

Study of Chengdu's Inbound Tourism Development under the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract—Against the background of the Belt and Road Initiative, this paper analyzes the inbound tourism opportunities brought by the initiative. What's more, sampling analysis of the inbound tourist sources of countries along the Belt and Road has been conducted in light of the present situation of Chengdu's inbound tourism. On this basis, some suggestions are put forward in this paper to help Chengdu develop the inbound tourist source market, thereby further improving Chengdu's inbound tourism.

Keywords—The Belt and Road Initiative; Chengdu; Inbound Tourism; Respondents

I. INTRODUCTION

"The Belt and Road" is the abbreviation for "the Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road", covering most parts of Eurasia, which helps unite countries along it to seek common development and progress. In terms of tourism, it is a cultural road that enjoys the world top-quality tourism resources, including nearly 80 percent of the world cultural heritage, involving more than 60 countries and 4.4 billion people. According to the national official data, countries along the route will attract 150 million Chinese tourists and boost tourism-related spending of \$200 billion from 2016 to 2020, thanks to the continued promotion of the Belt and Road initiative. China will also receive 85 million inbound tourists, driving about \$110 billion in tourism spending.

II. POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF THE BELT AND ROAD ON CHENGDU'S INBOUND TOURISM

A. Bring New Tourist Markets

According to the request proposed by the Sichuan Provincial Party Committee at the economic work conference to build a world tourism destination with Chengdu as the center, Sichuan will focus on upgrading the tourism quality of the South Silk Road (Sichuan) fine routes represented by Chengdu. As the provincial capital of Sichuan Province, the western tourist center city, Chengdu has top-class fine tour routes and tourism services. However, because of being landlocked, the international influence of Chengdu is not very powerful, the quantity and quality of tourism resources have great potential for development, and there is also room for further exploration in the inbound tourism market [1]. With the help of historic opportunities from the Belt and Road Initiative, it is possible to guide the promotion of inbound tourism and the development of tourist markets on the basis of national strategies, so as to intensively develop the tourist source

markets of emerging countries along the route and promote regional tourism cooperation.

B. Bring Preferential Policies

The development level of inbound tourism is originally an important indicator for a country's openness degree and tourism development level. The proposal of The Belt and Road Initiative has made more attention paid to the importance of the inbound tourism industry in establishing and optimizing the national image, as well as in serving the nation's overall strategic deployment [2]. As a national strategy, the Belt and Road Initiative provides inbound tourism with support of both policies and funds, which exerts great influence and benefits many aspects. It is of great significance to improve Chengdu's tourism image and increase the foreign exchange income.

III. THE FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPING INBOUND TOURISM IN CHENGDU

A. High Speed Development of the City

With the acceleration of the modernization and internationalization in recent years, international events such as the Fortune Global Forum, G20 Central Bank Governors and Finance Ministers' Meeting, and the World Tourism Organization Conference are held in Chengdu successively, resulting in the improvement of Chengdu's international popularity, influence and reputation. In addition, the function of the city's comprehensive transportation hub has become increasingly significant, which has greatly improved the accessibility and convenience of tourism. Chengdu boasts the busiest international airports, the largest number of international routes and foreign consulates in the Chinese Midwest. Serving as the fourth "72-hour visa-free city" in China and the first one in the Midwest, Chengdu has an increasingly prominent feature of an export-oriented and open economy, which lays a good foundation for Chengdu to speed up the development of inbound tourism and further enhance the internationalization of tourism.

B. Abundant Tourism Resources

Chengdu is a habitat for pandas, the world heritage. Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding is the best place to watch giant pandas where more than 170 pandas live, and it is also a popular science education base for people close to giant pandas and nature.

Chengdu is also the cradle of the ancient Shu civilization. Dujiangyan-Qingcheng Mountain Scenic Spot, the world cultural heritage, has fully demonstrated the diligence and wisdom of the ancient Shu people. The Dujiangyan established

more than 2000 years ago is a water conservancy project that has been used for a long time. Since then, Chengdu Plain has been transformed into “a land of abundance” where “people won’t suffer famine because they can control floods and droughts”.

With a history of about 3,000 years, Jinsha Site has always sparked the glory of the ancient Shu culture. In addition, Chengdu also boasts Wuhou Temple famous for its culture of the Three Kingdoms at home and abroad, Du Fu Thatched Cottage well-known for its poetry culture around the world, and Wenshu Monastery famous for its Buddhist culture all over the world.

Chengdu, as a city of gastronomy in the world, is well-known for its over 6,000 varieties of Sichuan cuisine with spicy and delicious features. Kuanzhai Alley, Jinli Street and Taikoo Li reign peace and quiet in the midst of noisy bustle, famous for their integration of tradition and fashion. What’s more, in Chengdu, the capital full of international brand hotels, nearly 70 international brand hotels have been built till now.

During the “13th Five-Year Plan” period, Chengdu will vigorously implement the integration development model of “Tourism Plus” industry. It will build seven core tourism

products such as heritage sightseeing, cultural and creative leisure, fashion shopping, a gourmet experience, sports and health, self-drive camping, as well as healthful vacation, providing tourists with more tourism products, more wonderful travel experiences, and more convenient tourism services [3].

IV. ANALYSIS OF CHENGDU’S INBOUND TOURIST SOURCE COUNTRIES ALONG THE BELT AND ROAD

A. Analysis of Chengdu’s Main Inbound Tourism Source Countries in 2017

In 2017, against the background of increasing downward pressure on the economy, Chengdu’s tourism industry kept its good development trend like last year, receiving total tourism revenue of 303.84 billion yuan and visitors of over 210 million, which increased more than 15% over the same period. The total tourism revenue of the entire Chengdu Plain Economic Zone exceeded 570 billion yuan, accounting for more than half of the province’s total tourism revenue. The number of Asian inbound tourists is significantly higher than that of other continents, and the United States, Britain and other countries have been stable sources of tourists as well. The main tourist source countries/regions are shown in Table I.

TABLE I CHENGDU’S TOP TEN MAIN INBOUND COUNTRIES /REGIONS IN 2017

| No. | Tourist source region | The number of tourists | Year-on-year growth (%) |
|-----|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Hong Kong | 383,800 | 11.98 |
| 2 | America | 363,800 | 11.94 |
| 3 | Taiwan | 327,800 | 12.39 |
| 4 | Britain | 220,100 | 13.3 |
| 5 | Japan | 190,400 | 6.98 |
| 6 | Malaysia | 149,900 | 10.86 |
| 7 | Singapore | 139,300 | 10.98 |
| 8 | Germany | 127,200 | 18.56 |
| 9 | Korea | 126,700 | -7.36 |
| 10 | Austrilia | 113,900 | 14.49 |

B. Analysis of Inbound Tourist Source Countries along the Belt and Road in China

According to 2017 Annual Report on Inbound Tourism Development released by the China Tourism Research Institute, 7 out of the 10 major tourist source countries of China’s inbound tourists were those along the Belt and Road, including Vietnam, Myanmar, Russia, Mongolia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore, accounting for 43.1% of the total number of China’s inbound tourists.

According to 2016 Ctrip’s the Belt and Road annual report issued by Ctrip, a well-known travel e-commerce platform, Ctrip received more than 7 million inbound tourists in 2016, a year-on-year increase of 40%, including over 3 million inbound tourists from countries along the Belt and Road, a year-on-year rise of more than 50%, which is higher than the

growth rate of the total amount. The number of tourists from Vietnam is the largest, accounting for about 10% [4].

V. ANALYSIS ON FEATURES OF THE BELT AND ROAD INBOUND TOURIST SOURCE MARKET IN CHENGDU

In 2017, from October to December, the author conducted special investigations of the Belt and Road inbound tourist sources from various districts and counties of Chengdu (including Gaoxin District and Tianfu New District) and travel agencies engaged in the entry reception business. Through questionnaires and face-to-face exchanges, visual data and information for the inbound tourists have been obtained.

A. Distribution of Tourist Source Regions among Respondents

In terms of geographical distribution, the number of tourists from Asia is the largest, especially tourists from

Southeast Asia, accounting for 61.5%. According to the distribution of countries, the number of tourists from Russia is the largest, accounting for 13.5%, followed by more than 10%

of tourists from Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The national statistics are shown in Table II.

TABLE II NATIONALITY STATISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

| Nationality | The Number of People | Proportion (%) |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Russia | 27 | 13.5 |
| Vietnam | 25 | 12.5 |
| Malaysia | 23 | 11.5 |
| the Philippines | 23 | 11.5 |
| Singapore | 15 | 7.5 |
| Thailand | 15 | 7.5 |
| Myanmar | 13 | 6.5 |
| Mongolia | 12 | 6 |
| India | 10 | 5 |
| Indonesia | 9 | 4.5 |
| Kazakhstan | 8 | 4 |
| Ukraine | 7 | 3.5 |
| Nepal | 7 | 3.5 |
| Turkey | 6 | 3 |
| Total | 200 | 100.0 |

B. Demographic Statistics of Respondents

1) Gender: among the respondents, male tourists accounts for 59.5.0% and female tourists 40.5%.

2) Age: the majority of respondents are between 18-45 years old, accounting for 52%, followed by 46-65 years old, accounting for 27.5%. The proportion of minors is 13.5%, and the proportion of people over the age of 66 is 7%.

3) Occupation: professional technicians are the main respondents, accounting for 23% of the total, followed by commerce and trade personnel, with a proportion of 21%, and then students and company employees, accounting for 18.5% and 17.5% respectively. Besides, there are also civil servants, retirees, teachers, housewives, media workers and so on.

C. Analysis of Respondents' Travel Behavior

1) Tourist motivation: about 33.5% respondents come to Chengdu for tours; 26% respondents for business meetings; 15.5% for study tours; and 11.5% for cultural and technological exchanges.

2) Revisit ratio: 67% respondents visit Chengdu for the first time, 21.5% for 2 or 3 times, and 11.5% for 4 or more times.

3) Accommodation selection preference and stay days: for the overnight visitors, 71% tourists will choose to stay in 3-5 star rated hotels for 3 days, 18.5% choose to live in homestay hotels and business hotels for 3.5 days, and 10.5% live in relatives' and friends' homes for 2.5 days. Visitors who choose schools and scientific research institutions stay for a longer time.

4) Tourism resource preference: the places that respondents are most interested in include Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, Dujiangyan, Mount Qingcheng, Jinsha Site, Jinli Street, Kuanzhai Alley and so on.

5) Shopping preference: 34.7% respondents are interested in food and specialties; 23.5% are interested in cultural and creative products associated with giant pandas, while due to high prices of crafts like Sichuan brocade, Sichuan embroidery and silver wire weave, as well as border restrictions on Chinese medicine herbal and health products in some countries, the proportion of purchasing such products is not very high.

6) Tourism consumption structure: traffic consumption, especially long-distance transportation, accounts for the largest proportion. Basic tourist spending (traffic, accommodation, catering, and touring) reaches 4,036 yuan per capita, accounting for 82.7%; non-basic spending (entertainment,

shopping, communications, etc.) is 841.1 yuan per capita, accounting for 17.3%.

TABLE III TOURISM CONSUMPTION STRUCTURE

| Consumption Types | Amount (Yuan) | Proportion (%) |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Traffic | 2350.7 | 48.2 |
| Accommodation | 947.3 | 19.4 |
| Catering | 473.0 | 9.7 |
| Touring | 265 | 5.4 |
| Entertainment | 180 | 3.7 |
| Shopping | 523.9 | 10.8 |
| Communications | 57.7 | 1.2 |
| Others | 79.5 | 1.6 |
| Total | 4877.1 | 100 |

VI. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BELT AND ROAD INBOUND TOURISM IN CHENGDU

A. Vigorously Expand the Emerging Tourist Source Markets along the Route

Make full use of national strategies including Bangladesh-China-India-Burma Economic Corridors, China-Pakistan Economic Corridors, China-ASEAN Tourism Cooperation Zone, and China-Vietnam Tourism Cooperation Zone. Deepen tourism cooperation with countries along the Belt and Road through holding tourism years and tourism fairs. Prolong the visa-free time for cross-border visits, and exempt some selected countries from visas, so as to further facilitate their travels to China [5].

B. Strengthen Tourism Promotion of Chengdu

The tourism promotion in Sichuan Province and Chengdu City should be further strengthened through advertising, exhibitions, and cooperation with local tourism companies in countries along the Belt and Road. A well-known tourism brand can be created by combining the silk road tourism lines, the world heritage tourism lines, the giant panda ecotourism lines and other lines with the ancient Shu culture, intangible cultural heritage and food culture.

C. Adjust the Structure of Tourism Products and Increase Entertainment and Shopping Supplies

While protecting and developing tourism resources of natural landscapes, cultural relics and historic sites that are preferred by tourists, we must also dig deep into the folk customs, diet, and experience tourism resources, and further enrich Chengdu's tourism product structure. Besides, we should strive to improve the quality of tourism and entertainment activities, and develop more cultural and recreational activities with local and ethnic characteristics, and multi-levels, accelerating the construction progress of Chengdu as a world tourism destination and an internationally influential shopping paradise, as well as increasing shopping supplies to meet consumer demand.

VII. CONCLUSION

As China continues to be the world's largest outbound tourism source country, the development of inbound tourism is still in a downturn due to the global economic situation, geopolitics, international competition, exchange rate fluctuations and other factors. Through investigating the tourist sources from countries along the Belt and Road and knowing about the distribution of tourists, tourism motives, consumer preferences and so on, we can further expand the emerging tourist markets and enrich the product mix so as to effectively promote the development of inbound tourism.

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