

Research on Optimization of Rural Tourism Marketing Strategies Taking Scenic Area B as an Example

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Abstracts

The objectives of this study were 1) to Analyze the current marketing situation and marketing environment of the scenic area, B. 2) to Identify the problems of the marketing strategy of the scenic area, B. 3) to Propose optimization measures for the marketing strategy of the scenic area. B. This research was a quantitative study. The conceptual framework of this research was applied from 7P marketing theory, SWOT analysis, and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The population consists of tourists from scenic area B in Henan Province. The samples were 400 individuals, and the sample size was determined using the Yamane formula. The research instrument was a questionnaire. Statistics used for data analysis were descriptive statistical.

This study found that: 1) Tourists generally have a positive attitude towards rural tourism, high satisfaction, and positive tourism intention. 2) Scenic Area B has problems with product, price, place, promotion, personnel, and process management. 3) The marketing strategy of Scenic Area B has the problems of a single channel, fuzzy positioning, insufficient brand promotion, and lack of interactive mechanisms. 4) The marketing strategy of Scenic Area B should be optimized in terms of product, price, place, promotion, personnel, and process management.

Keywords: Rural tourism, marketing strategy, SWOT analysis, 7P theory, TPB

Introduction

In recent years, China has vigorously promoted the development of the tertiary industry, and tourism has received strong support from the state as one of its important representatives. After the official debut of China's Ministry of Culture and

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Tourism in 2018, it has injected new vitality into the fast-developing tourism industry and provided unlimited development space for integrating tourism resources. As an important part of China's domestic tertiary industry, tourism has become a sunrise industry that drives economic development.

According to statistics, China's per capita GDP will exceed 85,700 yuan in 2023, and GDP growth will rapidly increase domestic residents' consumption levels. With the country's rapid social and economic development and the increase of per capita disposable income, the change of consumption concepts, and the enhancement of consumption ability, traveling to experience natural, historical, and humanistic landscapes has become the choice of more and more people. The tourism expenditure has become one of the essential components of the country's GDP growth. According to the *2023 National Economic and Social Development Statistics Bulletin* released by the National Bureau of Statistics, the total number of domestic tourist trips reached 4.89 billion in 2023, an increase of 93.3% over the previous year. The whole province of Henan received 995 million domestic tourists, with a total tourism revenue of 964.6 billion yuan. Urban leisure and rural tours have become one of the hot spot for tourists' trips and the mainstay of the tourism industry's development.

Rural tourism has taken a proportion in the national economy as an emerging industrial form and a new type of consumption in the tourism industry. It plays a vital role in socio-economic development. At the same time, because of its close association with the countryside and its good economic, social, and ecological functions, rural tourism is widely considered an essential endogenous force for rural revitalization. The development of rural tourism is a strategic requirement of the country to promote rural economic revitalization, while improving the marketing level of rural tourism is an effective means to encourage the development of rural tourism and increase market awareness. Therefore, how to combine modern marketing theory with the actual development of rural tourism to enhance the endogenous force and sustainable development power of rural tourism development has become an important research topic.

Research Question

1. What is Scenic Area B's current marketing situation and environment?

2. What problems exist in the marketing strategy of scenic area B?
3. How to optimize the marketing strategy of scenic Area B

Research objectives

1. Analyze Scenic Area B's current marketing situation and marketing environment.
2. Identify the problems of the marketing strategy of scenic area B.
3. Propose optimization measures for the marketing strategy of scenic area B.

Research Hypothesis

H1: The current marketing situation in scenic area Bs is diverse but limited by geographical resources. The marketing environment is highly competitive, with government support and local cultural advantages.

H2: Scenic area B's marketing strategy may face problems such as a single channel, vague positioning, insufficient brand publicity, and a lack of an interactive mechanism.

H3: Optimizing the marketing strategy of scenic area B should broaden the channels, clarify the positioning, strengthen the brand promotion, and establish the interactive mechanism.

Literature review

1. Theory and Concept of 7P Marketing Theory

7P marketing theory is the American scholars Burns and Bitner (1981) put forward in order to overcome the shortcomings of the traditional marketing theory in the service industry; he suggested that in the original 4P marketing strategy combination (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) based on the increase of the three service elements, that is, the people, the physical evidence, the service process to expand into a 7P combination suitable for the service industry. That is, focusing on the needs of people and improving their satisfaction, making customers feel the value of the service and be attracted to it before they use it, and focusing on every aspect of the service process, and so on. This theory is particularly applicable to developing marketing strategies in the service industry. Also, it provides a more comprehensive

analytical framework for rural tourism, a form of tourism that integrates service elements. The introduction of the 7Ps theory further emphasizes the critical impact of personnel services, customer experience processes, and the physical environment of scenic areas on marketing effectiveness. It helps to identify potential problems in the marketing strategy of Scenic Spot B more comprehensively.

2. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) evolved from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Since TRA cannot provide a rational explanation for behaviors that an individual does not fully control will, to improve the situation, Ajzen (2002) added perceptual, behavioral control degree of difficulty an individual perceives to complete a behavior as a new influential factor on top of the two critical factors of attitudes and subjective norms in TRA, which led to the formation of the TPB. TPB argues that the overall attitude of an individual's behavior, which consists of a combination of the degree to which people expect the outcome of the behavior to be achieved and whether they hold positive or negative expectations about the outcome produced by the behavior, is the most vital variable influencing behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). Subjective norms view individuals as social beings whose personal behavioral decisions are influenced by social pressures from family, friends, coworkers, or public media. Unlike attitudes and subjective norms, perceived behavioral control is based on the adequacy of the actual control conditions and indirectly influences or directly predicts the likelihood of the behavior occurring through attitudes (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

3. Theory and concept of SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis, also known as situational analysis, is a research method in management proposed in the early 1980s by Weirick Yu, a management professor at the University of San Francisco. SWOT analysis is a systematic analysis based on the research object's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, threats, threats, and other factors. Specifically, the SWOT analysis method is an analytical tool based on analyzing the internal factors and external environment of things, identifying the four key factors affecting the development of things, namely, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and analyzing the optimal development strategy composed of these four elements. SWOT methodology enables a comprehensive, systematic, and accurate study of the subject's environment, from which development strategies, planning, and decision-making can be formulated.

There are three main steps in applying the SWOT analysis method:

Analyze environmental factors. Analyze the internal and external environmental factors by using various methods of investigation. Internal environmental factors are mainly strengths and weaknesses, positive and negative factors that exist in the development process itself;

Develop a SWOT rectangular array. The factors in the investigated results are ranked in different degrees of influence, forming a rectangular SWOT array. The most critical and direct influences are prioritized in the SWOT matrix, while indirect and secondary influences are ranked later.

Develop a plan. A plan can be developed after analyzing various internal and external factors and constructing a SWOT matrix. The basic idea is to take advantage of strengths, overcome weaknesses, utilize opportunities, and neutralize threats, which includes four types of strategies: growth strategy (SO), diversification strategy (ST), turnaround strategy (WO), and defensive strategy (WT). Using the integrative approach of systems analysis, the decision-making nature of matching the analyzed and ranked environmental factors with each other to combine them and arrive at alternative responses that will benefit future development is meaningful (Harold & Heinz, 1998).

4 Theory and concept of the six elements of tourism

The investigation of tourist satisfaction is always inseparable from the theory of the six elements of tourism. Based on the six elements of tourism and the individual elements of different scenic areas, it covers the essential tourism indexes affecting tourists' satisfaction. In the 1990s, Sun Shangqing elaborated on each of the six elements of tourism. The importance of the six elements of tourism was placed at the top of the list in the Introduction to Tourism released in 1994. The theory of the six elements of tourism refines and summarizes the differentiated attributes of tourism products from the structural level. The theory's core is "tourism," and all the other elements are based on "tourism." Among them, the three aspects of "food, accommodation and transportation" are safeguarding activities, which provide logistic services for the whole process of tourists' visits and satisfy their physiological needs. "Entertainment and shopping can not only satisfy the spiritual needs of tourists but also enrich tourism content.

4. About Basic Overview of Scenic Area B

Scenic Area B is located at the confluence of Qi and Xi Rives south of Linzhou City, Henan Province, at the junction of Jin, Hebei, and Henan provinces. Puzzle Group invested in and developed the W scenic area, with a total investment of about 700 million yuan. Scenic Area B has a planned area of 67.8 square kilometers and is being built into a large-scale comprehensive tourist resort with the theme of ecotourism, recreational vacation, agricultural sightseeing, leisure, and entertainment. In 2012, Puzzle Group transferred more than 3,000 acres of land under the support of national policies and financial support and greened more than 10,000 acres of barren mountains to construct scenic areas comprehensively. By August 2013, the newly completed east gate and square of Scenic Area B were put into use, and the brand-new Scenic Area B attracted tourists from all directions, with an annual reception of more than 300,000 people. In May 2015, Linzhou City passed the project approval for upgrading, renovating, and expanding the B scenic area. The same year, it was honored as the national "science popularization demonstration base." On July 19, 2016, a once-in-a-century flood hit the B scenic area, resulting in the collapse of the scenic area's internal plaza, road disruption, and direct economic losses of more than 40 million yuan. Then, Puzzle Group hired domestic senior tourism experts to carry out comprehensive planning for the reconstruction of scenic areas and went all out for the post-disaster reconstruction work, repairing the river, repairing the roads, and reconstructing the embankment. After a hundred days of continuous struggle, large open-air spring baths, water parks, and other amusement projects re-bloom; in December of the same year, the newly built visitor service center put into use, the B scenic area was rated as a national AAAA level scenic area.

Conceptual framework

In addition to demographic variables such as gender, age, education, occupation, characteristics of tourists' place of origin, and monthly income, the concepts addressed in this study include mode of travel, length of stay, consumption, access to information, purpose of travel, travel attitude, tourist satisfaction, and tourist travel intentions. These variables are crucial for developing rural tourism optimization strategies.

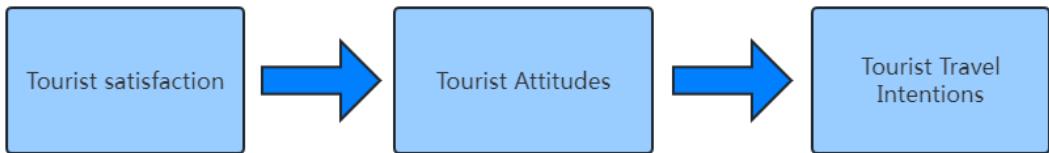


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

1. Population and sample

The population selected for this paper is Scenic Area B, which is situated at the confluence of the Qi and Xi Rivers in the south of Linzhou City, Henan Province, at the junction of the provinces of Jin, Hebei, and Henan. Although the development time of scenic area B is relatively short, the scenic area is rich in tourism resources within the territory of the scenic area, with Yinshang culture, Qi River culture, Poetry and Scripture culture, and other unique cultural heritage. Since becoming a national AAAA-level scenic area in 2016, Scenic Area B has fully tapped its tourism resources and initially formed four scenic systems, including the natural landscape with the Qixi River National Wetland Park as the core, the cultural facilities with the Qixi Literature and Tourism Town as the core, the recreational projects with water expansion as the main focus, and the featured B&Bs represented by Qixin Xiaozhu and Shangtao Li, which have formed specific scenic characteristics in terms of tourism products.

The sample size for this study should be $n=500/[1+500*(0.05)2] \approx 222$. Therefore, at least 222 tourists must be selected as the target population.

2. Research instrument

In this paper, the primary data will be obtained through the questionnaire method. The questionnaire contains two main parts. The first part is a survey of demographic characteristics, specifically including the basic information of the survey respondents, such as gender, age, education, and occupation, and the information of the survey respondents, such as the purpose of tourism, the duration of stay, the consumption and the way of obtaining information of tourists in the actual visit, and to find out its problems and shortcomings. The second part is a satisfaction survey of Scenic Area B, which focuses on the six elements of tourism activities and travelers' perception

of the destination. The third part is a survey on tourists' attitudes and tourism intention, and the question items are set on a five-point Likert scale to determine the extent of tourists' attitudes towards rural tourism and tourism intention.

Result

SWOT Analysis

1. Strengths Analysis

- Excellent geographical location and transportation
- Rich natural and human resources
- Regional market maturity
- Disadvantage analysis
- Short operating time, low visibility
- Low level of scenic area management services
- Financial stress
- Frequent flooding and lack of safety awareness.

Opportunity Analysis

- Policy support
- Good prospects for the tourism market
- Technological innovation and popularization
- Transition of tourist destinations to mountainous and remote areas

Threat analysis

- Increasing competition in the industry
- The ecological environment is easy to destroy
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Analysis of questionnaire results

1. Analysis of basic tourist information

(1) Gender Characterization

There were 19 males (47.25%) and 52.75% females, totaling 211 in the survey. Statistically, the number of males and females is close to each other, and there is no significant gender difference.

(2) Age profile analysis

Regarding age profile, the highest percentage was between 18-35, 33.5%, with 134 persons. Followed by 36-59 years old, under 18 years old, 60 years old and above, the number of people was 123, 76, 67. The survey found that 18-59 years old is still the main force of tourism,

(3) Educational Characterization

The survey on the education of the tourist group found that the bachelor's degree accounted for 51.25% of all tourists, while the master's degree and above only accounted for 18%. Therefore, the tourist group with a high education level has less demand for scenic tourism.

(4) Occupational Characterization

among the tourists, freelancers, enterprises, and institutions, student groups accounted for the most significant proportion of 24.75%, 21.75%, and 19.75%, respectively. The employees of enterprises and institutions have a fixed job and economic freedom to enjoy the off-season, and freelancers can freely dispose of their time, so they choose to travel outside of their work. Students have enough time, and their numbers are at the top of the list of advantages expected.

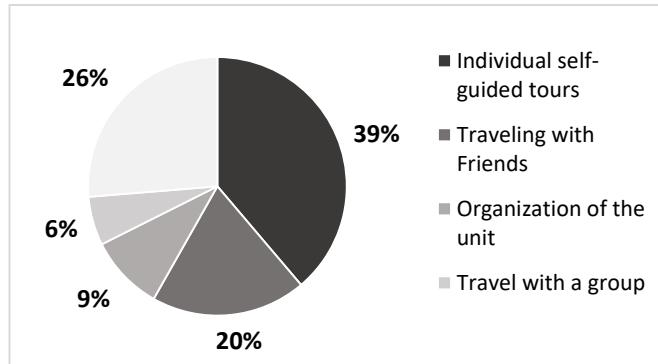
(5) Characterization of tourists' place of origin

The geographic location of scenic area B reflects the status of the tourist source in the surrounding areas. Linzhou City has the most significant number of tourists, accounting for 45.75%; other jurisdictions in Anyang City accounted for 22.25%, and the rest of the region totaled only 32%. This indicates that the scenic area should adopt effective marketing strategies to explore tourism resources and expand the destination deeply.

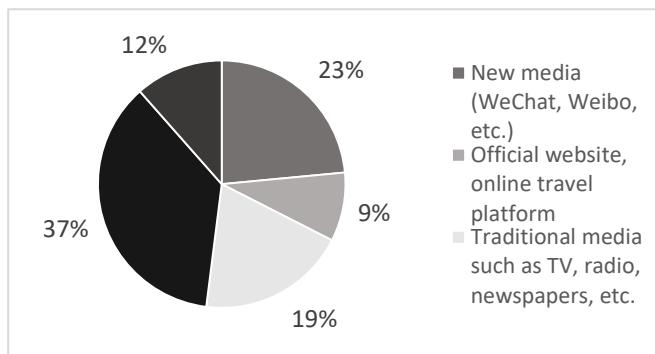
(6) Monthly income characterization

The average monthly income of tourists was categorized into four brackets. Overall, the percentages from high to low are 31% for 2000-5000 yuan, 27.5% for

5000-8000 yuan, 24.25% for less than 2000 yuan, and 17.25% for 8000 yuan and above. The demand for tourism services by people with different income levels and consumption needs shows a diversified pattern.



2. Analysis of tourists' travel behavior



(1) Analysis of tourists' travel patterns

Figure 2 shows that tourists choose individual self-help tours and family group tours in the majority and choose unit organization and group tours in a lesser way. Only 6.1% of travelers will participate as travel agents, which indicates that the current tour itineraries and services do not meet customers' expectations.

Figure 2 Statistical chart of tourists' travel mode

(2) Dwell time situation analysis

As shown in Figure 3, 264 people visited scenic area B for one day, accounting for 66%. The number of tourists who played for two days was 26%; those who played for more than two days only accounted for 8%.

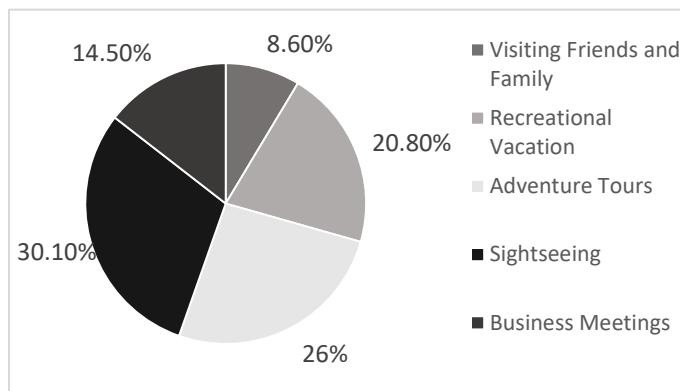
Figure 3 Statistical chart of average length of stay of tourists

(3) Analysis of consumption

Fig. 4 shows tourists' consumption in the scenic area. One hundred four people consume less than 200 yuan, accounting for 26.3%; 162 people consume between 200 yuan and 500 yuan, accounting for the vast majority of 47.5%; 76 tourists consume between 500 yuan and 1,000 yuan, accounting for 16.2%, and only 58 people consume more than 1,000 yuan, which is the least.

Figure 4 Tourist spending statistics

Analysis of access to information



From the ways of obtaining tourism information (see Fig. 5), the proportion of people introduced by friends and relatives reaches 36.5%, with 146 people; the number of people promoted through new media is 94, accounting for 23.5%; the proportion of people obtaining tourism information from traditional media such as TV, radio, and newspapers is 19.5%, with 78 people; the proportion of travel agencies' introduction is 11.5%, with 46 people; and the proportion of official websites is the least, with only 9%, with only 36 people.

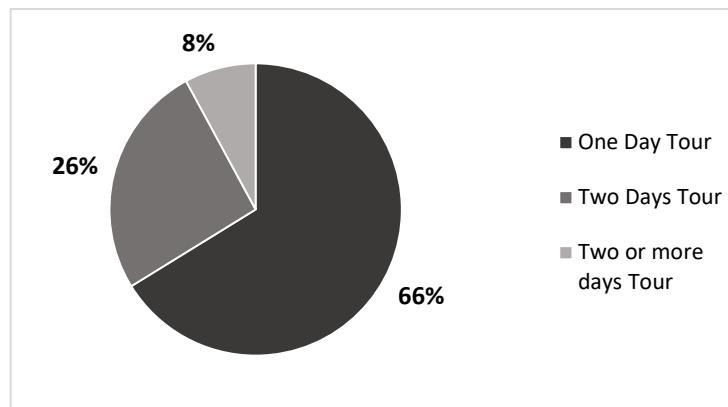


Figure 5 Map of access to information

Analysis of Tourists' Purpose of Tourism

Figure 6 shows the distribution of tourists' tourism purposes. By analyzing the purpose of tourism, tourists can be seen tourists to the B scenic area tourism purposes are mainly for sightseeing tours, adventure play, and leisure and vacation; the number of people accounted for 29.1%, 25.2%, 20.1%, while visiting friends and relatives and business meetings accounted for only 8.3%, 14.0%, as the purpose of tourism for the tourists is low. Therefore, the publicity and marketing of scenic area B should be targeted, highlighting the main features of the scenic area to promote.

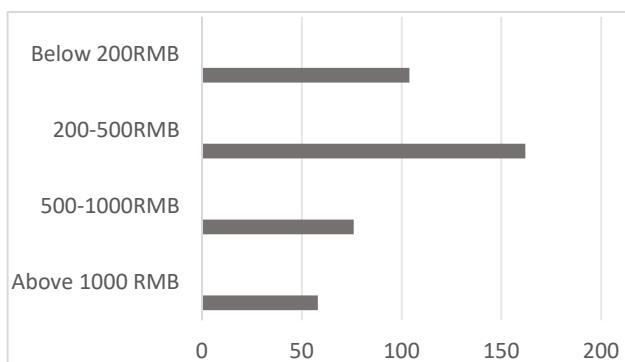


Figure 6 Distribution of tourists' purpose of traveling

Tourist Satisfaction Analysis

Tourist satisfaction analysis the table below shows the tourist satisfaction survey results for the B scenic area survey. Through the survey statistics found that in the scenic area entertainment projects, the proportion of unsatisfied 41.7%, indicating that the diversity of scenic area products needs to be further improved; in the scenic area of the quality of service, 39.6% of the tourists of the scenic area of the satisfaction of the relatively poor service; in the scenic area of the infrastructure of the satisfaction of the general proportion of up to 63.3%, indicating that the tourists for the tourist attractions of the infrastructure of the satisfaction level.

Table 1 Satisfaction Survey Statistics of Scenic Area B

options	very dissatisfied	dissatisfied	genera	satisfied	very satisfied
gastronomy	3.2%	12.2%	24.1%	56.1%	4.3%
lodging	2.5%	3.2%	37.8%	47.1%	9.4%
Scenic Area	1.1%	7.2%	33.1%	52.2%	6.5%
Transportation					
QOS	9.4%	39.6%	27.0%	17.6%	6.5%
Recreation Program	10.4%	41.7%	26.6%	13.7%	7.6%
infrastructure	1.4%	3.6%	63.3%	20.9%	10.8%
Tourism products	2.9%	21.6%	50.4%	18.3%	6.8%
Sightseeing Spot	2.2%	5.8%	45.0%	39.2%	7.9%
Environment					

Conclusion

By analyzing the SWOT analysis of scenic area B and the results of the detailed tourists' questionnaire, this study draws the following main conclusions:

1. Tourists generally have a positive attitude towards rural tourism: They believe that it provides opportunities for relaxation, the growth of insights, and good memories. This indicates that the rural tourism market has a broad space for development and that there is a strong demand from tourists.
2. High visitor satisfaction: The survey shows that most visitors are satisfied with the rural tourism experience in scenic area B, considering it beneficial to their physical and mental health and viewing it as a meaningful leisure activity. This reflects the advantages of scenic Area B in providing rural tourism services.
3. Positive tourists' intention to travel: Most tourists expressed their willingness to continue to choose rural tourism in the future and to revisit scenic area B. This shows that scenic area B has a certain degree of attraction and loyalty in the minds of tourists, laying a good foundation for future development.

Discussion

We analyze the challenges and opportunities faced by Scenic Area B in depth and explore how to overcome the current limitations through strategic adjustments to achieve longer-term development.

To address the problem of insufficient tourism product characteristics, scenic Area B needs to deeply explore the uniqueness of rural culture and natural resources and, through innovative design, create tourism projects with distinctive regional characteristics and differentiated competitive advantages. For example, it can introduce ecological agricultural experience, handicraft production, folk festival activities, etc., so that tourists can feel the charm of the countryside in participation and enhance the uniqueness and attractiveness of the tourism experience. At the same time, the linkage with neighboring scenic areas should be strengthened to form complementary tourist routes, broaden the range of choices for tourists, and enhance the richness and diversity of the overall tourism products.

In summary, scenic area B faces both challenges and opportunities in developing rural tourism. By implementing product innovation, flexible pricing, channel integration, promotion optimization, and personnel and process

management improvement, Scenic Area B will overcome the current limitations and usher in a broader development prospect.

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