



Research on New Media Helping Rural Tourism Development in the Context of Normalization of Epidemic Situation

A Case Study of Kunshan City, Jiangsu Province, China

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Abstract. With the normalization of pandemic scenarios today, promoting rural tourism through new media technology and growing the popularity and impact of tourism-related products has progressively evolved into a development trend for destination marketing in the travel industry. In this article, the PEST model is used to examine the viability of new media to support rural tourist development, using Kunshan as an example, against the backdrop of a serious epidemic sickness.

Keywords: Rural Tourism · New Media · Kunshan · PEST Model

1 Introduction

Rural tourism is an important part of the implementation of rural revitalization strategy and an important channel for promoting agricultural restructuring and rural industry revitalization. The Kunqu Opera originated in Kunshan and is the forerunner of all Chinese plays. It is a water township with a rich cultural legacy that is situated in the Huning economic corridor in the south-east of Jiangsu Province. It has a history that spans more than 6,000 years of civilization and more than 2,000 years of building. The first admission ticket to the picturesque area was offered in the Kunshan town of Zhouzhuang in April 1989. Since then, Kunshan's tourism business has expanded quickly, with the historic watertown serving as its main resource. At present, Kunshan has one national 5A-level scenic spot (Zhouzhuang) and three 4A-level scenic spots (Jinxi, Qiangeng, and Tinglingyuan). At present, Kunshan City has one national 5A-level scenic spot (Zhouzhuang) and three 4A-level scenic spots (Jinxi, Qiangeng and Tinglingyuan). In recent years, Kunshan has successfully developed a number of rural tourism projects, including Zhouzhuang Xiangcun Qizhuang, Jinxi Zhudian Ancient Kiln Cultural Park, Jijiadun New Rural Life Co-Creation Cluster, Ba Cheng Xibang Kunqu Society, etc., relying on the area's abundant cultural resources and favorable ecological environment. The market demand potential for rural tourism is unquestionably enormous.

In 2020, however, under the influence of the COVID-19 epidemic, the global tourism industry suffered a huge impact, and the vulnerability of rural tourism was fully exposed.

Table 1. The number of visitors received and tourism revenue in Kunshan city, 2017–2021

YEAR	NUMBER OF VISITOR (MILLION)	TOURISM REVENUE (100 MILLION)	YEAR-ON- YEAR
2017	21.26	284.20	+8.6%
2018	21.82	307.74	+8.3%
2019	22.98	325.31	+5.7%
2020	11.27	166.27	-48.9%
2021	17.70	259.88	+56.3%

The People’s Republic of China’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism published the yearly tourism figures for 2020 in February 2021: 2,879 million persons travelled to China in 2020, which is 3,022 million (or 52.1%) fewer than during the same period in 2019. Domestic tourism income was 2.23 trillion yuan, a decrease of 3.50 trillion yuan from the previous year, or 6.1% [20]. In Kunshan, the traffic volume has been greatly reduced, the cultural products are unsalable, the orders of hotels and homestays have been reduced, and the catering and retail business has been deserted, resulting in huge losses to the local villagers’ business. The tourism data of Kunshan city shows in Table 1. Rural areas are less educated and more developed than cities [11]. Future rural tourism development must adjust to the new demands of the web 2.0 era and take advantage of the scenario because diseases are becoming more commonplace today.

In the era of the digital economy, various types of emerging media have become the most important information dissemination tools in today’s society with the advantages of fast dissemination, low cost, high efficiency and a large amount of information. The consumption patterns and viewpoints of tourists have changed significantly, particularly since the COVID-19 outbreak has become more common. Traditional marketing strategies can no longer directly contact customers, thus new media marketing is a necessity for the tourism sector to regain its vitality. In order to increase rural tourism, it is crucial to stick to the strategic notion of “tourism + internet” while looking into new avenues for growth based on both online and offline channels. Based on this, this thesis analyzes the feasibility of using new media to develop rural tourism in Kunshan through the PEST model, and puts forward some corresponding suggestions.

2 The Development of Newmedia Under the Epidemic Situation

The exact nature of the relationship between the media and society is a subject of much debate. But even without reaching any definite conclusions, the increasing centrality of the media, and especially of the new media, is clear to all of us [17]. A new media is a kind of communication that employs digital technology to deliver information and services to users through terminals like computers, mobile phones, and digital televisions as well as channels like computer networks, wireless communication networks, and satellites. The current advancements in 5G, AI, and big data technology have almost

completely revolutionized the generation of new media. 5G wireless communications, in comparison to the current 4G networks, offer high data speeds (i.e., terabytes per second), minimal latency, increased base station capacity, and perceived higher quality of service [1]. For example, the development of various industries is becoming increasingly platform-oriented; Online sales and secure payment functions have been continuously improved; The method of communication between industries has been slowed down, and the means of information distribution have gradually gotten more efficient, widespread, and content-rich. One major advantage of 5G is that it will address some of the present problems with cellular networks, including slow data rates, capacity, poor quality of service, and latency [2].

While there is no doubt that the COVID-19 epidemic has brought a huge blow to most industries, all kinds of new media platforms have ushered in unprecedented opportunities for development during this period. A new type of social media, known as social live streaming services, has emerged in recent years (SLSSs). As they contain a backchannel between the viewers and the streamers as well as among the viewers, social live streaming services mix Live-TV with components of Social Networking Services (SNSs). With the use of such services, users can stream live content to anyone with an interest [8]. The number of marketing solutions based on new media platforms is constantly increasing. Short-form video sharing sites like Tiktok and Kuaishou are expanding quickly in China, and many businesspeople who are adept at utilizing new media tools have reaped significant financial rewards. This marketing model based on new media not only satisfies consumers' shopping preferences, but also actively avoids the negative impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, and even makes a noticeable contribution to the national economy of China. Therefore, with the normalization of the epidemic, it is inevitable that the development of Kunshan must rely on the power of new media in order to seek the revival of rural tourism.

3 Analysis of Kunshan's Rural Tourism Development with the Help of New Media by Pest Model

3.1 Political

The Chinese government attaches great importance to the development of new media. So far, many relevant policy opinions have been issued to encourage and support the development of new media, such as Opinions on Further Accelerating the Development of Traditional Media and Emerging Media Together [13], Notice on the pertinent issues relating to the National Innovation Center for the coordinated growth of mass media's establishment [14], Advice on Quickening the Deep Integration and Development of Media's [6], etc. Chinese new media talent is very highly regarded, and numerous initiatives are taken to support their innovativeness. From the development of abilities and the improvement of young people's inventive consciousness training. It can be seen that China is actively supporting the development of new media, which constitutes a solid policy guarantee for Kunshan to develop rural tourism with the help of new media.

3.2 Economic

Objectively, the outbreak of COVID-19 has prompted more consumers to choose new media channels to obtain information. Many entrepreneurs spread and sell their goods through live broadcasting thanks to new media platforms like Tik Tok and Kuaishou. The internet live broadcast has significantly increased public consumption want as well as domestic investment and consumption demand in China through the precision marketing of big data, which has also helped to somewhat support the recovery of the national economy. The 45th “Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development Status” published by CNNIC states that as of March 2020, there were 560 million live broadcasting users in China, or 62.0% of all internet users. Among them, the number of e-commerce live broadcasting users that emerged and achieved rapid development in 2019 is 265 million, accounting for 29.3% of the total netizens [18]. Regarding Kunshan City, the extensive promotion of cutting-edge tourism products through the new media platform may not only boost the economic benefits but also draw a large number of fans, making full preparations for the economic recovery in the post-epidemic era.

3.3 Social

The new media platform has dual attributes of economy and society. The new media platform must be lucrative in order to function as a business. The obligation to spread advanced culture rests with new media as a public forum. We are in the “platform society” era. When we get up, we read the news or check in with our pals on social media. We might use a shared bike or a platform-enabled lift in a stranger’s car to get to work. While other Fortune 500 companies use online platforms to buy labor piecemeal from around the world, we purchase everything from books to dishwasher filters, and now even groceries, through Amazon without giving the location of the seller or the number of people they employ or how long they have been in business [5]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the new media platform became an important channel for the spread of epidemic information. It can not only accurately publish all kinds of relevant information, but also build an effective communication bridge between the government and the people, greatly alleviating the panic of the general public. Numerous media outlets, meanwhile, helped the public gradually develop a constructive and helpful anti-epidemic attitude and put up a positive public opinion orientation during the outbreak period. They also made significant contributions to the fight against the COVID-19 epidemic.

Individuals’ interactions with government are increasingly taking place online through centralized platforms that offer to supply a wide range of services with a seamless, customer-focused experience while also providing competition in areas such as the provision of identity services. Such online platforms that connect large groups of buyers and sellers, or friends and social connections, or governments and citizens have a strong neoliberal logic to them: they promise quicker and more efficient transactions, better customer targeting, greater transparency, and more intense competition in terms of prices, wages, and quality [15]. In addition, the new media platform is relatively open, and it also serves as a platform for public scrutiny, helping to correct some unreasonable or unfair phenomena in society. For example, in the midst of the epidemic’s market chaos

caused by the illegally high price of drugs and food, the masses turned to new media for assistance, causing public concern. These issues were actively addressed by government agencies, who also implemented online feedback processing on new media platforms. Evident that the new media platform is playing an invaluable role in today's society, and taking advantage of the new media platform has become a general trend in Kunshan.

3.4 Technical

Technical aspects of the new media platform are mainly reflected in three aspects: digital technology, network technology, and mobile communication technology. Digital: Though since new media is digital, there are virtually no marginal costs for producing additional copies of digital products, and individuals can easily distribute their creations to a global audience without having to go through traditional "gate keepers" such as publishers [10]. Networks: Consumers use new media to participate in social networks, which enable them to create and share content communicate with one another, and build relationships with other consumers [9]. Mobile communication: The use of new media by consumers is observable by third parties. Consumers' posts in forums, blogs, and social communities can be tracked by other consumers as well as businesses. Mobile services generate location-sensitive messages, offers, and market differentiation using information on consumers' spatial position as reported by GPS, 3G, and IP addresses [10].

In recent years, the advancement of new media technology has made great contributions to market supervision, media control, information confusion, and entry threshold. Various new media technologies, such as 5G, big data, and cloud computing, are closely integrated with various industries. In addition, new media gradually transforms live broadcasting into e-commerce, offline teaching into online teaching, and the offline office into an online office. Chinese new media technology has now advanced to a fairly advanced level. Based on the foregoing, it is clear that Kun2environment is completely feasible. However, there are several issues that need to be addressed in Kunshan's rural tourism development.

4 Problems in Rural Tourism Development

With the rapid development of new media, rural tourism in Kunshan is facing various challenges. First, the resource advantage is not immediately apparent. The competitive advantage is not obvious when compared to the surrounding Huzhou, Zhejiang Province, and Wuzhen District, Suzhou, and there is no resource monopoly. Changshu, Zhangjiagang, Wujiang, Taicang, and other cities They are geographically close, and ancient water towns and ecological agriculture share regional characteristics and market perception. The second point is that industrial innovation, transformation, and upgrading are relatively slow, as evidenced by low product quality, insufficient personalization, single type, and inconspicuous features. Only the development of material landscape resources is emphasized, while the development power and degree of folk customs, cultural and creative peripheral products, and intangible cultural heritage are weak. Third, the tourism market space must be expanded, external promotion efforts must be strengthened, and specialized talents such as tourism planning and new media are in short supply.

5 Proposals on Developing Rural Tourism with New Media in Kunshan City

5.1 Building Exclusive Brand Image of Kunshan

Perception about a destination is called brand image of a tourist destination. In contrast, brand image refers to the consumer's current perception of a company and the particular set of beliefs that tourists hold. Tourists choose their vacation destination based on their perception. In today's world, where a wealth of information is available and tourists are well-educated, a destination's brand image is crucial in deciding where to visit. The first step in developing destination branding is to create a destination brand image [3]. To begin, brand positioning is done from the standpoint of tourist perception, cognition, and demand. The characteristics, cultural context, and market trend of rural tourism resources in Kunshan establish the specific image of rural tourism. Secondly, we should pay attention to the localization of Kunshan, regional characteristics, and localization characteristics. A thorough understanding of Kunshan's own advantages, an improvement in the way rural tourism resources are packaged, the creation of its core competitiveness, and a reduction in the likelihood of imitation in other areas.

Since brand image occasionally functions as fiction and occasionally as an icon, it can occasionally differ from tourist to tourist. As a sensitive and challenging concept to work with that will have an impact on a destination's reputation, brand image is something that destinations need to handle carefully. Any mismatch between reality and brand perception creates a negative brand image [16]. Building "four brands" of Kunshan service, Kunshan manufacturing, Kunshan shopping, and Kunshan culture through a unified logo, image, and online publicity. Online tourism and live tourism broadcasting, which incorporate people's food, lodging, transportation, travel, shopping, and entertainment, are used to carry out the "Rural tourism + Internet" promotion strategy. Rural scenic spots can form a group relationship with stakeholders through some new media platforms. For example, if tourists' demand is the special diet around rural tourism scenic spots, the rural scenic spots can carry out platform cooperation with farmers around Kunshan, and the whole process from the selection of ingredients to the production and tasting can be displayed through the live broadcast platform. Learn from the experience of tasting live broadcast to stimulate the tourist demand of the audience during the live broadcast. Meanwhile, it also achieved the role of rural tourism in poverty alleviation and rural revitalization.

As a result of the epidemic condition, it is a problem for tourists to be unable to travel immediately to the scenic location for an on-the-spot tour. Operators of scenic spots that go digital might put occupying new markets and seeking profit maximization first. By satisfying more online users and gaining the potential big data resources and tourism consumption value space of online users, the customer stickiness can be increased, the precision marketing ability of tourist attractions can be improved, and the unique marketing mode service system of Kunshan scenic spot under the background of epidemic normalization can be realized.

5.2 Culture Creation Products are Diversified

As many societies have evolved from production-based to consumption-based economies [4], there has been a corresponding shift in the idea of value as embedded in a product to value as co-created by both the consumer and the producer [19]. Along with this economic shift, there has also been a cultural one, where customers now contribute not only to the creation of value but also of meaning [7]. Products of cultural creation combine culture, aesthetics, and purposes. Successful cultural production products must be full of distinctive local culture, useful practical applications, and satisfying aesthetic experiences. Contrarily, a cultural creative product with a weak cultural connotation, vulgar design, and shorn of its functional value will struggle to catch consumers' attention and pique their interest in purchasing. Nowadays, Internet consumers are more sensitive to the attributes of products because of their diverse needs. They can influence other consumers through word-of-mouth effect.

Thus, the promotion of cultural creation products through new media must begin with enriching the types of products and improving the design of cultural creation products. The villagers' inventive consciousness must be boosted as it is the primary driver of rural tourism. To realize the transformation of the open mode of cultural creation products from extensive to refined, villagers must develop products in a variety of methods, such as using the crops, houses, costumes, and other cultural components around them as creative inspiration. Villagers must challenge outdated ideas, try daringly to invent cultural creation products, and lessen the appearance of uniform goods during this process. So that cultural creation items in rural Kunshan can reach more consumers, it is conceivable to use new media to promote and sell cultural creation products.

5.3 Government Support and Talent Training

Rural Revitalization requires not only a large number of rural labor, but also rural talents with certain technology and ability [12]. It is necessary for expert teams in relevant disciplines to promote the development of rural tourism using new media. However, indigenous people account for the majority of the long-term residents in Kunshan's rural districts, and they aren't very interested in new media and don't have many skills for using and managing the platforms. To enhance the operation and application ability of new media, the Kunshan government must attach great importance to the cultivation of new media talents. It can cooperate with Zhejiang, Shanghai, Nanjing, and other related universities and enterprises to set up advanced tourism management classes, so as to improve the comprehensive skills and quality of rural tourism managers. Additionally, it can entice recent graduates with interests in tourism, new media, and seasoned professionals to launch businesses in Kunshan, explore the creation of the Kunshan Tourism Society and Kunshan Tourism Wisdom Library, and create a rural talent reserve wisdom bank. The government will do its best to provide these initiatives with economic and policy support. By introducing the historical story of Kunshan village and the intangible cultural heritage-Kunshan opera online, the professional team can let more people know about the characteristic culture and special value of Kunshan village. Strive to create a beautiful rural tourism image in Kunshan, aiming at the coordinated development of rural tourism and new media, and make full preparations for rural tourism after the epidemic.

6 Conclusion

A key step in China's implementation of its policy for creating beautiful rural areas and rural regeneration is the development of rural tourism. The Communist Party's 19th National Congress proposed the "rejuvenation of villages" policy. In 1989, the first ticket was sold in Zhouzhuang ancient town, which indicated the official start of rural tourism in Kunshan. Now that the epidemic situation has become normal, the development of rural tourism must attract consumers with the help of new media platforms, so as to expand the influence of tourist attractions. Rural tourism in Kunshan is a significant emblem of the growth of rural tourism. By creating digital platforms, drawing Internet traffic, and conducting business online, scenic areas can further investigate the fundamental meaning of rural tourism and realize its long-term sustainable growth.

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