

Competitiveness of the Tourism Industry in Guizhou Province

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Abstract: Guizhou Province has become an important tourist destination for domestic and foreign tourists because of its unique karst landscape, colorful folklore, and suitable weather. In the face of fierce competition in the domestic and international tourism markets, this paper proposes a series of countermeasures to enhance the competitiveness of Guizhou's tourism industry, including optimizing the socio-economy, improving the competitiveness of resources, exploring the potential to improve the socio-economic benefits, and making use of the natural advantages to create an "ecological" Guizhou, and so on. These measures aim to promote the leapfrog of Guizhou's tourism industry and enhance its competitiveness in the tourism market through policy guidance, capital investment, talent training, digital transformation, ecological protection, and cultural heritage.

Keywords: Tourism; Competitiveness

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1. Introduction

Against the background of globalization and regional economic integration, tourism, as an important part of the national economy, plays an irreplaceable role in promoting regional economic growth, cultural exchanges, and international cooperation ^[1]. Guizhou Province, as a bright pearl in Southwest China, has become a desired destination for many people at home and abroad due to its unique karst landscape, colorful folklore, and suitable weather. However, in the face of fierce competition in the domestic and international tourism market, how to enhance the competitiveness of Guizhou Province's tourism industry is an issue worth studying. Guizhou Province is rich in tourism resources and is blessed with natural landscapes and human heritage. From the spectacular Huangguoshu Waterfalls to the mysterious Zunyi Conference site, from the colorful minority customs to the long history and culture, these valuable tourism resources provide a solid foundation for the tourism industry in Guizhou Province ^[2]. However, the utilization of tourism resources, the innovative design of tourism products, the enhancement of tourism services, and the formulation of tourism marketing strategies still need to be further

optimized and improved. The purpose of this paper is to explore the key factors affecting the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Guizhou Province by delving into the current situation of the tourism industry in Guizhou Province, and on this basis, to propose strategies to enhance the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Guizhou Province ^[3].

2. Status of the tourism industry in Guizhou Province

2.1. Red tourism resources in Guizhou Province

Guizhou Province is rich in red tourism resources. According to the results of the great census of tourism resources in 2016 and the supplementary results of resource census in 2022 of the Guizhou Provincial department of culture and tourism, there are a total of 1,384 red tourism resource sites in the province, which are widely distributed in 88 provincial municipalities, but the overall level is low ^[4-5]. The distribution of red tourism resources shows obvious agglomeration, especially in the already red tourism resources, and this agglomeration difference is more significant. These core areas are mainly distributed in places of strategic importance during the Red Army's Long March, such as Yanhe, Dejiang, and Yanjiang connecting areas, Honghuagang, Huichuan, and Baozhou connecting areas, as well as Liping districts and counties ^[6]. The developed sources of red tourism are mainly concentrated in 3 first-level core areas, 2 second-level core areas, and 9 core areas, showing the "Y" shape of "multiple cores, small pieces and discrete points" and the "core-edge" spatial structure ^[7]. Among them, the density of developed sources of red tourism in Guizhou Province is high in the north and low in the south, showing the spatial distribution characteristics of "more in the north and less in the south, dense in the north and sparse in the south." These resources are affected by the five dimensions of resources, nature, society, economy, and tourism level, in which market demand, road network density, consumption level, forest coverage, and total tourism income have a decisive role in the spatial distribution of red tourism resources. These red tourism resources are of great significance in promoting the comprehensive economic and social development of the old revolutionary areas, protecting and utilizing the red resources, giving full play to the function of revolutionary education, and promoting the spirit of patriotism ^[8]. Guizhou also enhances the connection between red resources and real life, for example, through the organic combination of these red resources and the teaching of university courses on ideology and politics, to help students establish a correct world view, outlook on life and values, and promote their healthy growth.

2.2. Tourism resources of intangible cultural heritage in Guizhou Province

The intangible cultural heritage in Guizhou Province has distinctive national and regional characteristics and is rich in cultural heritage resources. These heritages reflect the living history, customs, psychological characteristics, and close connection with nature and society of each ethnic group and are the embodiment of local life ^[9]. The inheritance and promotion of intangible cultural heritage in Guizhou Province requires its historical continuity and the maintenance of its fundamental cultural identity. In the process of promotion, it is necessary to pay attention to its dissemination in different directions and levels, as well as to promote exchanges between different ethnic groups, ensuring that the culture retains its original charm while also undergoing continuous innovation ^[10]. The bearers of intangible cultural heritage play a central role in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage, connecting the past with the present and with innovation, ensuring that the essence of the skills is preserved, and revitalizing the culture. Guizhou Province has adopted a variety of approaches to the transmission of ICH,

including direct folk transmission, preservation through the use of digital means, integration into the education system, and the active participation of institutions ^[11]. Folk transmission encompasses family, group, and community forms of transmission, while digital transmission involves detailed field research, recording, archiving and integration through modern technology, and the promotion and preservation of this cultural heritage through online platforms.

3. Progress in research related to the competitiveness of the tourism industry

3.1. Definition of competitiveness in the tourism industry

Competitiveness remains important for the success of a company, regardless of the industry ^[12]. This principle applies to the tourism industry even if tourism is not a physical product. Poon, as the first tourism researcher to conduct a study on tourism competitiveness, identified four key principles in terms of competitive success, firstly tourism, secondly tourism, thirdly radical innovations, and fourthly strengthening the strategic position of the traveler. According to Athiyaman and Robertson, the competitive advantage to be available requires the application of energy and resources to strategic planning and the results of decisions and actions based on specific research findings. Tourism destinations should understand the meaning of competitiveness based on the universal definition of competitiveness and understand the competitiveness model and factors. Abreu-Novais et al. stated that research on competitiveness of the tourism industry in progressively, identifying the factors that contribute to the competitiveness of the tourism industry. Although there are various definitions in the tourism literature, Crouch and Ritchie's definition has been recognized by scholars, which describes the competitiveness of the tourism industry as "the ability of tourism expenditures to increasingly attract tourists while providing them with satisfying and memorable experiences, and to do so profitably while enhancing the well-being of the destination's inhabitants and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations."

3.2. Competitiveness is recognized as a key factor for success within the tourism industry

3.2.1. Measuring competitiveness in the tourism industry

In a service-intensive industry such as tourism, a model that provides a clear understanding of how to improve the competitiveness of a destination is undoubtedly important. Poon proposed competitive strategies that apply to the tourism industry and a model that incorporates these strategies. In a study done by Zengeni, he states that the measurement of competitiveness of the tourism industry can be done with published secondary data. Among them, quantitative data is often used because it tends to be more precise and accurate, and two types of qualitative data or "soft measures" can be found in the tourism literature. First, competitiveness is measured by survey data on tourists' opinions and perceptions, and the second is based on an empirical assessment of some subjective indicators of tourism competitiveness, which are surveyed and reported on key tourism-related indicators such as the TTCI (Tourism and Travel Competitiveness Index). The Tourism Competitiveness Report (2019) indicates what factors are required for tourism, which will further improve the measurement of tourism competitiveness ^[12]. These factors are determined by the Tourism Competitiveness Index (TCI), which is derived from the World Economic Forum's Executive Opinion Survey and then measured on a scale of 1–7, where 7 indicates the best result.

3.2.2. Factors for the competitiveness of Guizhou's tourism industry

Rich resource endowment: Guizhou is endowed with unique natural scenery and a cool climate, as well as rich

ethnic culture and historical relics. These original natural landscapes and colorful ethnic cultures provide a solid foundation for tourism. It also has rich animal resources, which are divided into livestock and poultry resources and wildlife (including rare animals) resources. Guizhou has 45 kinds of breeding livestock and poultry. Rich natural resources bring beautiful natural landscapes to Guizhou, with famous tourist attractions such as Fanjing Mountain, Qianling Mountain, and Huangguoshu Waterfall. Distinctive ethnic and cultural characteristics: Guizhou is a multi-ethnic province, represented by the cultures of Miao, Dong, Bouyei, Shui, and other ethnic minorities, with rich ethnic customs and unique cultures, which provide diversification and differentiation of tourism products^[13]. Outstanding climate tourism resources: The cool climate and fresh air in summer make Guizhou a place for summer vacation and leisure, with obvious climate tourism advantages. Guizhou has a warm and humid climate, which is suitable for living. Guizhou has good air and little temperature change. It is warm in winter and cool in summer. The average temperature in summer is about 24°C. The average temperature of Liupanshui, known as the “cool capital of China”, is as low as 19.8°C. The average annual relative humidity is above 70%. The intensity of ultraviolet rays is low. The forest coverage rate of the province is about 40%. Policy support: Guizhou province promotes tourism through a series of policies and measures, such as the Guizhou Province Tourism Management Regulations, for the standardized management of the tourism industry and market order to provide legal protection. Gradual improvement of infrastructure: With the improvement of transportation infrastructure, such as the construction of highways and rapid railroads, the accessibility of Guizhou province has been improved, which promotes tourism^[14].

4. Countermeasures to enhance the competitiveness of Guizhou Province’s tourism industry

In Xu Qun’s analysis, four factors were analyzed: economic environment factor, socio-economic benefit factor, international tourism operation factor, and natural environment factor. Through principal component analysis, the tourism competitiveness of 31 provinces (municipalities) and autonomous regions in China is comprehensively ranked, and the current situation of tourism competitiveness in Guizhou province is analyzed and compared with other provinces. Based on the results of the empirical analysis, suggestions are made for the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Guizhou Province as follows.

4.1. Optimize the socio-economic environment

Adopt guiding economic development policies to attract capital flow to the tourism industry and make up for the lack of capital. At the same time, increase investment in infrastructure, including transportation, communication, and energy, to lay a solid foundation for the development of the tourism industry. It is necessary to make full use of long-term systems and policies that encourage rural tourism. Ensure the supply of land and incorporate it into the annual and land-use master plan for rural tourism projects. Rural collective economic organizations can use their property or property associated with other units and individuals for the construction of parking lots for hospitality, accommodation, catering, tourism, and other service-oriented facilities following relevant plans. Support the creation of pilot projects to improve the layout of rural construction land, connect urban and rural construction land, and provide infrastructure for tourism.

4.2. Improve resource competitiveness

Emphasize the cultivation and development of tourism talents, improve the mechanism for cultivating tourism

talents, increase investment in tourism education, attract and retain talents, and form human resource advantages. A tourism sector can grow and develop, and the tourism experience can be enhanced and innovated, all thanks to the development and promotion of the digital economy ^[15]. Culture and tourism authorities should do a good job in the top-level design of digital tourism, set up enough special funds to encourage enterprises to carry out digital tourism projects, product development, and digital tourism construction, and encourage the development of digital platforms. A combined mode of industry-university-research can be adopted to jointly cultivate digital talents in the tourism industry, education, culture, and tourism authorities. This model relies on excellent practice programs to strengthen practice management and coordination of digital tourism talents. Cultural and tourism authorities should guide the digitization of popular destinations and help top companies implement their digital tourism plans. Guizhou's unique tourism resources should be promoted to tourists through technology, with a focus on tapping the growth potential of smart tourism investment enterprises in attracting investment.

4.3. Utilizing natural advantages to create an “ecological” Guizhou

Give full play to the characteristics of Guizhou's rich plant species, optimize the natural environment, and promote the competitiveness of the tourism industry. Relying on Guizhou's unique natural environment and biodiversity, develop eco-tourism products, such as excursions to nature reserves, ecological hiking, bird-watching activities, etc., to attract tourists interested in nature and ecology. Utilizing the natural scenery, idyllic life, and agricultural resources of the countryside, develop rural tourism and provide activities such as farmhouse, agricultural experience, and rural leisure so that tourists can experience the tranquility and nature of the countryside. Design diversified thematic tourism routes, such as world natural heritage tours, ethnic and cultural village tours, and ancient town style tours, to meet the interests and needs of different tourists ^[16]. Provide customized tourism services, designing exclusive tourism plans and itineraries according to the individual needs of tourists to enhance the personalization and satisfaction of tourism services.

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