

Counter Measures on Promoting Tourism Product Brands of Liaoning Province

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Abstract

Branding tourism products is an important strategy for the fierce competitive market environment. Liaoning province is abundant in tourism products, while they are not all well-known in the nationwide tourism market. Therefore, it has important significance to optimize the brands of Liaoning tourism products. This paper expounds the current status of the tourism product branding in Liaoning province, analyzes the driving factors and restricting factors of constructing tourism product brands and puts forward countermeasures to promote branding, aiming to strengthen the competitiveness of Liaoning tourism product brands in tourism market.

Keywords: Liaoning Province, tourism products, branding; promotion.

Introduction

In recent years, more and more important tourism items have been settled down in Liaoning Province. The development foreground of tourism industry in Liaoning is becoming better than before in investors' eyes. As the multifunctional center of Chinese economy, Liaoning Province has kept a stable and rapid growth in the field. The developing tourism industry of Liaoning province not only drives the development of related industries, such retail trade, catering, transportation, communication, architecture and food & beverage, but also contributes to the development of China. Liaoning Province has possessed conditions of developing tourism product brands, but need to optimize the branding of tourism products. Thus, the thorough systemic researches on branding Liaoning tourism products have a relatively essential meanings and values.

1. Overview of Branding Tourism Products

Theories of Branding, applied in more and more industries, have been widely used in tourism industry in 1990s. Constructing tourism product brands has become an important component of tourism management. Philip Kotler, the father of modern marketing, says that brand is a name, a term, a sign, a symbol, a pattern or the combination of these elements, aiming to identify obviously the manufacturers and sellers. Ike defines brand is a proprietary name or symbol aiming to mark products or services provided by certain sellers and distinguish them from the other similar ones. American Marketing Association points that brand is a name, a term, a sign, a symbol, a design or the combination of these elements intending to identify the sellers of the products and services and distinguish them from the competitors'. In a word, brand is applied to identify products and services of certain sellers or selling groups. It is a name, a term, a symbol, a pattern, or the combination of these elements. The world has entered a global branding era since 1990s. Branding in tourism has become a global language and competitiveness. Brands determine the success in competitive market. The ones who recognize the importance of branding will occupy the competitive tourism market. The ones who know to strengthen branding will capture the commanding height in tourism market.

2. Influencing Factors of Branding Tourism Products in Liaoning Province

2.1 Driving Factors

2.1.1 Enterprise-Oriented Operating Mode

With the revolution and reform of China, enterprises have become the main component in tourism and governmental functions have been changed from the dominant position to the directing position. Governments put more emphases on rapidly developing tourism industry. Many of them view the development of tourism industry as the core of economic growth. Because the governmental policy decision could not embody market working regulation promptly, the healthy development of tourism industry is restricted by the injustice competition and monopoly. The tourism industry can be developed rapidly with the appropriate supports from local governments. In such a circumstance, more and more enterprises need to decide operating modes for themselves, which is caused by market economy. Tourism enterprises coexist with tourism products is a basic requirement of the enterprises-oriented operating mode. Thus, tourism enterprises naturally pay close attention to development of tourism products. Brand management is an important means of promoting tourism products.

2.1.2 Strategic Orientation of the Pillar Industry

In 2009, the State Council proposed that tourism industry should be developed into a national economic strategic pillar industry and a modern service industry satisfying consumers. In 2012, the State Council put forward the important working target for tourism industry. That is, in the following five years, tourism industry must be developed into a national economic strategic pillar industry. The traditional service industry, tourism, is being promoted into a national strategic pillar industry. Liaoning is striving for a strong province in tourism based on its sufficient tourism resources. Zheng Yaoxing and Chu Deping have proposed that the industry position of tourism is determined by its contribution towards national economy. Commonly, if one's output value accounts for 5% of the local gross domestic products, it is considered as a real industry; if its output value accounts for 8% of the local gross domestic products, it is viewed as a national economic pillar industry. According to the statistics of Liaoning Statistics Information Net, the GDP of Liaoning Province in 2012 is 2480.13 billion RMB, containing 394 billion revenues from tourism. That is 15.89% of the total. Tourism has gradually become the pillar industry and the new economic growth point of Liaoning province. It is developing rapidly and actively. As the pillar industry, Liaoning tourism industry must strive for constructing tourism product brands in order to exist in the competitive tourism market and strengthen its pillar position.

2.1.3 Brand-Oriented Market Demand

With the development of social economy and improvement of national revenue, tourism industry has been transformed from seller's market to a buyer's market. Tourists consume tourism products rationally instead of perceptually. They initiatively put more emphases on the quality and brand of products. Tourists search for broadening minds, enhancing knowledge, being acquaintance with local cultures, relaxing themselves in a travel; simultaneously, they purchase tourism products and recommend the satisfactory ones to the others. At present, qualities, brands and images of destinations are the key elements for obtaining consumers' loyalty and maintaining sustainable development. The brand effect influences tourists' initiative selection and promotes the building of tourism product brands.

2.1.4 Brand-Oriented Development Mechanism

The development of tourism industry depends on the tourism resources when it started at the early stage. Tourism resources were exploited to attract tourists and develop local tourism industry rapidly. Liaoning province is rich in abundant tourism resources including landscapes, water sceneries, biological relics, historic heritages, cultural activities and so on. They were schemed and exploited into tourism products. With the rapid development of tourism industry and continuous promotion of comprehensive actual strength, brands have become the obvious identification of tourism products, because homogeneity a common phenomenon in the field. Bad ecological environment is caused by resources-oriented development mechanism. Tourism resources are excessively exploited and destructed. In such a case, governments and tourism enterprises are positively constructing tourism product brands. This is an effective way to optimize the pillar industry, protrude its strength and make it influential in the country and the world.

2.2 Restricting Factors

2.2.1 Intense Competitive Environment of Brands

Tourism industry is attached importance by governments and tourism enterprises because it is a comprehensive industry relating with many other industries. Destination places have established tourism product brands and obtained definite profits from them. The competitive environment of tourism product brands has become more and more intense. Report on Chinese Tourism Development in 2012 shows that tourism industry of Liaoning province ranks 7th in terms of comprehensive competitive power after Guangdong, Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Shandong. Though the competitive strength is promoted, the fierce competition in tourism market cannot be ignored. Liaoning province should give play to superiority of its tourism products, and strengthen brand competitive power in order to succeed in the fierce competition toward tourism product brands.

2.2.2 Insufficient Innovation Consciousness

The characteristic of Liaoning products is summarized as "Colorful Liaoning full of Manchu cultures and Qing Dynasty relics", which is also the orientation of Liaoning tourism product brands. As the agglomerations of Manchu ethnic group and the birthplace of Qing Dynasty, Manchu and Qing dynasty undoubtedly play the leading role in Liaoning tourism industry. However, they are not fully developed. Colorful Liaoning refers to five types of tourism resources in Liaoning province. It is similar to Five-color Tourism in Hebei and Hainan to some extent. Liaoning integrates its resources and proposes the "One Circle and Three Routes" tourism program, which is almost same with the tourism proposals in Shandong, Zhejiang. Lacking innovation consciousness leads to produce similar tourism products without any new concepts.

2.2.3 Short of Supports from Governments

The construction and propagation of tourism product brands can not be carried out without

the approvals and supports from local governments. The government of Liaoning province has invested funds for tourism advertisements in CCTV. However, such kind of investment is done after the other provinces; the effect is not as good as the desired results. To certain degree, Liaoning tourism missed many potential tourists. Moreover, the information of the governmental tourism websites is updated slowly. The exploiters of tourism products cannot search for the latest professional information on line. Their positivity is usually reduced and discouraged. Because of the insufficient supports from the local government, the tourism market is not developed deeply yet.

3. Countermeasures on Branding Tourism Products in Liaoning Province

3.1 To Innovate Traditional Items with Deep Exploitation

The birthplace of Manchu and Qing dynasty is the core of branding tourism products in Liaoning province. Manchu ethnic group members accumulate in Liaoning province. The biggest feature of Shenyang Imperial Palace is the best-preserved royal palace with Manchu style and its cultural relics. Deep exploitation on Manchu cultural elements is an effective way to differ cultural tourism of Manchu and Qing dynasty in Liaoning province from the others. Meanwhile, innovative travel patterns should be utilized to transform the traditional tourism items such as travels for finding origins, experiencing folk customs and local festivals. Folk customs should be exploited and protected at the same time. Folk customs and landscapes should exist harmoniously. Experience activities should be developed deeply in tourist activities.

Hot spring, especially the combination of hot spring and ice & snow, has become another tourism product brand in Liaoning. In 2011, Liaoning government proposed to develop hot spring resources rapidly. The publicity of ice & snow tourism resources in Liaoning is not as good as the popular northeastern city Haerbin, but the combination of hot spring and ice & snow is a unique feature. Liaoning is rich in hot spring resources. Items containing hot springs and skiing park are popular among tourists. These items should be developed deeply, exploiting its cultural connotation and medical values, uniting with Manchu folk customs and architecture, adding some other entertainment items, and combining with tourism real estates. 200 hot springs resources of Liaoning province is a potential positive strength for branding local tourism products.

3.2 To Emphasize Tourists' Experiences and Exploit Cultural Elements

In the travel process, visitors ask for an aesthetical appreciation, experiences in local environment, and various activities with folk features. Tourism enterprises and local government should combine natural beauty and humanity elements and deeply exploit the abundant local cultural factors.

Visiting heritage attractions is a must in Manchu and Qing dynasty cultural trip. It will be perfect if tourists can taste real Manchurian foods, dress in traditional Manchurian costumes and shoes, learn Manchurian etiquettes, attend festival activities and experience sacrificial ceremonies. In industrial tourism, tourists can go deep into factories' workshops, learning working technological processes, manufacturing art wares in person. In the trip of visiting revolutionary attractions, historical events can be displayed to visitors with a high technology and preformed to tourists on stages. After deeply experiencing the tourism products and concerned cultural elements, tourists can really memorize the tourism product brands and form the loyalty towards the brands.

3.3 To Integrate Regional Resources

Single tourism product lacks of competitiveness and economic strength. It is hard to satisfy various demands of tourists'. Thus, marketing alliance should be set up to brand the entire

products in the objective tourism market. The concept of Big Tourism is gradually constructed to benefit enterprises of the marketing alliance. Tourism products of different cities in Liaoning province should be integrated, and programmed as a whole, aiming to realize that economic revenue and abundant complement with each other. In such a circumstance, the popular tourism districts and unacquainted tourism areas should be developed harmoniously and simultaneously.

In Liaoning province, Shenyang and Dalian possess the most influential tourism products, which are separate to tourism products of neighboring cities. According to the growth theory, regional integration should be carried out to drive all tourism products in Liaoning, including featured products and common products. Shenyang, the dynamic city, is the capital of Liaoning. She can be integrated with Iron City—Anshan, Early Qing Relics City—Liaoyang, Mountain City—Benxi, Steam Engine Train City—Tieling, etc. Tourism products of different cities complement with each other. Shenyang, Benxi and Dandong can be integrated into the Border Landscape Trip. Shenyang, Liaoyang, Anshan, Yingkou and Dalian the Seashore can be integrated into the Leisure Trip. Shenyang, Panjin, Fuxin, Chaoyang, Jinzhou and Huludao can be integrated into the Sightseeing Trip of Western Liaoning.

3.3 To Promote Brand Effects Depending on the 12th National Game of the PRC

The 12th national game of the People's Republic of China is held in Liaoning province. It brings new opportunities to Liaoning tourism industry. Sports and tourism have close relationship. Sports tourism is one of the oldest types of tourism activity. Sport has the positive driving function towards tourism industry.

As the host of the 12th national game, firstly, Liaoning should fully utilize the various medias to publicize the local tourism products, aiming to promote the brand effects and speed up the development of local tourism industry. Secondly, the basic public facilities should be improved to meet the demands of visitors and athletes. The new sports venues should be used as the new tourism resources. Thirdly, the atmosphere of sports tourism should be built up by advertising local tourism products such as ice & snow entertainments, hot springs soaking, mountain climbing, exploration, seashore sports and so on. Thus, brand effects will be promoted naturally.

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