

Opportunities, Challenges and Countermeasures of Tourism Cooperation Between Fujian and Taiwan Against the Background of China (Fujian) Pilot Free Trade Zone*

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Abstract—The establishment of China (Fujian) Pilot Free Trade Zone provides opportunities for the two-way flow of people from Fujian to Taiwan and the development of tourism market in the two places. But at the same time, it poses the challenges, for example, the tourism resources need to be integrated and planned, the tourism industry cooperation system needs to be improved and compound tourism talents in Fujian and Taiwan are in shortage, etc. Therefore, Fujian and Taiwan should jointly set up a marketing platform to vigorously build the brand system of "fresh Fujian" and consolidate the industrial foundation; deepen the reform and opening up of Fujian's tourism industry and build strategic alliance together; improve the competitiveness of Fujian's tourism service trade and conduct mutual training and education. This will promote the barrier-free flow of tourism talents from Fujian to Taiwan and strive to realize the deep connection of tourism cooperation between Fujian and Taiwan under the background of the free trade zone.

Keywords—Fujian and Taiwan; tourism; cooperation; pilot free trade zone

I. INTRODUCTION

As a trans-regional economic form, tourism plays an extremely important role in cross-strait economic exchanges. Because Fujian and Taiwan are geographically close and linked by culture, blood relationship, business relationship and law relationship, Fujian has become a transfer station for compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan straits since Taiwan opened one-way tourism to the mainland in 1987, playing an important role as a bridge and link in cross-strait exchanges and cooperation. In 1987, the Taiwan authorities lifted the martial law, curtailed the control of mountainous areas, coastal defense and important military facilities, and began to accept the applications of visiting relatives from the mainland, increasing the space, resources and freedom for sightseeing and recreation activities, which started the hot trend of visiting relatives from the mainland. In 2001, Mawei and Xiamen of Fujian signed the "agreement on non-

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governmental exchange and cooperation" with Matsu and Kinmen of Taiwan respectively, realizing the "mini three links" of commerce, shipping and postal services between the two sides. In 2008, the two sides of the Taiwan straits realized the "Three Direct Links" of shipping and air transportation and direct postal service. This policy made the number of Taiwan compatriots visiting Fujian increase by 2.29 times from 2008 to 2014, and the number of Taiwan compatriots visiting Fujian accounted for up to 41.36% of the total number of inbound tourists to Fujian province. In 2015, China (Fujian) Pilot Free Trade Zone was established, and the policy dividend on Taiwan attracted more frequent exchanges between people from Fujian and Taiwan. With the increasing demand for catering, accommodation, sightseeing and leisure, the tourism market developed rapidly. Therefore, under the new situation, it is of great significance for the in-depth economic and trade cooperation between Fujian and Taiwan to have a clear understanding of the opportunities and challenges of tourism industry cooperation between Fujian and Taiwan against the background of Pilot Free Trade Zone, pool advantages and deepen win-win results.

II. OPPORTUNITIES FOR TOURISM COOPERATION BETWEEN FUJIAN AND TAIWAN AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF CHINA (FUJIAN) PILOT FREE TRADE ZONE

A. *The Open Policy of the Free Trade Zone Is Conducive to Promoting the Two-way Flow of Personnel Between Fujian and Taiwan*

Since the establishment of China (Fujian) Pilot Free Trade Zone, policy dividends towards Taiwan have been continuously released. Seven preferential policies for Taiwan tourism have been introduced; the number of pilot cities for individual tourists to Taiwan has been increased; breakthroughs have been made in the "Mini Three Direct Links" policy; increased the quota exemption policy for direct flights to Taiwan; the opening of the free trade area for tourism has been pushed forward; the number of tour groups to Taiwan has been increased, the Fuzhou office of the Taiwan travel association has been established; and Pingtan

has obtained the right to apply for the Taiwan compatriots certificate. The promulgation and implementation of these policies will greatly promote the two-way tourism exchanges between Fujian and Taiwan. In 2015, the number of tourists to Taiwan via Fujian ports increased by 61.8 percent year-on-year, and Fujian received more Taiwan compatriots than any other province in China. More than 400 students from Kinmen University have started their study tour in Fujian, which has set a new record for the number of young students from Taiwan in the single batch of "fresh Fujian" study tour, and opened a new page for tourism cooperation between Fujian and Taiwan.

B. The Improvement of Infrastructure in the Free Trade Zone Contributes to Broadening the Tourism Cooperation Routes Between Fujian and Taiwan

The realization of direct flights between Fujian and Taiwan is the precondition for tourism cooperation between Fujian and Taiwan. At the end of 2015, the passenger ship Anqi 2, carrying 89 passengers, sailed from Huangqi, Fujian province, to Matsu, Taiwan, marking the official opening of the fourth "mini three links" passenger route between Fujian and Taiwan. Since the Southern Song Dynasty, Matsu has been under the jurisdiction of Lianjiang County, Fuzhou. It is known as "the outer mountain", ranking alongside with Huangqi which is called "the inner mountain". Within the free trade zone, the tourism development of the Huangqi peninsula has been given priority support, and efforts have been made to build a "Central Matsu Island Tourist Area", to connect Lianjiang and Matsu characteristic tourism products, and develop a multi-station tourism connecting boutique line. The direct route between Huangqi and Matsu not only gives new meaning to the cross-strait exchanges, but also adds a golden route to the direct route between Fujian and Taiwan, which will greatly enhance the convenience of tourism cooperation between Fujian and Taiwan.

C. Taiwan's Priority in the Policies of the Pilot Free Trade Zone Contributes to Promoting the Development of Fujian and Taiwan Tourism Market

The China (Fujian) Pilot Free Trade Zone has relaxed the entry threshold for Taiwan tourism market entities, allowing natural persons holding Taiwan identity certificates to apply for the tourist guide qualification certificate after living in the pilot free trade zone for more than one year, and apply for the certificate to practice in the mainland. It also allows Taiwan tour guides and tour escorts to practice in Fuzhou, Xiamen and Pingtan pilot zones after obtaining valid certificates through training in the pilot zones and allows Taiwan service providers to hold exhibitions in the pilot zones, and approves the holding of Taiwan-related economic and technological exhibitions in the pilot zones as required. A "Fujian model" for tourism to Taiwan should be created through institutional innovation. Flexible policies and loose market access threshold will attract Taiwan tourism practitioners to Fujian, jointly improve the Fujian and Taiwan tourism product system, and create a common tourism market across the Taiwan straits.

III. CHALLENGES OF TOURISM COOPERATION BETWEEN FUJIAN AND TAIWAN IN THE CONTEXT OF CHINA (FUJIAN) PILOT FREE TRADE ZONE

A. Tourism Resources in Fujian and Taiwan Need to Be Integrated and Planned

There are many similarities and much substitutability between Fujian and Taiwan in natural geographical environment, ecological resources and cultural features. Fujian's tourism industry is mainly distributed in coastal and mountainous areas, while Taiwan's tourism resources are also dominated by mountains and seas. Therefore, the repeated development of tourism industrial distribution in Fujian and Taiwan is common. Examples are like: Meizhou Mazu temple is similar to Taiwan Mazu temple; Fujian has Wuyi fairyland while Taiwan has Yushan peak; Fujian has rich hot spring resources and Taiwan also has diverse hot spring recuperation resources and so on. Similar tourism resources will reduce the attraction of tourists from both places to the same type of tourism resources. Secondly, ecological landscape tourism products are one of the most important tourism products in Fujian and Taiwan. At present, they only stay in the development stage of sightseeing, which is not warmly participated. Resort tourism products are in shortage and a complete product chain has not been formed yet, which affects the competitiveness of tourism products of the two places. Therefore, in the context of the free trade zone, Fujian and Taiwan need to integrate their own tourism resources and explore their own distinctive tourism routes and culture.

B. The Cooperation System of Fujian and Taiwan Tourism Industry Needs to Be Improved

At present, in Fujian and Taiwan, core enterprises of sufficient scale such as tourist attractions and travel agencies are not many, and with low concentration and weak competitiveness, their ability to develop and design tourism products is not strong. Phenomena like forcing tourists to buy things exists, varied quality of tour guides, improperly matched catering, accommodation and other services in some tourist attractions, opaque travel prices of some tourist products, all result in the loose tourism industry chain structure and cooperation in Fujian and Taiwan. In addition, Taiwan's tourism brand is better known than Fujian's in the world. The establishment of Fujian and Taiwan tourism cooperation system will greatly enhance Fujian's tourism competitiveness, and at the same time, it also means the liberalization and smooth development of cross-strait tourism market. However, the tourism resources of Fujian and Taiwan have many internal homogeneous structures, so Taiwan's relatively leading position may be weakened. Also, in terms of tourism products, tourism services and infrastructure, Fujian province is still far behind the Yangtze River delta and Pearl River delta economic circles which started early and have entered a relatively mature stage. Therefore, the benefit distribution mechanism to benefit Taiwan needs to be established in the tourism cooperation between Fujian and Taiwan, otherwise it will be difficult to realize the industrial cooperation system.

C. The Shortage of Compound Tourism Talents in Fujian and Taiwan Is Prominent

In the context of free trade zone, with the deepening of economic and trade cooperation between Fujian and Taiwan, there is a large space for tourism cooperation between Fujian and Taiwan. Meanwhile, a large number of tourism management talents, tourism development talents and tour guide talents are urgently needed. However, due to the small number of undergraduate colleges and universities offering tourism management related majors in Fujian, most of the tourism related majors are concentrated in vocational colleges and universities, and most of the graduates are tour guides and other tourism practitioners. Therefore, high-level tourism management talents are very scarce. Tour guides can be promoted to tourism management personnel by accumulating experience. However, tour guides in Fujian province are mostly part-time, lacking professional qualities. In addition, due to the tough working environment at grassroots working environment in tourist attractions, especially in some remote scenic spots, there is a shortage of tourism professionals. It can be often seen that a tourism worker holds several posts, with low salary, lack of corresponding training and career development prospects, and job-hopping and demission of tourism workers are common. In addition, at present, most tourism talents in Fujian and Taiwan are just familiar with local tourism resources, and there is a shortage of inter-disciplinary tourism talents who are proficient in Fujian and Taiwan languages and familiar with the local customs of Fujian and Taiwan, which will bring challenges to the tourism cooperation between the two places.

IV. COUNTERMEASURES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR DEEPENING TOURISM INDUSTRY COOPERATION BETWEEN FUJIAN AND TAIWAN UNDER THE NEW SITUATION

A. Jointly Setting up a Marketing Platform to Create High-quality Tourism Cooperation Products

It is necessary for them to jointly create a product promotion platform, creative center, research and development base, focusing on the "fresh Fujian" tourism brand product marketing institutions, to cultivate creative, promising and effective tourism boutique. Health care products can be cultivated and high-end leisure and health culture resort, such as high-end fitness center, health therapy center, spa can be built and various health activities can be jointly held. It is also necessary to expand coastal tourism products to form a coastal tourism pattern with regional characteristics, such as the development of residential tourism products around Dalian island and Dongyang Island; develop research tourism products focused on the Keqitou site and the underwater wreck site; and develop aquatic leisure products focused on the Yangtze River bay and Shanqi bay. Refined agricultural products should be developed and the high-tech leisure agriculture venture fund for the two places should be established. For example, the construction of happy farm, fisherman's wharf, mountain family and agricultural production cooperatives is all worth consideration. The shopping format should be innovated and

opened to create a shopping paradise of Asian fashion brands. For example, a tax-protected zone can be set up to build a shopping center for fashion brand. The introduction of exhibition products should be expanded to build a demonstration area for professional exhibition cooperation between the two places, such as the jointly held exhibitions, recreational and commercial performance, festival activities of various types and various chambers of commerce in Fujian and Taiwan.

B. Jointly Building Strategic Alliance to Enhance the Competitiveness of Fujian and Taiwan Tourism Cooperation Industry

The two places should explore the establishment of Fujian and Taiwan enterprise alliance and set up the alliance headquarters to integrate the internal resources of joint venture and give full play to their advantages. The headquarters of the alliance has administrative authority over both parties, directly lead the extension and expansion of tourism product chain within the free trade zone, such as hotel air ticket online booking, online travel agency services, travel insurance claims, online tour guide service, self-driving tour line to realize the business strategy of "group" tourism enterprises of the two places. On the one hand, through the integration of existing enterprise resources and mergers and acquisitions, large tourism enterprises can be constructed to drive the growth of enterprise efficiency through competition; On the other hand, the government should be the guide to bring in a number of large tourism enterprises with considerable strength and scale and the ability to develop tourist products in the two places to settle in the pilot free trade zone. Public services should be improved to realize seamless docking of people's services between the two places. For example, in tourist public service areas, transportation distribution areas and other areas of the pilot free trade zone, the free exchange of RMB and "Taiwan dollar" should be realized, and green channels should be opened for transit tourists from Taiwan, so as to realize the one-card for tourism consumption. It is necessary to play a leading role, cultivate the overall tourism product image of the free trade zone, promote the construction of enterprise tourism, cultural tourism, agricultural tourism and other industrial cluster center so as to change the original situation of scattered tourism enterprises and realize the intensive growth of the tourism industry.

C. Training Mutual Employment and Mutual Education, and Promoting the Barrier-free Flow of Tourism Talents Between Fujian and Taiwan

Innovations should be made in the mechanism of talent flow between the two places. Through transparent talent selection and talent incentive mechanism, talent sharing between the two places will be implemented and international talent incubation base and technology display platform will be cultivated to attract tourism entrepreneurs, tourism technical talents, tourism academic elites and tourism professionals from the two places to gather in the free trade zone. It is necessary to implement the qualification certification of tourism practitioners in the free trade zone;

invite experts and scholars from both places as members; allow Taiwan's high-level tourism colleges and universities to set up independent colleges in the free trade zone to recruit students from the mainland; establishing Fujian and Taiwan cooperative tourism education and research base, exploring new cooperation in tourism education and research; exchange high-level teaching and research staff in the two places; jointly establish tourism teacher training programs, tourism talent training programs, tourism industry-university-research integration transformation programs, and tourism academic exchange activities for universities in Fujian and Taiwan; establish a pool of tourism talent resources and a fund for talent entrepreneurship, and jointly organize recruitment, skill competitions and other activities, so to provide strong intellectual support and human resources for the development of tourism in Fujian and Taiwan against the background of the free trade zone.

V. CONCLUSION

Fujian province has long been an important passage for Taiwan people to and from the mainland. The relationship between Fujian and Taiwan has a long history, and has formed a unique "five predestined relationships" of geographical proximity, cultural affinity, blood relationship, business affinity, and legal affinity, which provides unique advantages for tourism cooperation between Fujian and Taiwan. Fujian and Taiwan are separated by only one strait of water. They are connected by blood, roots and relatives, so there is great potential for tourism cooperation. The tourism resources of Fujian and Taiwan are both complementary and homogeneous, which need rational planning, comprehensive utilization and joint development. The establishment of Fujian pilot free trade zone presents both opportunities and challenges for tourism cooperation between Fujian and Taiwan. Only by cooperating in the development of first-class tourism products, accelerating the transformation and upgrading of the tourism industry, and safeguarding the rights and interests of tourists and tourism service providers from Fujian and Taiwan, can the two sides achieve win-win cooperation and common development under the new situation. Therefore, it is necessary for them to give full play to the unique tourism resource advantages, the cultural advantages of the "five predestined relationships" and national policy advantages of Fujian and Taiwan, establish interactive coordination mechanism through scientific planning, and strive to realize the deep connection of tourism cooperation between Fujian and Taiwan.

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