourism. Without the constraints of physical space, platforms can flexibly allocate tourism resources and customize multiple solutions for travelers. Travelers can easily combine the most suitable travel mode according to their travel preferences, route choices, hotel accommodation needs, and expected arrival times [9-10]. Additionally, based on different browsing habits of travelers for tourism products, relevant tourism products are recommended to enhance traveler consumption motivation. This personalized service not only meets the diverse needs of travelers but also further enhances the user experience and market competitiveness of online tourism platforms.

2.3. Wide Range of Product Choices

When planning a trip, travelers' decisions are often filled with variability. As travel plans involve multiple aspects such as travel mode, hotel reservations, site selections, and souvenir purchases, each decision may be influenced by external factors such as weather changes, personal interest changes, or unforeseen circumstances. The online tourism market provides travelers with a wide range of travel product choices, meeting travelers' pursuit of diversity. Whether seeking outdoor adventures or enjoying tranquil and comfortable leisure vacations, travelers can find suitable travel products here. However, due to the vast selection space, travelers may face more hesitation and uncertainty when making decisions, posing greater challenges for online tourism enterprises.

3. Issues in the Online Tourism Market

3.1. Need for Improved Management System

The tourism industry is comprehensive and involves multiple sectors, with many deficiencies in the management system, as depicted in Figure 2. Although online tourism business relies on the Internet and provides convenient booking and browsing services, its consumption model involves pre-payment, making it impossible for users to directly experience services when booking. Currently, the online management system needs improvement, with weak service awareness and skill management among employees [11-12]. Online tourism services require a large amount of manual processing, and due to urgent talent demands and the simplicity of operation processes, many inadequately trained employees rush into their roles, unable to provide professional answers to tourists' inquiries about scenic knowledge, route planning, or hotel reservations, significantly reducing tourists' online travel experience. At present, domestic online tourism market management remains rigid, lacking effective management of enterprise employees and development, making it difficult to fully stimulate enterprise vitality and improve service quality.

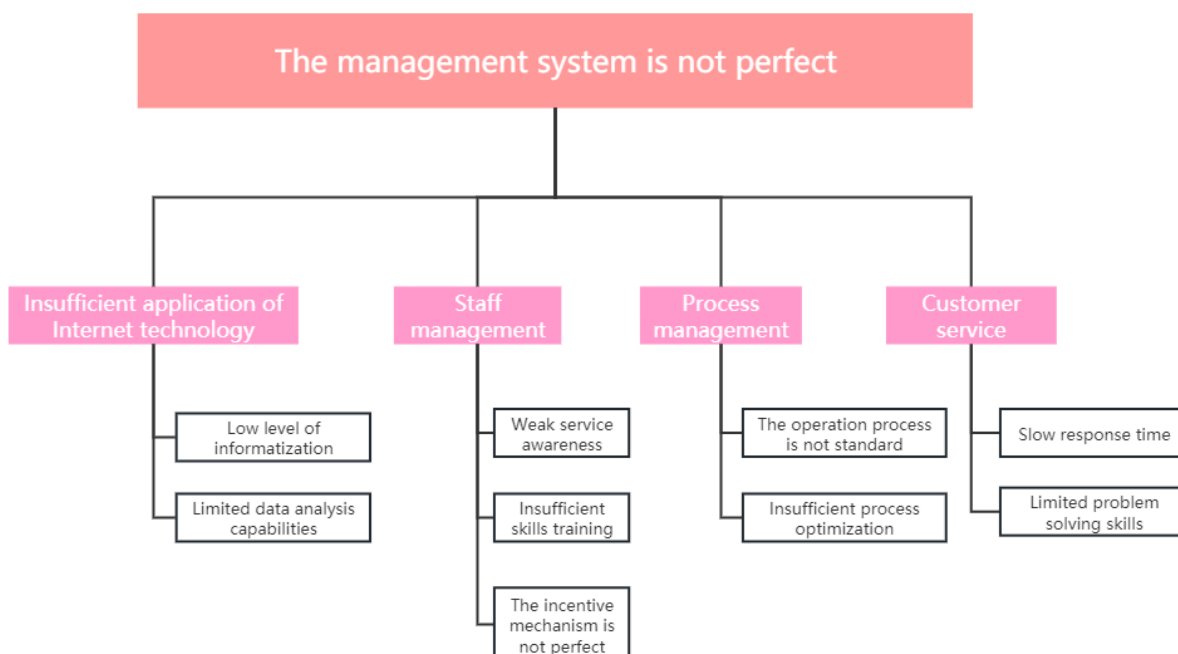


Figure 2. The management system is not perfect

3.2. Lack of Sound Complaint Mechanism

The online tourism experience, as an important part of modern tourism, covers the entire process of users browsing and consuming travel products through Internet platforms. However, this early experience has inherent limitations. Users mainly rely on online publicity and introductions for decision-making, but cannot experience tourism products in real-time and comprehensively during actual travel. When there is a gap between tourism products and expectations, it is easy to trigger tourism complaints. Tourists submit tourism complaints through online platforms or by phone, with online service platforms recording complaint details, customer service personnel submitting them to higher-level departments, and finally providing feedback to tourists. This process takes a long time, lacks effective communication with tourists, results in delayed complaint handling, and fails to meet tourist needs. However, due to inadequate professionalism of tourism service personnel and the pressure of handling many tourism orders, the process of handling online tourism complaints becomes slow, resulting in a significant reduction in tourist experience during travel and affecting tourist satisfaction [13].

3.3. Relatively Single Marketing Model

Although online tourism enterprises have diverse marketing methods, they are limited to low-price, multi-attraction group buying strategies, lacking true innovation. With the rapid changes in Internet information, online tourism enterprises can use various methods and types of propaganda through Internet media, relying on platforms like Weibo, Douyin, and WeChat public accounts. However, the marketing methods mainly focus on low prices, multiple attractions, and group purchases, lacking innovation in tourism products. Internet information updates quickly, and online tourism enterprises cannot update the information they possess in a timely manner. Online tourism website designs tend to be homogenized, lacking clear differentiation and personalization, weakening their attractiveness to some extent. To quickly capture the market, these websites often overlook in-depth analysis of user needs, resulting in vague target market positioning and difficulty in stimulating tourists' booking interest. Due to fierce competition among enterprises and limited tourism resources, many online tourism enterprises adopt a flat marketing model, making it difficult to deeply understand and meet tourists' personalized needs.

4. Marketing Suggestions for the Online Tourism Market

4.1. Strengthen Management Efforts

The online tourism market is in a rapid development stage, and various regulations and systems need improvement. To ensure the healthy and orderly development of the market, it is necessary to expand the coverage of regulatory personnel to ensure comprehensive supervision. Establishing a comprehensive and strictly supervised regulatory system is essential to ensure effective implementation of regulations. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the service awareness of online tourism market practitioners, with regulatory departments implementing a responsibility system. Regulatory departments should clarify division of responsibilities to ensure that each regulatory personnel can fulfill their duties. Faced with the diverse types of business operations and broad industry involvement in the online tourism market, establishing an online management system to achieve comprehensive and multi-point supervision through automated monitoring means is crucial. Additionally, it is necessary to strengthen the responsibility awareness and service awareness of suppliers, establish enterprise associations, and jointly create a healthy atmosphere for the online tourism market.

4.2. Improve Complaint Mechanisms

In the growth and strategic development of tourism enterprises, customer feedback plays a critical role and is a key indicator for measuring the quality of tourism services. Therefore, tourism enterprises need to take a series of measures to optimize the tourist experience (Figure 3). Firstly, it is necessary to improve the online tourism complaint mechanism and enhance the comprehensive quality and professional skills of service personnel. By introducing professionals in tourism management, a professional and efficient "dedicated talent" team can be cultivated. Secondly, reduce complaint hierarchies to ensure that tourist feedback can be conveyed quickly and directly to relevant departments, while establishing diverse communication channels to allow tourists to express opinions and suggestions conveniently^[14-15]. Lastly, establish archives for tourist complaints, conduct in-depth analysis of concentrated tourism business complaints, formulate rectification measures, and fundamentally improve service quality to provide tourists with better travel experiences.

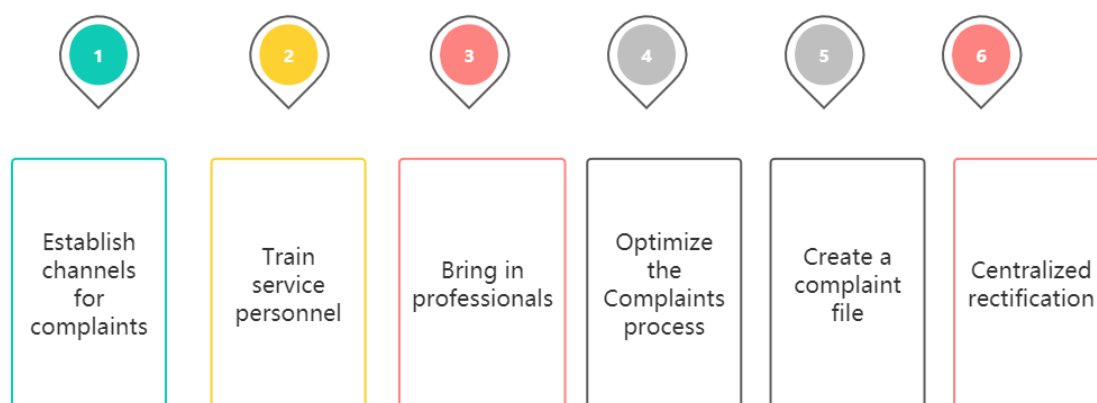


Figure 3. Improve the complaint mechanism

4.3. Enrich Marketing Models

In tourism industry marketing, a combination of traditional and online promotion models can be chosen. To enhance the attractiveness of tourist destinations, local rich cultural connotations can be integrated into online promotions to create a unique promotional style against a backdrop of deep cultural heritage. The promotional text of scenic spots should focus on current hot tourism topics, stimulating tourists' desire for exploration in vivid and interesting ways, thereby promoting the sales of tourism products. For souvenirs of tourist destinations, an innovative online supermarket can be established to provide tourists with a convenient "tour, purchase, and take" integrated experience. While tourists are enjoying their trip, they can browse and select their favorite souvenirs without worrying about the hassle of carrying them during the journey. By providing mail delivery services, tourists can easily bring souvenirs home, enjoying the convenience of one-stop consumption. This innovative marketing method significantly enhances tourist satisfaction and brings new growth points for tourism enterprises.

4.4. Strengthen Data Analysis

In today's rapidly developing digital era, strengthening data analysis is not a choice but a necessity for online tourism enterprises. The rise of big data and artificial intelligence technologies provides more opportunities for enterprises to understand user behavior and needs. By deeply analyzing user search, browsing, and booking behaviors, enterprises can obtain rich user data, which intuitively reflects users' immediate needs and reveals their long-term preferences and trends. This insight is crucial for online tourism enterprises to better understand users, discover new opportunities in the market, and formulate more accurate marketing strategies. Based on the results of data analysis, enterprises can develop personalized tourism products and services tailored to user preferences, predict and meet their potential needs based on user behavior, and improve marketing efficiency through precise advertising placement. These strategies can effectively enhance user experience, significantly strengthen enterprise market competitiveness, and improve marketing effectiveness.

4.5. Enhance Brand Building

With the intensification of market competition, consumers' choices of tourism products increasingly rely on brand influence and reputation. Therefore, strengthening brand building has become a key factor for online tourism enterprises to win market share and enhance competitiveness. A strong brand not only serves as an enterprise's identity but also symbolizes its reputation and quality. For online tourism enterprises, a powerful brand can enhance consumer trust and attract more potential customers. By strengthening brand publicity and promotion, enterprises can expand brand awareness, allowing more consumers to understand and remember their brand. At the same time, improving brand reputation can also increase consumer loyalty, prompting them to choose and recommend their tourism products. Additionally, maintaining brand image is equally important. In the Internet age, information spreads rapidly, and any negative event may seriously impact the

enterprise. Therefore, enterprises need to handle user complaints and negative information promptly, respond actively to social concerns, and maintain a good brand image to stand invincible in the fierce market competition.

5. Conclusion

In summary, in the modern tourism industry, the online tourism market occupies a significant proportion and has tremendous development potential, capable of maximizing tourists' needs. With the improvement of people's living standards and the transformation of tourism consumption concepts, more tourists tend to plan their trips through online tourism platforms. To meet the increasingly diverse travel needs of tourists, online tourism enterprises should keep pace with the times, closely follow tourists' travel habits, and through collecting and analyzing tourists' search records, browsing behavior, and other data, deeply understand their preferences and needs, thus adjusting and optimizing travel routes in a timely manner. This data-driven precise marketing strategy not only helps enterprises better meet tourists' personalized needs but also improves the market competitiveness of tourism products, promoting the healthy and stable development of the industry.

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