

Evaluation of the Credibility of Tourism Industry Associations and Its Influencing Factors: Perspective of the G Hot Spring & SPA Association in China

Bin Tu^{1*}, Lingling Huang², Qianyi Tu³

¹Guangdong Research Center for NPO, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China

²School of Public Administration, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China

³Department of Law and Politics, North China Electric Power University, Baoding, China

Email: *hattytu@126.com

How to cite this paper: Tu, B., Huang, L.L. and Tu, Q.Y. (2019) Evaluation of the Credibility of Tourism Industry Associations and Its Influencing Factors: Perspective of the G Hot Spring & SPA Association in China. *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management*, 9, 1712-1722.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ajibm.2019.98112>

Received: August 5, 2019

Accepted: August 26, 2019

Published: August 29, 2019

Copyright © 2019 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

The Tourism industry association is a non-profit organization that is a bridge between the government and tourism companies to maintain the common interests of the tourism industry and members of the association, and to promote the sustainable development of tourism and member companies. The credibility degree to the self-discipline and supervision of tourism industry associations will affect the public's willingness to spend in member companies of tourism industry association. This paper takes China's G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association in China as an example to investigate the credibility in the G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association and the public's willingness to spend on the member companies of the G Province Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association, and then analyze the factors affecting the credibility of the Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association. It was found that the public did not have a high degree of trust in the shortlist. The association's insufficient publicity by the self-media, the imperfect internal governance mechanism of the association, the insufficient of government supervision over the hot spring industry associations, and the imperfection of the social credit system lead to low credibility. Relevant strategies and suggestions to enhance the credibility of the tourism industry association were proposed.

Keywords

Credibility, The G Hot Spring & SPA Association, Internal Governance, Government Regulation

1. Introduction

The Tourism Industry Association is a professional industry association organization that tourism enterprises or individuals voluntarily participate in, and is a social groups with intermediary, non-governmental, non-profit and mutual benefit characteristics, in order to safeguard the overall interests of the tourism industry, promote the healthy development of tourism enterprises and protect the legitimate rights and interests of tourism consumers (L. Fan, 2014) [1].

With the development of the economy and the improvement of people's income level, China's tourism industry has entered an era of sustainable development. In the process of rapid development of the tourism market economy, in the context of the acceleration of the transformation of Chinese government functions and the deepening of economic system reform, the tourism industry association plays an indispensable communication and coordination role between the government and tourism companies, and plays a role in service and coordination for members, self-discipline and supervision for industry. It is increasingly obvious in reflecting the members' demands, participating in the research and formulation of relevant tourism industrial policies, strengthening industry self-discipline, improving industry management, coordinating international trade disputes, and safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of members (Z. Ma, 2015) [2].

The development of the tourism industry association and the role of its functions, as well as the development of the tourism industry and the willingness to consumers' consume willing, cannot be separated from the establishment and promotion of the credibility of the tourism industry association. The credibility of the tourism industry association refers to the integrity, prestige, influence and appeal of the tourism industry association. It is an ability of the tourism industry association to gain the trust and support of members of the association and the public. The credibility of the tourism industry association will directly affect the degree of tourism companies support associations and the public's consumption level in member companies of the tourism industry association [3].

Different from the establishment of industry associations in Europe and the United States, China's modern industry associations are mainly produced in the process of economic system reform. The top-down formation model of administrative forces constitutes the main body of the Chinese industry association. Industry association in China has strong administrative dependence, and has a strong administrative color in the early stage of industry association development (L. Huang, 2006) [4]. It is difficult for industry associations with purely civil nature to play an industry management role in the unified planning and coordination of functions of companies in the same industry that are subordinate to different level government departments and dispersed in different regions. Therefore, it is necessary to rely on the administrative power of certain departments, thus the industry associations showed color of "administration" and "government" (D. Su, 2000) [5]. In this context, the credibility of the tour-

ism industry association depends mainly on the credibility of relevant government departments. However, this situation has changed since 2015. The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council issued the “Overall Plan for the Decoupling of Industry Associations, Chambers of Commerce and Administrative Organs of the Industry Association” in 2015, which is a programmatic document guiding the reform of the industry associations and Chamber of Commerce. The program should fully play the role of the industry association and chamber of commerce in accordance with the clarification of functional boundaries. In principle, a clear road map for decoupling reform, a clear timetable and a specific task book are proposed.

It mainly includes: First, cancel the sponsorship, supervisory and affiliation relationship between the administrative organ (including subordinate units) and the industry associations and the chamber of commerce. Industry associations and the chamber of commerce are directly registered and operates independently according to laws. The administrative organ provides services to the he industry associations and the chamber of commerce according to their functions and supervises them according to laws. The second is to clarify the functions of the industry associations and the chamber of commerce. Remove the existing administrative functions of the industry associations and the chamber of commerce, except as otherwise provided by laws and regulations. The third is the separation of assets and finance, and standardize property relations. The fourth, the industry associations and the chamber of commerce have the autonomy of personnel. In the personnel management, it is decoupled from the affiliated administration departments which is original sponsor and supervisor. A standardized employment system is established according to the rules, and the people are selected according to the regulations [6].

According to the time schedule of decoupling, at the end of 2017, the industry associations including tourism industry associations were decoupled from the government administrative organs. Its credibility is hard to rely on the credibility of government departments. What is the status of credibility of the tourism industry associations after being decoupled from the government administrative departments? What is influencing factor on the establishment and improvement of its credibility? How to establish and enhance the credibility of industry associations? These issues about the credibility of the tourism industry associations are rarely discussed in the literature in China. Taking the G Hot Spring & SPA Association in China as an example, this paper conducted relevant questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews to evaluate the public trust status of the hot spring industry associations in the province from the perspective of the public, analyze the factors affecting the credibility of tourism industry associations, and put forward relevant suggestions. In order to try to enrich the relevant theories of the credibility construction of the tourism industry association after decoupling from government, try to provide some reference for improving the credibili-

ty of the China Tourism Industry Association.

The article is organized as follows. First of all, it introduces the background of the decoupling of the tourism industry associations from the government in China, and the necessity of credibility construction after decoupling, as well as the related literature review and the basic framework of this paper. Second, taking the G Hot Spring & SPA Association which is one of the tourism industry associations as an example, a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews were conducted on the public trust level of the list of real hot spring announced by G Hot Spring & SPA Association, and verified the reliability and validity of data. Third, analyzing the factors that affect the public's trust in the information announced by the G Spring & Spa Association. Finally, relevant recommendations are proposed.

2. Credibility Evaluation of the G Hot Spring & SPA Association

2.1. Profile of the G Hot Spring & SPA Association

G Province is a famous hot spring town in China and has a very rich hot spring resource. The G Hot Spring & SPA Association was established in G Province in 2007. The association was established by the hot spring enterprises of the G province, the relevant departments of the university and the social organizations of related industries, which is established on the principle of equality and voluntary and has independent corporate legal personality [7]. The association is responsible for the G Provincial Tourism Bureau. There are currently more than 70 members. It play the following basic functions: as industry representatives, communicate with government agencies; strengthen information communication among industry members, release industry-related materials; promotion and market development in hot spring tourism, spa health care; training and business consulting; mediation and to prevent unreasonable competition within the industry.

2.2. List of Real Hot Spring Announced by the G Hot Spring & SPA Association

With the rapid development of tourism, various hot spring enterprises have been developed one after another. There are many hot spring tourist towns and hot spring resorts in G province. There are about 80 hot spring resorts that have been developed. The selling points are hot spring water quality or the decoration style or the hot spring pool design. Consumers have different levels of doubts about the true and false degree of these hot springs and the conformity of water quality industry standards. In February 2018, the G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association hosted a true and fake verification of the quality of hot springs. A list of 43 true hot springs was announced by the We-chat public account of a daily newspaper in G Province. G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association hopes to provide consumers with real information and help the people to consume

smartly. It also promotes the integrity management, standardized management and orderly development of the hot spring industry. Does the public believe in the list published by the G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association? What is the level of trust in the G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association? Whether consumers will consume according to the list of short-listed hot spring companies?

2.3. Credibility Evaluation of the G Hot Spring & SPA Association

In this paper, 400 questionnaires were randomly distributed to the public, and 386 copies were valid. The questionnaire set up a scale to investigate the public's trust and influence factors on the list published by the G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association. At the same time, 23 people depth interviews were conducted on relevant issues.

The reliability of the Cronbach α coefficient measure questionnaire as a whole and the purpose of each item. If the measured value of Cronbach α is above 0.7, it can be proved that the reliability is high; if the measured value of Cronbach α is between 0.5 and 0.7, the reliability is normal; if the value is less than 0.5, it is poor reliable. According to **Table 1**, it can be seen that the reliability of each item is greater than 0.7, indicating that each item has higher reliability.

Judging by the KMO value and the Bartlett spherical test value, the KMO test value is 0.854, which is greater than 0.7, indicating that it is suitable for factor analysis. The Bartlett spherical test value is 1265.540, the value is relatively large, and the significance is 0.000 ($P < 0.01$), so the structural validity is good, which is suitable for factor analysis. After factor analysis, it can be found that the commonality of all items is greater than 0.4. The items are consistent with the expected correspondence, and the absolute value of the factor load factor of the item is higher than 0.4 indicating the good validity.

The evaluation results are as follows: The score of questionnaire item "G-Position Hot Spring List Trust Level" is 5.8 points (full score 10 points, same as below), indicating that the public's trust in the shortlist is not high; 68% of the response

Table 1. Reliability analysis.

Item	Cronbach's Alpha
Degree of trust	0.807
Q1: Degree of consumption according to the list	0.844
Q2: Possibility of commercial advertising behavior for the list	0.786
Q3: The authoritative of the Association	0.792
Q4: Possibility for money-power deals	0.835
Q5: Lack of social integrity	0.846
Q6: Low cost of fraud and less punishment	0.921
Q7: Enterprises that meet the standards and fail to meet the standards should publish	0.809
Q8: Objectivity of evaluation criteria	0.901
Q9: Commercial advertising behavior	0.853

about the Questionnaire item “Whether to consume according to the G Province hot spring list” are “no”. The results of 23 people in depth interviews were analyzed with NVivo. The results are shown in **Table 2**.

According to the analysis of NVivo, 57% of the respondents were distrustful to the shortlist, 30% were not full believe, and only 13% chose to believe the shortlist. From the results of this analysis, it can be seen that the respondents are more skeptical about the hot spring association and its published content, and the G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association has not high credibility in the public. Why is the public not trusting the hot spring industry association’s list? What impact factor will affect the public’s judgment?

3. Analysis of the Factors Affecting the Credibility of the G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association

3.1. The Association Has Insufficient Publicity by the Self-Media

How much influence an industry association has on the inside and outside of the industry and the public and what level of credibility, is inseparable from its effective publicity and promotion. Most of the publicity of the G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association is concentrated on the self-promotion of members of the association. The propaganda channel is narrow and the scope is small. The publicity through the official website and We-chat public number is less. The credibility of the industry association is based on the level of the public’s grasp the industry association. According to the questionnaire, the item “how much you know about the nature of the e G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association”

Table 2. Results from NVivo analysis of in-depth interviews.

View	Number of people	proportion
Do not believe	13	57%
Not fully believe	7	30%
Believe	3	13%
Tourism industry associations as the subject of selection are not authoritative	18	78%
Possibility for money-power deals	15	65%
Lack of social integrity	14	61%
Low cost of fraud and less punishment	10	43%
Enterprises that meet the standards and fail to meet the standards should publish	10	43%
Commercial advertising behavior	9	39%
Standards should be established	7	30%
Whether the list is true or not, it is conducive to market regulation	6	26%
Believe in oneself judgment	5	22%
Insufficient media credibility	4	17%
Some real hot springs are not on the shortlist	3	13%

and “the extent to which you know the role of the G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association”, “Your understanding of the membership incentive mechanism of the G Spa Industry Association” show that the score are respectively only 3.6 points, 3.8 points, 2.3 points, indicating that the public is less aware of the hot spring industry associations. The basic situation of the association is not understood, and there is no recognition or trust to it at all. In in-depth interviews, 78% of respondents believe that industry associations are not the authoritative subject of the selection. The public is not aware of the nature and functions of the hot spring industry associations. Naturally, associations are considered not to be authoritative, thus there is no credibility.

3.2. The Imperfect Internal Governance Mechanism of the G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association Leads to Low Credibility

First of all, the imperfect reward and punishment mechanism of the association leads to low credibility. The reward and punishment mechanism of the industry association is to treat the members of different credits with different way, to achieve the clear rewards and punishments. In this way, establish the authority of the industry association. However, at present, the G Hot Spring & SPA Industry Association are not good at awarding members operating in good faith, punishing members operating in bad faith. There are still a lot of fake hot springs in the market. There is no better reward and punishment mechanism to reward members with high integrity, and to punish those who are dishonest. In the end, the industry is chaotic and loses its credibility. Three respondents made it clear that they knew that some real hot springs were not included in the shortlist after the identification.

Second, the transparency and comprehensiveness of the association’s information disclosure affects credibility. The detailed and objective level of information published by the association will also have a certain impact on the public trust. The score of the questionnaire item “What do you think about the objective degree of information disclosure after the authentic hot spring appraisal?” is 4.5. In depth interviews, 43% of the respondents thought that the hot spring companies whether meet the standard or not should be announced on the list, and 26% of the respondents thought that the objective criteria of the judging and the evaluation results of all hot spring enterprises should be announced, to make the information transparent and comprehensive to the public, thus the public will gain more information to improve the credibility of industry association. One interviewee said that the objective criteria should be announced, all the hot springs with different minerals should be ranked for fairness perspective.

3.3. The Insufficient of Government Supervision over the Hot Spring Industry Associations Has Led to a Decline in the Credibility

The management and supervision of industry associations adopt a joint supervision mechanism in China. Many administrative department such as the civil af-

fairs, the judiciary, the public finance, the taxation, the industry and commerce, the public security etc. carry out coordinated supervision according to their respective responsibilities. In particular, as the supervise mainstay to the industry associations, the civil affairs department are directly examined, registered and supervised the industry associations.

However, the civil affairs departments often pay attention to registration and lack of supervision, pay attention to annual inspections and neglect daily supervision, and the supervision of industry associations is relatively extensive and loose. It is difficult to find and timely correct problems existing in the daily operation and operating process of industry associations, so it is difficult to play an effective regulatory role.

The data shows that 48% of the respondents thought that the current government is lacking of the efficient supervision. 30% of the respondents are skeptical to the media though this shortlist is pushed by the official mainstream media, as distortion of reports from some media are driven by interests. The Spring Industry Association is an emerging industry organization, and the government also has similarities to other industry associations in the role of supervision. On this issue, unless the government makes hard moves and strengthens supervision, it is difficult for the credibility of industry associations, including the hot spring industry association, to fundamentally reverse from lower evaluation.

3.4. The Imperfection of the Social Credit System Is Not Conducive to the Improvement of the Credibility of the Industry Associations

In recent decades, there are rapid development in politics, economy, culture, education, science and technology etc. in China. The social system has been increasingly developed and the people's living standards have been continuously improved. However, during the period of social transformation, various "credit crises" have emerged. The social credit system is relatively fragile. In the depth interview, 65% of the respondents thought that there might be a money transaction on the shortlist, that is, the companies that entered the real hot springs shortlist are likely to pay the association extra fees. 61% of respondents believe that the current social integrity is generally lacking and they are lack of trust in the announced information. 39% of respondents believe that this shortlist is only a commercial advertisement for the hot spring enterprises. It can be seen that many respondents believe that the lack of social integrity has led to distrust of the hot spring industry association's identification list.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

A public survey of the shortlist of real hot springs published by the G Hot Springs Association to the public was carried out. It was found that the public did not have a high degree of trust in the shortlist. The association has insufficient publicity by the self-media, the imperfect internal governance mechanism of the association, the insufficient of government supervision over the hot spring

industry associations, and the imperfection of the social credit system lead to low credibility. The following suggestions are proposed.

4.1. The Tourism Industry Associations Should Establish a Clear Reward and Punishment Self-Discipline System

The G Hot Spring Industry Association must first establish the business standards and rules and regulations that members jointly follow. This is the basic “family rule” for the tourism industry association. It is just like that “members must implement relevant industry conventions, the association is responsible for organizing the implementation of the convention and supervising the implementation of members.” It may further stipulate that “for violations of this convention, the association has the right to impose corresponding penalties and announcement to the society. If a member violates the provisions of the convention, the association will deal with it according to the seriousness of the incident. For those incidents who are less serious will be notified of criticism, suspension of membership etc., and for those who are serious, delisting from the membership” Such a self-discipline convention is undoubtedly a deterrent to all members of association. Secondly, the tourism industry association should establish an assessment mechanism, and reward the well-performing members. For those members who are basically qualified or unqualified, they should conduct vigilante talks in a timely manner. For illegal members, the industry associations should dare to promptly clear it out.

4.2. Improve the Government’s Comprehensive Supervision System for Tourism Industry Associations

Formulate comprehensive supervision measures for industry associations and improve supervision mechanisms. In accordance with the relevant registration management regulations, the civil affairs department shall strengthen the registration censor, supervision and law enforcement inspections of the industry association, and strengthen the supervision of the qualify conditions and appointment procedures of the principal responsible persons. The finance department is responsible for assessing and supervising the funds and behaviors of the government’s purchase of the industry associations’ services. The taxation department audits and supervises the taxation of the industry associations. The audit department conducts audit supervision over the industry association. The price department regulates the fees and price behavior of the industry associations. When the industry associations organize activities such as forums, appraisals, standards, commendations etc., the activities must be strictly followed the relevant regulations and be accepted supervision. Explore the establishment of a professional, socialized third-party monitoring mechanism.

4.3. To Keep Information Disclosure and Increasing Transparency

For non-profit organizations, the visibility of their information and the transparency of their operations will also have an important impact on their credibility.

The G Hot Springs & SPA Industry Association should develop a comprehensive information disclosure system and implement it in detail and strictly enforce it in the actual operation process. On the one hand, the basic organizational information of the association should be opened and transparent to both internal and external organization, including: the business scope and organizational structure of the association, the generation, removal, rights and obligations of position at all levels, the conditions for applying for membership and the standard of membership fees, the principles of the association management, use and disposal in asset, the annual financial revenue and expenditure of the association, the source and use of the activities, and the selection and hiring rules of the staff of the association secretariat. Make the association's own operations more transparent by disclosing the above information, to ensure the comprehensive and effective supervision of the association by members, relevant government departments, the media and the public and to promoting the standardization of the operation and management of the association, thus improving its credibility.

On the other hand, the relevant industry association business information should also be disclosed, including: important meetings of the association, minutes of activities, industry economic operation data held or counted by the association, and supply and demand information of the hot spring tourism market. The disclosure of this information will help the relevant government departments to understand the operation of the industry, and then scientifically formulate policies for regulation. At the same time, it also effectively promotes the communication of tourism company information and resource docking in the industry, avoids monopoly and vicious competition, and safeguards the overall interests of the industry. In addition, it has deepened the understanding to the hot spring industry association from the government, the media and the public, and has helped to enhance the image and credibility of the association.

4.4. Play Fully the Role of Association's Self-Media Promotion and Enhance the Association's Visibility and Influence

Strengthen the construction and operation of the official website of the association, We-chat public account, Weibo and other online publicity platforms, and fully display the various work and the various public services to the public carried out by the association, so that the public's understanding of the association is more profound and comprehensive. Through the above-mentioned network platform, timely to release the latest information and dynamics of the industry, to publish authoritative analysis and comments, objectively to summarize and analyze the economic operation of the industry, and cause more attention from the industry and the public. Further improve the quality of the publication of the association's journals, expand the distribution, open up more distribution channels, and strengthen the publicity of the association itself through the journal.

Acknowledgements

Thanks for Natural Science Foundation of Guangdong Province (2017A030313426).

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- [1] Fan, L.J. (2014) Tourism Industry Association Market Service Function Research. Master Thesis, Nanchang University, Nanchang.
- [2] Ma, Z.T. (2015) China Travel News 2015.7.29/004 Version.
- [3] Huang, L. (2006) China Tourism Industry Association Research. Master Thesis, Sichuan University, Chengdu.
- [4] Huang, L. (2006) China Tourism Industry Association Research. Master Thesis, Sichuan University, Chengdu.
- [5] Su, D.S. (2000) Industrial Economics. Higher Education Press, Beijing.
- [6] The Central Office of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council (2015) Overall Plan for the Decoupling of Chambers of Commerce and Administrative Organs of Industry Associations.
http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2015-7/08/content_2894118.htm
- [7] G Province Hot Spring Industry Association Official Website.
<http://www.gdhotspring.com>