

Research on Influence Factors of Cluster Reputation

A Case Analysis on Shanxi Tourism Cluster*

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Abstract—Cluster reputation plays a distinctly important role in industrial cluster development. While the connotation and influence factors of cluster reputation are still researched at present. Under such circumstances, Shanxi tourism cluster is taken as typical case to analyze the influences of five factors such as products and service, economic performance, cluster cohesion, cluster competitiveness and social responsibility on cluster reputation in tourism cluster. Meanwhile, corresponding countermeasures are proposed to enhance cluster reputation, cluster development and regional image.

Keywords—cluster reputation; tourism cluster; influence factor

I. INTRODUCTION

The industrial cluster development is effective way to improve industrial competitiveness of specific regions. [1] In global economic integration, industrial cluster of specific regions constantly enhances reputation of professional field, making it more possible for buyers to turn to settlement of sellers. [2] In the development of tourism, advantages of cluster attract increasing number of tourism regions to move towards cluster. Tourism cluster refer to the new aggregation of existing independent industries that center on tourism activities. It is industrial cluster that depends on tourist attraction and provides comprehensive tourism products and service for tourists. Because tourism industry is peculiar, reputation has vital influence on tourism cluster. Therefore, this paper instances Shanxi tourism cluster, proposes the influence factors of cluster reputation and discusses how to gain competitive advantage and sustainable development.

II. RELATED THEORIES OF CLUSTER REPUTATION

A. Connotation of Cluster Reputation

The definition of cluster reputation bases on the excavation and extension of connotation of enterprise reputation. Fombrun observes corporate reputation refers to the comprehensive evaluation given by stakeholders such as customers, investors, employees and the public on the company. [3] Hall addresses corporate reputation contains knowledge and emotion of stakeholders on enterprises. [4] Obviously, corporate reputation refers to evaluation and perception of stakeholders on enterprises and they will put

into practice.

Cluster reputation originates from the respect and trust of different stakeholders on the long-term professional experience and skills of interrelated enterprises and organizations in specific field of cluster. Cluster reputation bases on enterprise reputation, referring to the positive social evaluation gained by cluster members who consciously abide by the contract to gain long-term profits. Cluster reputation is extensive to let other regional industries share good reputation, in order to improve regional competitiveness. However, the acquisition of cluster reputation requires enterprises and organizations in the cluster to continuously have good performance in development and provide more value for stakeholders of the cluster. Enterprises in cluster must pay attention to individual reputation and cluster reputation. [5] Cluster enterprises form benefit community that shoulder the evaluation of stakeholders inside and outside the cluster on the cluster. Cluster reputation depends on long-term cooperation and innovation of enterprise in the cluster to win recognition and praise in specific field. It enables cluster members to share benefits brought by cluster reputation.

B. Influence Factors of Cluster Reputation

When evaluating the influence factors of enterprise reputation, according to the theory of social expectation, Corporate Reputation Quotient (RQ) assessment system of Fombrun-Harris proposes six indicators of reputation evaluation, including emotional appealing, products and service, prospect and leader, work environment, social and environmental responsibility and financial performance. [3] According to components of corporate reputation and on the basis of attitude theory, Manfred proposes reputation 2D structure measurement model, to measure the degree that the public go for enterprise and their judgment and evaluation on enterprise competitiveness, including sympathy and competence. [6]

Based on the research of corporate reputation and the connotation of cluster reputation, when researching cluster reputation, this paper proposes the influence factors include products and service, economic performance, cluster cohesion, cluster competitiveness and social responsibility, and analyzes the five factors through instancing Shanxi tourism cluster.

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III. CASE ANALYSES ON THE INFLUENCE FACTORS OF CLUSTER REPUTATION

Shanxi is renowned as “the Hometown of Coal”, but it forms deformed industrial structure because of excessive dependence on coal industry, and has difficulty in development under the current economic environment. Meanwhile, Shanxi Province is also praised as “Museum on the Ground” with plentiful tourism resources. With more and more companies entering tourism industry, in tourist area of Shanxi, it appears tourism industrial cluster that centers on cultural tourism and landscape tourism, integrating tourism service enterprises such as travel agency, catering, hotel, shopping and transportation and such supporting enterprises as bank, insurance and communication.

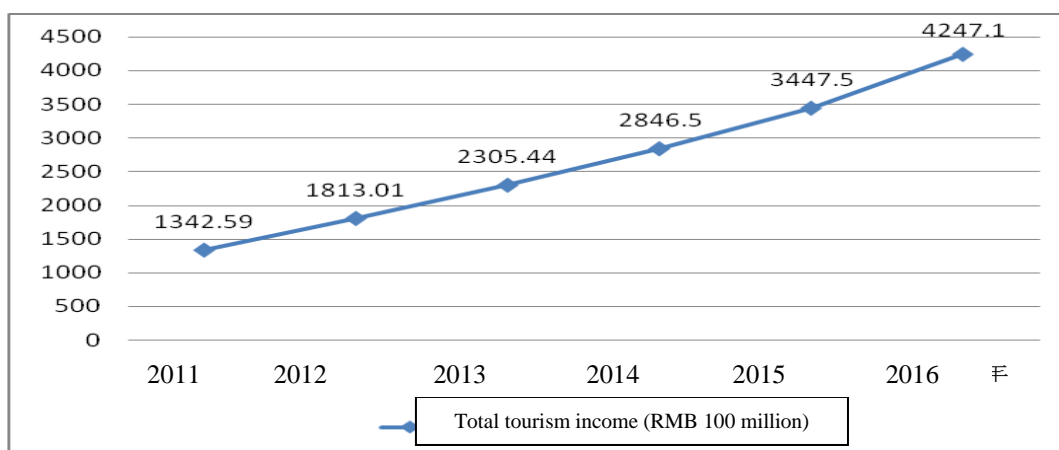
A. Tourism Products Are Unique

Shanxi tourism focuses on cultural tourism and landscape tourism. Cultural tourism in Shanxi Province is unique and has profound foundation, with abundant types and varied cultural expression forms. It integrates tangible cultural resources such as cultural relics and historic sites with intangible cultural resources. Sites of the early Paleolithic period, main areas involved in activities of Yellow Emperor and Yan Emperor, and Shanxi merchants that rule the roost in business circles during period of Ming and Qing Dynasty have a long history and far-reaching influence. Shanxi has six

national famous historic and cultural cities and forty national famous historical and cultural towns and villages. Meanwhile, it has 452 national key cultural relic protection units, ranking first in China. At present, Shanxi has three world cultural heritages, including Ancient City of Pingyao, Yungang Grottoes and Mount Wutai. Shanxi Province also has plentiful landscape resources, six national scenic spots, eight national geological parks, eighteen national forest parks and seven national nature reserves. According to the particular resource superiority and climate characteristics in Shanxi Province, we can develop tourism products such as cultural tourism, natural scenery, going on holidays, avoiding summer heat, commerce exhibition, red tourism, agricultural and industrial tourism and rural tourism, in order to build compound tourist destination. Tourism resources and products of Shanxi with great variety, distinctive features and affluent cultural connotation are attracting more and more tourists.

B. The Gross of Regional Tourism Economy Increases Continuously

In recent years, the tourism development speed of Shanxi Province further accelerates. The industry scale constantly expands. Market development has achieved notable results. Economic contribution ceaselessly increases. Tourism industry has become the most vigorous emerging industry with the most rapid development in economy of Shanxi Province.



^a Data source: Related data of Statistical Bulletin of National Economy and Social Development of Shanxi Province over the years

Fig. 1. The gross revenue of tourism industry of Shanxi Province during 2011 and 2016.

In 2016, commercial lodging facilities of Shanxi Province receive 630,000 person-times of inbound tourists and tourists who stay overnight, receive 440 million person-times of domestic tourists, up 6.1% and 23.1% respectively; have foreign exchange earnings from tourism of USD 320 million, up 6.8%; domestic tourism income of RMB 422.8 billion, up 23.3%; total tourism income of RMB 424.71 billion, up 23.2%. [7] Tourism development brings economic benefit at the meantime provides employment opportunities for local residents, with its comprehensiveness and correlation. The contribution rate of tourism industry in driving the growth of transportation and communication per urban and rural resident of Shanxi Province reaches 70%; the value added of cultural tourism accounts for more than 20% that of the tertiary

industry in Shanxi Province. The development of leisure tourism and rural tourism promotes farmers to get jobs and get rid of poverty and become better off. It avails political and social stability and makes tourism cluster win praise of external stakeholders such as government and the public.

C. Cohesion of Tourism Enterprise Is Enhanced

After long-term resource integration, Shanxi Province has preliminarily presented tourism cluster in cities of Taiyuan, Jinzhong, Datong and Yuncheng. Scale and quantity of enterprise in the cluster increase obviously.

The quantity of star grade tourist hotel in Shanxi Province increases continuously. There were 17 five-star hotels and 62

four-star hotels at the close of 2016. Tourist attractions have numerous residential hotels and social restaurants not counted, basically covering all cities and counties of Shanxi Province. The quantity of travel agency also increases sharply. Statistically, by the end of December 31, 2015, Shanxi Province has 854 travel agencies, including eight travel agencies which have more than RMB 100 million of turnovers. Baohua CITS and Hongma CITS rank top 100 travel agencies of China. Shanxi Province has exceeding 20,000 licensed tourist guides. In addition, there are numerous supporting enterprises related to tourism transport, tourism production and sales and tourism entertainment.

Concerted efforts of cluster enterprises win trust of stakeholders on tourism cluster and promote the formation of cluster reputation.

D. Cluster Competitiveness Remains to Be Improved

Although the industrial cluster in tourist area of Shanxi Province develops rapidly, and more attentions are paid to tourism industry, problems in the short term still exist because the economic development of Shanxi relies on heavy energy and heavy industry. It restricts the improvement of cluster competitiveness and has negative influence on cluster reputation. The main problems are as follows:

First, enterprises in the area have low competitive level and disordered competition. Products and services provided by tourism-affiliated enterprises have low grade and no big differences, leading to product homogeneity. Besides, they are absorbed in immediate interests, "swindle money out of customers", sell seconds at best quality prices, and provide products that don't conform to its price, severely influencing the sustainable development ability of tourism enterprises in the cluster.

Second, the innovation input is inadequate and products have weak innovation capacity. Few products with independent innovation and fewer products that can embody cultural characteristics of scenic sports greatly influence tourism income and fail to deeply publicize scenic spots. They have insufficient innovation policy support, backward management innovation and deep-rooted administrative management and unsound management. Under the impact of internet, they adapt passively and lack active innovation.

Third, they lack high quality talents. Basic employees of tourism industry in Shanxi Province have low educational level. Most of employees in scenic sports are local farmers who have low academic qualification and intellectual level, poor service skills and service awareness. Entrepreneurs with creative spirit and market appealing and high level professionals in tourism planning, tourism management and tourism marketing are scarce. They are crucial to the tourism development.

E. The Performance of Social Responsibility Needs Improvement

Although Shanxi Province has abundant tourism resources, such problems as improper use, excessive development and inadequate protection exist. Natural landscape resources in

scenic spots and numerous precious cultural relics and historic sites are destroyed easily and have limited bearing capacity. With the rapid development of local tourism, tourism resources cannot be reserved well. Some enterprises in the cluster damage cluster reputation to seek individual immediate interests, because of the absence of trust mechanism between enterprises in tourism cluster, the absence of rational incentive system related to integrity and promise abidance, and the weak cooperative awareness.

IV. COUNTERMEASURES TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN CLUSTER REPUTATION OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN SHANXI PROVINCE

A. Improve Quality of Products and Services

Tourism development is important in economic transition of Shanxi province, but the development and service quality of scenic spots is criticized frequently. Problems like nearsightedness in operation, unlicensed tour guide, swindle money out of customers, irregular charge, and inadequate development of auxiliary products and tourist route fail to effectively exert the internal charm of scenic sports. Besides, it has insufficient brand awareness and reputation and single brand image. Therefore, in tourism development, we must integrate abundant intangible cultural heritage, famous historical figures, major historical events, renowned historical allusions and influential literatures of Shanxi Province in tourism products, fully excavate the connotation of "invisible culture" in tourist destinations and create unique tourism products. Besides, we must let tourism industry promote supporting industries and create tourism cluster including "food, housing, transportation, traveling, shopping and entertainment", in order to meet tourists' personalized, diversified and multilayer demands in leisure tourism.

B. Strengthen Cluster Cohesion

Abundant tourism resources of Shanxi Province and the increasingly market-oriented and open tourism policies are attracting more and more strategic investors. Under new normal economy, resource-based enterprises in Shanxi Province are seeking transformation. Tourism industry becomes target domain of enterprises. Tourism industry of Shanxi Province must seize the opportunity and optimize industrial structure, in order to attract and create large enterprises of tourism industry and get rid of the "small, scattered and weak" situation. Leading enterprises standardize behaviors of enterprises, strengthen sense of responsibility of large enterprises and promote internal marketing of cluster, enhance the trust and faith of stakeholders on the cluster, at the meantime internally and externally influence the perception and evaluation of stakeholders. [8]

C. Improve Cluster Competitiveness

The improvement of cluster competitiveness depends on cooperation and innovation of cluster enterprises. The development of tourism cluster needs cluster enterprises to develop cluster culture with themes of integrity, innovation, cooperation and mutual benefit. Cluster enterprises trust mutually and seek competitive advantage through cooperation

and resource sharing, and win praise and trust of stakeholders for the cluster. [9]

In order to make tourism products and services more attractive to tourists and realize sustainable development of tourism cluster, cluster enterprises must adhere to product innovation and management innovation and cultivate innovative talents. They must have accurate orientation and show characteristics and optimize relations of competition and cooperation through complementing differences as well as share benefits in the growth of cluster; improve the construction of enterprise system and operate according to market rule; select, cultivate and introduce excellent tour guides to continuously improve service quality and establish good reputation.

D. Integrate Traditional Media and Emerging Media to Build External Cluster Reputation

The building of cluster reputation is systematic and requires high quality products and services as well as effective marketing, in order to improve cognition degree, reputation and trust of the public on cluster image. Therefore, we must center on tourists, integrate marketing channel, combine traditional media with emerging media to provide explicit and unified information and build good reputation of Shanxi tourism cluster. Besides, enterprises must make the best of traditional media like newspaper, magazine, television and broadcast, and channels of large-scale activities and non-governmental exchange, and adapt to emerging media. Social media have changed the pattern of speaking right and audiences have rights to choose and publicize information on social media, so it becomes the main platform to build and maintain reputation. [10] Integration and propagation improve the propagation speed, intensity and coverage of good reputation of Shanxi tourism cluster, and make the propagation integral, interactive and affluent to more roundly improve cluster reputation.

E. Moderately Develop Tourism Resources and Fulfill Social Responsibility

Enterprises in the cluster must implement sustainable development and moderately commercialize cultural relics and historic sites as well as reasonably protect natural resources, advocate ecological tourism and civilized traveling and green tourism. Enterprises in the cluster are developers of tourism resources and protectors of resources and shoulder the responsibility to protect resources in scenic spots and scientifically and reasonably utilize resources. In marketization operation, they must carry out protective development and moderate exploitation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage and reduce adverse effects of human activities on resources in scenic spots, strengthen consciousness of local people in environmental protection to hand down abundant resources from generation to generation.

V. CONCLUSION

Connotation of cluster reputation and influence factors are emerging field for cross-over study of industrial cluster and reputation management. Its specific contents need further

exploration. The research takes Shanxi tourism cluster as typical case, analyzes and verifies cluster reputation refers to comprehensive evaluation of stakeholders on products and services of the cluster, economic performance, cohesion, competitiveness and fulfillment of social responsibility. Cluster reputation needs close collaboration of enterprises and organizations in the cluster to continuously enhance the approval, trust and praise of stakeholders on cluster, jointly accumulate and treasure reputation capital, successfully build and effectively maintain cluster reputation and promote its sustainable development.

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