



Challenges and Countermeasures for China's Tourism Industry in the Post-Epidemic Era

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ABSTRACT

The outbreak of the epidemic has serious impacts on all walks of life in China, especially the tourism economy. Therefore, this paper focuses on the challenges faced by China's tourism industry under the current background and the relevant countermeasures that can be implemented. By summarizing the development of tourism in the post epidemic era, this paper points out that under the current severe background, there are some problems in the industry, such as a single revenue model, a shortage of high-quality tourism products and imperfect tourism-related supporting facilities. In the face of these situations, the government should implement supporting policies, grant subsidies to the injured enterprises, and establish and improve relevant economic policies, employment policies and emergency response mechanisms. Enterprises themselves should also take action to reduce costs and economic losses, and explore innovative ways of combining tourism with high technology. In addition, the combination of sporting events, celebrity effect and scenic spots is also the development direction of tourism that can be exploited in the future. The complete industrial chain formed around the event is the key to supporting the realization of tourism on this scale. The great tourism attraction brought by the creation of a successful event is an unmistakable boost to the industry. Therefore, the integration of event tourism with scenic tourism is a new impetus for the diversification and innovative development of the tourism industry.

Keywords: *Tourism Industry, China, Pandemic, COVID-19*

1. INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 has not only seriously affected people's normal production and lives but has also had a huge impact on all sectors of the domestic industry. The traditional Chinese tourism industry has been particularly affected by this serious challenge. As the epidemic progresses, the tourism industry is in the process of slowly adjusting and recovering after being hit hard. As an important part of the national economy, how to advance its recovery and quality development is a key issue in achieving the growth that will drive the country's economy. Therefore, the author explores the current dilemma of the tourism industry through an analysis of its development and changes during the epidemic, in order to help society seek positive countermeasures.

This paper first analyzes the current situation of the domestic tourism industry in China, then points out the problems that exist in the industry against the backdrop of the current set of challenges, and finally discusses

some feasible countermeasures. This paper also puts forward suggestions on how to promote high-quality development of tourism, and forecasts the issues and directions for its long-term development afterwards.

2. CURRENT SITUATION AND DEFECTS IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Current tourism development under the epidemic

According to official statistics from the Chinese Ministry of Tourism, the total number of domestic tourist arrivals in 2021 was 3.246 billion, an increase of 12.8% over the same period. This is 367 million more than in 2020, the worst year of the epidemic, and corresponds to a recovery of 54.0% of the total number of trips in 2019, when the epidemic had not yet broken out. Domestic tourism revenue (total tourism consumption) was 2.92 trillion yuan, an increase of 0.69 trillion yuan over the same period last year, returning to 51.0% in 2019 [1].

From these two data points, it can be seen that there is some slow rebound in tourism.

In addition, there has been a change in visitor spending compared to the pre-epidemic period. From the perspective of consumption patterns, the number of online tourism users is on an expanding trend. More and more tourist attractions have developed online ticketing platforms, enabling visitors to make reservations for tickets online. This not only helps to prevent and control the epidemic at this particular time, but also provides convenience and saves time for the public. Especially with the development of the new ecology of "Internet + tourism", there is more space for the development of online service platforms in the tourism industry [2]. Since the outbreak of the epidemic, different from the previous ways of sightseeing, people have become more inclined to the quality and experience of tourism. The demand for local tourism and peripheral tourism is also increasing. Emerging businesses such as resort hotels, sightseeing agricultural parks and characteristic homestays are developing rapidly. At the same time, the government also strongly supports the revitalization of rural industry, and the investment in the development of rural tourism projects is increasing, which has created a good development trend. Although the epidemic has been brought under control, tourists have become more cautious in their choice of travel options. People are wary of tour groups and prefer to travel by car. Health and safety have become the primary considerations in deciding the mode of travel [3].

Besides, from the perspective of the industry, all tourism-related industries were hit considerably after the outbreak. Particularly, in 2020, the worst year of the epidemic, travel agencies, hotel-based travel companies and scenic spots were severely damaged economically by the industry, losing approximately \$910 billion to \$1.2 trillion in revenue, reducing tourism-related jobs by approximately 110 million, and causing a loss of talent in the industry [4]. However, as the epidemic entered its normalization phase, the tourism industry gradually began to revive. Compared to traditional tourism, 'all-for-one tourism' has become a new development trend. The concept refers to a new model of coordinated economic and social development through the integration and utilization of relevant social resources in the region, based on the tourism industry in the context of mass leisure tourism [5]. With the increase in the public's demand for tourism and leisure after the epidemic has been mostly controlled, the appreciation of scenic spots as a spatial form alone gradually fails to comprehensively meet the consumption needs of the tourism market. The development concept of the tourism industry is progressively tending towards modernization, intensification, quality level and the completeness of tourism-related elements in order to achieve tourism as a regular way of life.

2.2. The main problems currently faced

First of all, one of the primary shortcomings of the tourism industry is the single revenue model of scenic spots, which relies excessively on the "ticket economy". The so-called "ticket economy" refers to a phenomenon in which ticket revenue becomes the largest and most direct economic income of scenic spots. The proportion of ticket revenue to the total operating income source for scenic spots has also shown a trend of increasing year by year, and many high-profile national key scenic spots have seen this revenue proportion exceed 50%, making ticket revenue the economic pillar of scenic spots [6]. Coupled with the fact that the government and enterprises have invested a lot of money in their investment and development, many scenic spots in China have had to increase their profits by raising ticket prices due to their too-single revenue model, and some have even incurred problems such as high-ticket prices and frequent price increases. In terms of the long-term healthy development of attractions, with the saturation of the carrying capacity of scenic spots, as well as the introduction of national policies on the control of admission prices, relying solely on the "ticket economy" to boost business income is not a long-term strategy. Judging from the development of this epidemic situation, scenic spots are very vulnerable if they only rely on ticket revenue.

Secondly, the shortage of high-quality tourism products is another issue facing the tourism industry. While industries such as tourism are slowly recovering from the epidemic, tourists are increasingly demanding quality and variety in their service offerings. For example, in the past, the overall planning and design of tourism projects were mostly based on the needs of the tour groups, and there was a lack of diversity in tourism products, as well as a lack of their own characteristics and a low sense of the overall tourism experience for tourists. In the context of the current epidemic, the number of self-driving tourists and casual visitors is increasing, and tourism products can hardly meet consumers' increasing demands for their diversification and quality, and tourism service products cannot keep up with the changing situation. In addition, the industry's ability to deal with health and safety emergencies in terms of management needs to be improved. With the epidemic still not completely gone, there is always the possibility of emergencies caused by the epidemic. The news that mass safety and epidemic prevention measures are not in place has been reported from time to time. Problems, such as the low level of hygiene services in hotels and the lagging system of cleaning and disinfection in scenic spots, are numerous, which is very likely to bring bad experience for tourists [7].

Thirdly, the lack of perfect tourism-related supporting facilities is also a development shortcoming of the tourism industry. Most scenic spots are not sufficiently diverse in management services, and the level of

information technology is not high enough, especially in some areas where there are still problems with backward network services and inadequate staffing of relevant professionals. There is still more room for the development of digital tourism products [8]. For tourist attractions in remote areas of the countryside, the provision of public services and infrastructure is comparatively weak, while the development of the surrounding food and accommodation industries is also relatively slow. Some of the scenic spots have poor internal environmental hygiene, and the basic supporting industries need to be further improved. Furthermore, the demand for tourism facilities varies greatly between groups with a need for retirement and wellness and younger groups pursuing emerging popular tourism products [7]. At present, there is still a lack of individuality and diversity in the facilities available to visitors of different age groups. From the point of view of the management system, with the changes in the situation after the epidemic, the tourism-related management system lacks adjustment and improvement in line with the current situation. When tourists encounter problems, the efficiency of the relevant departments in handling incidents varies, and the system of internal responsibility mechanisms is not yet complete.

3. MEASURES AND SUGGESTIONS

3.1. Government policy guidance and promotion

In the face of the impact caused by the epidemic, China quickly introduced a series of targeted supportive policies, but relatively few policies targeted at the tourism industry. Therefore, the government should play a leading role and lead enterprises to overcome the difficulties together with the people. For example, on the economic front, tax incentives or exemptions can be introduced for businesses to reduce the levy of business taxes, income taxes, etc. The arrival of the epidemic has had a considerable impact on most enterprises, especially the small, medium and micro enterprises, which have suffered from broken capital chains and operating difficulties. The government should promptly carry out financial support for these enterprises in accordance with the actual situation, introduce tax policies and encourage applications for loans to help them reduce financial pressure and economic losses.

The shutdown of production and businesses caused by the epidemic has led to layoffs in the labour-intensive tourism industry, and thus the employment situation of tourism-related workers also deserves attention. For employees laid off during the epidemic, the government and relevant departments should provide them with timely subsidies or organize re-employment training activities to help them solve their employment problems [9]. In addition, the safety issues arising from the

epidemic crisis should also cause the government to reflect on the need to establish and improve safety management plans. The government should improve the response mechanism to emergencies and the speed of response from all sectors to promote the sustainable development of tourism.

3.2. Proactive action by enterprises

The epidemic has left a large number of enterprises facing or suffering from the crisis of bankruptcy, when the only way to be able to operate and be qualified to talk about development is to take action to avoid bankruptcy. Enterprises should adjust their own business thinking, reduce unnecessary expenses and cut costs. At the same time, liaison with the government, financial and investment institutions, the media and other sectors should be strengthened in order to actively seek more external support [10].

The combination of high technology and tourism is also a point that enterprises should focus on. The internet industry is developing rapidly, so the tourism industry can use big data to get hold of information about tourists in order to conduct accurate marketing and seize the live broadcast, e-commerce and other activities that attract strong users to explore new business models in order to drive the transaction volume of products in the ticket, catering and transportation industries to create new consumption patterns.

3.3. Innovative strategy: tournament tourism

Traditional tourism mostly focuses on the value of people's appreciation of the ecological environment, but the modern younger generation is more interested in tourism to carry out their own emotional release. The author believes that sports events are the carrier of venting emotions. Creating an organic combination of tournament tourism and scenic tourism will be able to create a new impetus for the recovery of the tourism industry.

A case in point is the recently Beijing Winter Olympic Games. The competition had an extraordinary social impact, generating a great deal of traffic to the competition area with its high level of public attention and conversation. In this regard, the entire industrial chain formed around the event is the focus of maximizing commercial interests. In addition, the organic combination of scenic asset development and sports business is achieved through the driving role of star athletes, and the involvement of brokers and the sports industry. The combination of scenic spots, events and the huge traffic of celebrities is a highly promising direction for the future development of tourism.

4. CONCLUSION

Covid-19 is the most serious and lasting public health crisis in China for many years, which has had a significant impact on the survival and development of China's tourism industry. However, this unprecedented epidemic crisis is both a challenge and an opportunity.

Not only has the epidemic revealed long-standing problems in the tourism industry, but it is also an opportune moment to push the industry towards innovation and diversity. The tourism industry should strive to seize this opportunity to give birth to a business model to meet the new consumption needs of tourists, actively combine with the Internet industry and increase investment in technological innovation, or combine social hot spots to make the industry find a new direction of cross-border integration. In these ways, the diversified development of the industry can be promoted. In addition, the government's policy guidance is also indispensable. The government should increase its policy support to enterprises as well as improve the relevant laws and regulations in order to protect their sustainable development. Companies themselves should also promote business innovation, refine their operations, identify the future direction of the industry and actively follow the changing needs of consumers to adjust their product design. However, any change will not be achieved overnight. The recovery of the tourism industry is a process of continuous exploration and experimentation, which requires the support and efforts of all parties.

This paper also has some limitations: there is no detailed literature review, and it is not mature enough for innovative strategies. With the long-term impact of the epidemic, the resumption of work and production in the tourism industry is just a short-term issue. Future research will focus on the subsequent transformation and upgrading of the industry and how to achieve sustainable development in the face of changing circumstances.

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