



Strategies for Developing ‘Red Tourism’ : A Unique Tourism Activity in China

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Abstract

‘Red Tourism’, a newly developed tourism activity unique in China, has gained great popularity among tourists and keen attention from both tourism practitioners and researchers. However, its connotation has been narrowly defined and the policies to develop it in-depth at the regional level are insufficiently discussed. The paper firstly explains and redefines red tourism in a broader context. And then, taking Dalian, a Chinese famous tourist city, as a example, the paper analyzes the current situation and basis of red tourism resources, proposes marketing policies to promote red tourism, and finally expounds strategies to develop it in Dalian.

Keywords: Red tourism, Marketing, Strategy, Dalian

1. Introduction

‘Red’ in China is always related to the former revolution of Communist Party of China as far as tourism industry is concerned. Therefore, ‘Red Tourism’, a unique tourism activity originated from the 1990’s in our country, stands for specialized tourism form with outstanding themes of organizing and receiving tourists of visiting, studying, and commemorating at the former revolutionary bases, remains, and landmark sites (Wang, 2005, pp.305). All of them are formed and left before the founding of People’s Republic of China and after the birth of Communist Party of China, including the period of Red Army’s Long March, Anti-Japanese Aggression War, as well as Civil Liberation War. However, in practice, the connotation of red tourism has been expanded to include a variety of tourism activities which could arouse patriotism and better understanding of revolutionary history in China. In this sense, we define red tourism as tourism activities conducted at revolutionary bases or historic sites which could contribute to a better understanding of national or revolutionary history, enrichment of tourists’ knowledge about parties, history and revolution and arousal of patriotism.

Stimulated by ‘Golden Week’(longest seven-day holidays around Labor Day, National Day and Spring Festival in China), mass tourism and holiday tourism prospered, which meanwhile boosted the development of Red Tourism(Mo, 2005, pp. 21-25). In February, 2004, at the National Tourism Conference held in Zhengzhou, at which Zhengzhou Declaration was announced by Shanghai, Beijing, Jiangxi, Fujian, Hebei, Guangdong, and Shaanxi Province in central China. They advocated “sharing resources, information, and market and benefit together”, which unveiled the prelude of the great-scale Red Tourism development in China. Moreover, The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the General Office of the State Council has set six major goals for Red Tourism

in their guidelines for the development of the nation's Red Tourism from 2004 to 2010, including developing 12 key tourist areas, improving 30 "selected traveling routes", cultivating about 100 "classic red tourist spots" in our country.

Dalian ,one of Chinese 10 best tourism cities, has attracted tourists from all over the world for its mild coastal climate, spectacular seascape, fascinating theme parks and festivities. Dalian is also known for its historical remains from the turn of 20th century when Dalian was governed first by Russia then by Japan. A large number of war fields/fortresses/weapons etc. remained, many of which have been made into museums and exhibition centers to serve as tourist attractions. Besides, the old residence of Guan Xiangying, a top leader in Chinese revolutionary history, was selected as one of 100 "classic red tourist spots" in our country (Li, 2005). It is expected that the design and exploitation of red tourism in Daian could greatly complement existing tourism products whose prevailing attraction consisting of seascape, squares and theme parks.

2. Significance of Developing Red Tourism in Dalian

It is believed that red tourism is a major project that could benefit both the Party, the nation and the people, either in the economic, cultural or political sense.

First of all, Red Tourism could reinforce the patriotism education of adolescents by coordinating the traditionally revolutionary education with the development of tourism industry. Former revolutionary bases, remains and war ruins are high in historical value and educational meaning. Visits to those sites will infuse national ethos and patriotic spirit into the youngsters. Combining teaching and fun with travel is also an improvement in the form of education.

Besides, red Tourism could be conducive to the development of Dalian economy and social culture. The glorious traditional culture deriving from fights to win national independence and anti-imperialists is valuable assets in both the revolutionary war periods and present-day efforts to realize the rejuvenation of the country. Red culture is a significant part of Chinese culture system, and is indispensable to the integrated, advanced culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics. To inherit and carry forward Red culture, seeking the gearing point with Dalian local culture and tourism will assist the development of Dalian economy. Red Tourism can effectively convert political advantage to economic advantage, and form a new growing point of Dalian tourism economy.

Lastly, red Tourism can be a great aid to Dalian tourism industry. For a long time, tourist products of Dalian remain at the relatively low level. High-grade tourist products are badly scarce. The single tourist product chain centering on the sea—sightseeing sea view, tasting seafood, fishing and shopping handicrafts about the sea, cannot meet tourists' diversified needs at cultural and spiritual level. However, Red Tourism fills the gap. Tourists are prone to learn historical and cultural knowledge, mould their sentiments and enhance their tastes.

3. The Current Situation of Red Tourism Development in Dalian

The main attractions of Dalian Red Tourism are the Former Residence and Memorial of Guan Xiangying in Jinzhou District, abundant war remains and some military buildings of former Soviet Union in Lvshun district.

At present, Dalian municipal government has been carrying forward the design and construction of Memorial of Guan Xiangying. Dalian Transportation has rebuilt the highway of 12.3 kilometers in Jinzhou in order to completely improve the transportation to the memorial (Liu, 2005). Some surrounding tourism resources are being developed to integrate an exquisite tourism program based on Red Tourism. Meanwhile, in order to expand more items on display in the memorial, the collection and disposal of historical relics and stories or anecdotes about Guan Xiangying are under way.

Patriotism education bases such as the former prison of Russian-Japanese War of 1905 has been well combined with annual important festivals to hold some seminars and other activities, which has attracted plenty of tourists, especially young students.

3.1 Advantages

(1) Rich and unique Red Tourism resources

The Memorial of Guan Xiangying in Jinzhou district, the national patriotism educational base, has been brought into national layout of Red Tourism. Lvshun represents an epitome of Modern History of China. Plenty of wars such as the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, and other significant historical events were closely related with Lvshun. Particularly, Lvshun is the unique battle field of Russian-Japanese War of 1905, a lot of war ruins and military buildings are unique. They are live textbook as spreading patriotic spirit and national ethos. Thus, while reading the Modern History of China, people have to pinpoint Lvshun.

(2) Beneficial developing environment

National and local governments have placed much emphasis on Red Tourism, and are making policies supporting travel agencies to manage Red Tourism routes. National Tourism Bureau is going to integrate Red Tourism resources and to establish Red Tourism system.

Liaoning Province has set its aim and worked out the specific outline to develop provincial Red Tourism. One strategy is to design a series of exquisite itineraries and four key zones, including Lvshun in south Liaoning. In local Dalian, Red Tourism has been brought into the layout and many relevant infrastructures are under rebuilding.

3.2 Disadvantages

(1) Late start

Red Tourism originated in 90s, 20th century, whereas the development in Dalian began in recent years. A number of advantageous tourist products and itineraries need designing. However, some other renowned places outside Dalian have better basis and more experiences in developing Red Tourism.

(2) Competitive disadvantage in the region

Red Tourism is prevailing across China. Jinggangshan of Jiangxi, Shaoshan of Hunan and Yan'an of Shaanxi in central China developed Red Tourism early and are famous now. Their itineraries and scenic spots are overwhelming in the market. Furthermore, neighboring counterparts like Shenyang, Jinzhou and Fushun are also competing for market shares. Hence in order to catch up with and outdo them, Dalian has to highlight its strengths.

(3) Difficult to assimilate Red Tourism into Dalian tourism image

Dalian has promoted itself as an Romantic City and has gained much identification. Nevertheless, to speak of Dalian, tourists will associate with romantic squares and the sea. It needs a transition to change the first impression in the mind of tourists.

4. Marketing of red tourism in Dalian

4.1. Market Position

Red Tourism is positioned as a significant part of Dalian tourism economy. The general plan of developing Red Tourism is divided into two phases. The first phase mainly concentrates on the improvement of infrastructures and collections of historical and cultural objects. And the aim of the second stage is to make Red Tourism an essential part of Dalian tourism, extend and improve the industrial structure of Dalian tourism via Red Tourism.

Lvshun could be positioned as half of the history textbook of Modern History of China, and the Memorial of Guan Xiangying, war ruins in Lvshun and World Peace Park could be designed and promoted as the second classroom of patriotism education.

In terms of tourists' origins, the market of Dalian Red Tourism is mainly positioned domestically. The primary market consists of Dalian residents and people from neighboring areas. The secondary market should be extended to people in Liaoning province with which Dalian is affiliated. And the chance markets are those areas in the near vicinity of Dalian including parts of area of Shandong, Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces and Beijing. As far as tourists are concerned, red tourism in Dalian should be gearing to teenagers, school children who are required to study history or interested in Chinese revolutionary cause. Much attention should also be given old people who are proved to be more interested in history.

The policies are to strengthen and retain the primary market, making efforts to strive for the secondary market and working hard to win the chance market.

4.2 Design of tourist products

Red tourism should be designed to help in blending teaching into travel, rereading the history textbook of wars to realize the importance of peace, in the form of travel and via actual deeds, is mutually effective. And it also could provide tourists with experiences of sightseeing and shopping in an romantic city, touring red scenic spots and recalling the history.

It is very important to add red tourism spots into existing mature itineraries, making red tourism spots indispensable parts of highlighting traveling routes. Designing routes in light of different themes is strongly recommended. Meanwhile, cooperation and coordination with neighboring regions and trying to link itineraries across regions will tremendously expand market. It is also advisable that travel agencies should reform the combinations of tourist products, pinpointing Red Tourism and design different itineraries in terms of tourists of different age, to meet their diversified needs, such as organizing a special trip to visit various former battle fields.

Red souvenirs should be designed with great care to infuse red culture into local handicrafts and artworks to deeply develop commercial value of red tourism in the way of, say, carving red scenic spots of Lvshun into glassware and shell sculptures or making badge of Guan Xiangying, publishing books about Guan Xiangying's anecdotes etc.

4.3 promotion

Promotion can be done with unique features of red tourism and the collaboration with other forms of tourism taken into consideration. Firstly, make meticulous preparation, actively attend various cooperation conventions of red tourism in

our country to promote Red Tourism products of Dalian and extend the popularity. Secondly, integratively take advantage of media, such as newspaper, television, and radio to enhance the promotion strength. Thirdly, promote via internet by adding columns of red tourism in the website of Dalian tourism, helping the tourist timely acquiring information about red tourism in Dalian. As regards the market of college students, the government and travel enterprises may set up a special column of red tourism on university websites and other popular websites. Fourthly, hold tourism festivals, e.g. Cultural Festival of Dalian Tourism. Combine patriotism education and the cultivation of ‘national civilized city’ together to spread the image of red tourism.

As regards college students, tourism bodies could cooperate with tourism education schools. For instance, by providing free internship base for students of tourism management school to let them promote red tourism at the university. On the other hand, travel enterprises may cooperate with university student bodies to organize activities to publicize red tourism products, e.g. sponsoring a photography competition, which is an effective and economical way to enhance the popularity of travel enterprises and scenic spots.

As to secondary school students and pupils, tourism enterprises could make the best use of holidays such as Labor Day, Children’s Day and National Day to organize free trips to red tourism spots pinpointing theme activities of patriotism education, remembering national humiliation and studying for the reinvigoration of China etc. At the same time, patriotism education bases should enter schools to give lectures of and display pictures of Dalian Modern History to propagate patriotic spirit.

As for tourists of other ages, tourism organizations should take advantage of some commemorative days such as the 110th anniversary of Sino-Japanese War of 1894 provide free visits for enterprises, government ministries, and military institutions to expand chance tourist markets. And innovation of display techniques should be emphasized.

5. General development strategies

5.1 Make a master planning

The municipal government must make the general strategic aim of the near future and then put it in practice stage by stage. The task of the first stage is to improve infrastructures and maintenance of war ruins, collect more historical objects, anecdotes and stories concerned by the end of 2007. At the second stage from 2008 to 2010, all parties concerned should implement the plan to initiate an all-round development of red tourism, making it a significant part of Dalian tourism industry.

5.2 Make joint efforts from stakeholders

Provincial and municipal governments hold the responsibility to bring stakeholders’ initiative to full play. They are also responsible for rebuilding infrastructures, protecting ecological environment and providing sound conditions for the sustainable development of red tourism. Meanwhile, successful operation of red tourism involve tourism operators, tourism spots management, participation of local residents, and tourists themselves, whose common endeavors will enable red tourism to develop smoothly. Government will play the leading role in integrating efforts from various parts to propel red tourism to develop in line with the master plan.

5.3 Provide product mix in which red tourism is highlighted

Design ‘red+ green+ blue’ products, where ‘red’ refers to red tourism with ‘green’ and ‘blue’ representing the prevailing tourism products in market. ‘Green’ refers to green mountains and rivers like Bingyu Ice Valley, green squares and natural countryside sceneries. ‘Blue’ refers to the sea. It is necessary to bind those products together to enhance their general attraction and make better use of separate markets. As a famous tourist city of north China, Dalian is shielded by mountains and surrounded by seas, decorated by plenty of squares and lawns. Numerous tourists are deeply impressed by its superior natural environment and western style metropolitan design with many squares and buildings in Roman and Gothic Styles. Dalian’s rich tourism resources, mainly consisting of Lvshun national scenic area, Golden Pebble Beach State Tourist Resort, Ice Valley, Pole Aquarium of Tiger Beach and Sun Asia Ocean World, are of great attraction for potential tourists. However, a sole dependence on natural sceneries is becoming less competitive in tourism market. It is imperative to complement natural attractions with new products rich in cultural and historical implications. Thus, the combination of red tourism with traditional sightseeing, and the blend of natural sceneries and historical as well as cultural resources, will greatly contribute to the improvement of comprehensive strength, economic benefits, and the sustainable development of Dalian tourism industry.

5.4 Strengthen regional cooperation

In order to avoid the repetitive construction and vicious competition with neighboring cities, it is necessary to seek regional cooperation to form a master frame for the whole region. A long term strategy is also essential for all the cooperators to follow in the long run. Tourism industry is a highly open and inclusive industry that has close connection with other industries such as communication, environment, trade and construction etc. moreover, tourists always travel across regions to finish a trip. Therefore, tourism industry usually depends on endeavors across industries and regions

for smooth operation. Complementation and cooperation across departments and regions are the first choice for developing local tourism (Liao, 2005, 12-16). Dalian, the No.1 tourists destination in northeastern China, has great status in Chinese domestic markets, and as one of top destinations of Japanese and Korean tourists to China, it also plays a key role in Chinese inbound market. While enjoying the superiority of vast market, Dalian lacks competitive advantage in its red tourism development with abundant red tourism resources lying in the vicinity of but beyond management of Dalian. Under this circumstance, Dalian needs to seek help from neighboring regions which have good foundation and reputation of red tourism products, and as a reward, allowing those cities to take advantage of its large market and power in Chinese inbound markets. Regional cooperation can not only happen between cities within Liaoning province where Dalian is situated, but extend to neighboring provinces encircling Bohai Sea including Hebei, Shandong provinces and Beijing. Itineraries across regions could be designed with themes like 'Commemoration of Anti-Japanese Aggression' to incorporate red tourism spots in neighboring cities of Shenyang, Jinzhou and Fushun. Mixed products combining red tourism with other traveling activities are also advised to extend beyond Liaoning province. Beijing, capital of China and known for its insurmountable attraction for overseas tourists, could be a big impetus for Dalian if it successfully links its itineraries with Beijing. Hebei province and Shandong province, both famous for their rich heritage, revolutionary remains and gorgeous seascape, could greatly enhance the overall glamour of Dalian if red tourism spots in those regions are elaborately designed and link together.

5.5 Improve service

Distinguished from most natural sceneries, scenic spots of red tourism are more meaningful in cultural and spiritual implications. Red tourism relies on competent workforce, e.g. tourist's guide, to convey and interpret its profound meanings. Hence the training of working personnel, including management and servicemen must be emphasized.

The interpretation of tour guides plays a significant role in spreading patriotism education and instilling patriotic spirit. Thereby, it is urgent to build a high-quality and high-level team of tour guides. Political science, of national and international affairs and situations, should be added to training program. In addition, the training of tour guides' language and skills is of great importance as well. Their infectious interpretation will naturally bring tourists back to the war period and consequently make them be aware of the significance of peace.

6. Conclusion

The development of red tourism in Dalian started late, but the resources are rich and distinctive, furthermore, they have great historical and cultural values, and great potential of development. Relying on superiority in policy and regional environment as well as existing foundation of tourism, Dalian should take the opportunity to make scientific plan develop red tourism in a sustainable way.

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