

Study on the Ecotourism Development in Dazhou

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Abstract

After comprehensive discussion of the origin of ecotourism, the concept of ecotourism and the theoretical basis for ecotourism development, the paper carried out the SWOT analysis on ecotourism development in Dazhou City, and then proposed development strategies. The strategies were to: enhance the ecological awareness of the entire people and create a good atmosphere for ecotourism development; break the talent bottleneck of ecotourism development by adopting the policy of “combination boxing”; make scientific and feasible master plan for Dazhou’s ecotourism development; develop quality ecotourism products; innovate marketing strategies for ecotourism in Dazhou.

Keywords

Dazhou, Ecotourism, Development

1. Introduction

The concept of ecotourism was introduced into China in the 1990s. After more than 20 years of development, ecotourism has become a popular type of tourism, which promotes environmental protection, advocates green development and harmonious coexistence between man and nature. Under the guidance of Xi Jinping’s concept of “Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets”, the connotation of ecotourism development has been expanded. Guided by the concept of innovation, coordination, green, open, and shared development, the new-era eco-tourism refers to those tourism activities people-oriented and cored by harmonious development between man and nature.

On July 27, 2016, the National Development and Reform Commission issued “The Plan for the Revitalization and Development of the Old Revolutionary Base

Areas in Sichuan and Shaanxi Provinces”, specifying that the positioning of the Sichuan-Shaanxi Old Revolutionary Bases (including Dazhou City) is ecotourism destinations and the pilot areas for ecological civilization in the Qinba Mountain areas. According to “The National Ecotourism Development Plan (2016-2025)”, the State develops eight ecotourism regions, and gives top priority to cultivate 20 ecotourism cooperation areas including Daba Mountain Ecotourism Cooperation Zone (Dazhou included). On December 7, 2016, the State Council issued “The Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Tourism Development”, stressing that tourism development needs transformation and upgrading, coordinated advancement. It also points out that by sticking to the path of green ecological development and relying on trans-regional natural landscapes and complete regional cultural units, the nation is to cultivate 20 cross-regional featured tourism functional areas, including ecological and cultural tourism areas in Qinba Mountains (including Dazhou City). The status of Dazhou’s ecotourism is increasingly important, so the study on it is not only an urgent need for summarization and further development of Dazhou’s ecotourism, but also an inevitable path for its integration into Qinba Mountain’s eco-regional development. It is also the implementation of the national eco-cultural development policies.

2. SWOT Analysis of Ecotourism Development in Dazhou City

A SWOT analysis of the eco-tourism development in Dazhou (see **Table 1**) is of great significance to the sustainable development of its tourism industry, which

Table 1. SWOT analysis of ecotourism development in Dazhou.

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Internal Environment	1) Rich Natural Ecotourism Resources with Beautiful Scenery and Vast Forests. 2) Abundant Cultural Ecotourism Resources with Diversified Folk Cultures. 3) Rich Red Ecotourism Resources in Old Revolutionary Bases. 4) Huge Potential on Industrial Ecotourism Development as China’s Gas Capital. 5) Strong Tourism Potentiality with Outstanding Regional Advantages.	1) Weak Ecological Awareness of the Local People. 2) Low Professional Quality of Ecotourism Practitioners. 3) Lack of Depth in Ecotourism Development. 4) Lack of Scientific Ecotourism Planning.
	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
External Environment	1) Rapid development of eco-tourism. 2) Ecotourism is an important way for accurate poverty alleviation in Dazhou.	1) Highly Competitive Ecotourism Market. 2) Insufficient ecological responsibility of ecotourism developers and operators. 3) Industrial Transformation in the Era of “Dazhiyiyun”.

can help us to identify advantages and disadvantages, and thus propose appropriate development strategies.

2.1. Analysis of Strengths

2.1.1. Rich Natural Ecotourism Resources with Beautiful Scenery and Vast Forests

In Dazhou, there are rolling hills, abundant forests and a vast area with a humid climate. At present, there are 17 A-class scenic spots [1] (7 4A scenic spots, 9 3A scenic spots and 1 2A scenic spots), 2 scenic areas, 6 forest parks, 1 nature reserve and 1 geological park in Dazhou. Among them, the number of forest parks ranked the second in Sichuan province and there are abundant ecotourism resources.

2.1.2. Abundant Cultural Ecotourism Resources with Diversified Folk Cultures

According to the 2016 Dazhou Yearbook, the registered population of Dazhou City in 2015 reached 6.828 million [2]. Among the 11 counties with over 1 million population in Sichuan province, 3 are located in Dazhou, and the city has nearly 16 ethnic minorities. With a large population and diverse ethnic groups, Dazhou has gradually created a series of brilliant folk cultures in the long rivers of history, such as the Cong People culture, Sanhui pavilion, Mountain-climbing on the 9th day of the first lunar month, Diancao gong and drum, Shiqiao dragon burning, bamboo pole, and Kaijiang Niubang.

2.1.3. Rich Red Ecotourism Resources in Old Revolutionary Bases

Dazhou is a land with a glorious revolutionary tradition and is the country's second largest Soviet area, the core area of the Sichuan-Shaanxi revolutionary base. Many older generations of proletarian revolutionaries and military strategists used to fight here, such as Xu Xiangqian, Li Xiannian, Xu Shiyong, Wang Weizhou etc., leaving us a heroic battle history. A total of 300 national red tourism classic scenic spots have been listed in the "National Red Tourism Classic Scenic Spot Directory" issued by all members of the National Red Tourism Coordinating Group. Sichuan Province has 9 series of red tourism classic scenic spots listed in the directory, including Wanyuan Defend Warfare History Exhibition Hall in Wanyuan, Dazhou, Xuanda Battle Memorial Hall in Tongchuan District of Dazhou, and the 33rd Red Army Memorial Hall in Xuanhan County.

2.1.4. Huge Potential on Industrial Ecotourism Development as China's Gas Capital

With the promulgation of the National Outline for the Development of Industrial Tourism (2016-2025), industrial tourism will be an important strategic fulcrum for the upgrading of urban and rural tourism. In 2014, Dazhou City introduced its industrial tourism project in Chongqing, attracting a total investment of RMB 27.5 billion. As a rich natural gas field in the Sichuan Basin, Dazhou enjoys tremendous resource advantages with a natural gas reserve of 3.8 trillion cubic meters. Relying on the economic radiation effects and accumulation

effects brought by natural gas development, Dazhou City should correspondingly adjust the spatial layout and tourism planning and take industrial ecotourism as another growth point.

2.1.5. Strong Tourism Potentiality with Outstanding Regional Advantages

Dazhou is located in the geographical center of Sichuan, Chongqing, Hubei, and Shaanxi, and at the geographic intersection of four metropolis, namely, Xi'an, Wuhan, Chongqing, and Chengdu [3]. Dazhou has an airport in Heshi, the only branch airport in northeastern Sichuan, where Boeing 737 series, Airbus 319 and other medium-sized aircrafts can take off and land. In October 2016, the relocation project of Dazhou Airport commenced. Upon completion, it will become the largest airport in northeastern Sichuan. Dazhou Railway Station, a first-class station, is the second largest railway station in Sichuan Province and the fourth largest railway station in the southwest, connecting to the three railway lines of the Xiangyang-Chongqing Railway, the Dazhou-Chengdu Railway and the Dazhou-Wanzhou Railway [4]. Dazhou is also one of the 179 main hubs of national highway transport [5]. Therefore, a highly efficient three-dimensional travel network is basically formed, consisting of aviation, railways, highways, waterways, etc. Visitors have easy access to transport so that they may conveniently come for a visit and return back home.

2.2. Analysis of Weaknesses

2.2.1. Weak Ecological Awareness of the Local People

Ecological awareness is mainly composed of ecological cognition, ecological behavior, and ecological consumption concepts [6]. Ecological cognition is the most basic unit of ecological awareness, mainly indicating the degree of mastery of ecological knowledge. Farmers in ecotourism development sites in Dazhou City are old-aged, low in academic qualifications and weak in ecological awareness. Therefore, they are not likely to make proper ecological behaviors, and may even do such things as directly dumping garbage into rivers, burning straw stalks, and deforestation and other non-ecological behaviors.

2.2.2. Low Professional Quality of Ecotourism Practitioners

First of all, most of Dazhou's ecotourism scenic spots are located in more remote and economic sub-developed regions. The low wages make it more difficult to attract high-level tourism practitioners to work in scenic spots. Secondly, considering tourism poverty alleviation and tourism development costs, etc., the scenic area will employ a large number of local people who have low academic qualifications, insufficient professional knowledge and little experience in tourism industry. Lastly, there is no systematic system for the development and training of tourism talents in Dazhou City [7]. The compensation and incentive mechanism is old, the attention paid to the existing ecotourism practitioners is insufficient, and the phenomenon of the loss of ecotourism practitioners continues to intensify.

2.2.3. Lack of Depth in Ecotourism Development

The number of Grade-A scenic spots in Dazhou ranks 12th in Sichuan province, and the number of forest parks ranks the second in Sichuan province. The pursuing of quantity of scenic spots can guarantee Dazhou's ecotourism development, but too much emphasis on it will make it difficult to allocate talents and capitals, further develop ecotourism and explore the connotation of ecotourism. The development of ecotourism in Dazhou mostly stays at the initial stage of sightseeing tourism. There is a lack of experience ecotourism products, which can interact with tourists effectively. Tourists have low levels of tourist behavior. That's why tourists simply come and look rather than staying for some time, let alone coming again.

2.2.4. Lack of Scientific Ecotourism Planning

On August 22, 2016, the National Development and Reform Commission and the National Tourism Administration issued "The National Ecotourism Development Plan (2016-2025)" and the "Sichuan Ecotourism Planning (2017-2025) Year and Three-Year Implementation Plan" was officially launched on December 9, 2016. Dazhou City should quickly launch the preparatory work for Dazhou Eco-tourism planning and, at the same time, provide guidance for the development of eco-tourism during the blank period of planning, avoiding the development of homogenous, low-grade eco-tourism products.

2.3. Analysis of Opportunities

2.3.1. Rapid Development of Eco-Tourism

The "Five Development Concepts", put forward during the 5th Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Congress in 2015, has become the development philosophy that leads the development of China as a whole. The development of eco-tourism pays attention to the harmonious coexistence between man and nature and regards human development as the fundamental purpose of eco-tourism development, fully reflecting the essence of "Five Development Concepts". Eco-tourism development is in line with the overall plan of national development, so it is greatly supported by the state. Meanwhile, with growing economic development, Chinese tourists pursuit healthy and green consumption and have higher demand for eco-tourism products. In general, the development of eco-tourism has a promising future with the great support of national policies and driven by huge demand of tourists.

2.3.2. Ecotourism Is an Important Way for Accurate Poverty Alleviation in Dazhou

Dazhou's topography is high in the northeast (Daba Mountain area), and low in the southwest (basin and hilly areas). Most places are remote mountainous areas with a small population living scattered. With poor infrastructure and without any pillar industry, the farmers here mainly live on planting crops and have low income. Dazhou is not much influenced by industrialization, so it has well-protected ecological environment, rich ecological resources, and a huge po-

tential for ecotourism development. The development of ecotourism drives the development of the industry, balances the relationship between development and environmental protection, and can achieve accurate poverty alleviation.

2.4. Analysis of Threats

2.4.1. Highly Competitive Ecotourism Market

Dazhou is located in the geographic center of Sichuan, Chongqing, Hubei and Shaanxi, which is a sharp double-edged sword. On the one hand, it gives Dazhou an excellent geographical advantage. On the other hand, its surrounding area has some highly recognized tourist attractions, such as Guangwu Mountain Scenic Area in Bazhong, the ecotourism area of Deng Xiaoping's Former Residence in Guang'an, and Longgang Scenic Area in Yunyang, Wanzhou. All these have brought tremendous pressure on the development of ecotourism in Dazhou.

2.4.2. Insufficient Ecological Responsibility of Ecotourism Developers and Operators

The main purpose of tourism developers and operators is to obtain maximum economic profits. In the face of ecological responsibility and profits, most of them will kneel down at the foot of profits and develop eco-tourism projects that are not eco-friendly but profitable. It has always been a problem for tourism managers to raise the ecological responsibility of ecotourism developers and operators and balance the relationship between tourism development and profit maximization.

2.4.3. Industrial Transformation in the Era of "Dazhiyun"

"Dazhiyun" is the general term for a new generation of information technology, referring to big data, artificial intelligence, mobile internet and cloud computing. In the era of "Dazhiyun", all things are connected and the industry changes rapidly. The development of eco-tourism must be in line with the background of the times, and use "Dazhiyun" technology to do what visitors want to do.

3. Ecotourism Development Strategies in Dazhou

3.1. Enhance People's Ecological Awareness and Form a Good Atmosphere for Ecotourism Development

3.1.1. Energetically Developing the Economy and Strengthening the Material Foundation for People's Ecological Awareness

Maslow divides the demand into five levels, and points out that only when the low-level needs are met, the higher-level needs will have a stronger incentive effect [8]. In vast majority of eco-tourism development zones in Dazhou, the demand of people's basic necessities for food and clothing hasn't been completely met. In order to solve this problem, there is a risk of damaging the ecological environment for production. Therefore, we should vigorously develop the economy, raise the level of economic development to a higher level, free people from the worry of basic needs, and promote people's demand for eco-tourism devel-

opment.

3.1.2. Improving the Ecological Popularization and Education System with “Dazhiyun” Technology, and Laying Firm Cultural Foundation for People’s Ecological Awareness

Improve the national ecological education system. Firstly, we must stretch the time threshold of ecological education, starting ecological education from children’s pre-school stage through their primary, junior high, high school and university stages. Secondly, we must avoid homogeneous eco-education. We must teach students in accordance with their aptitude and teach them in due course, customizing the ecological education that can meet physical and psychological characteristics for students of different learning stages. In pre-school stage, ecological enlightenment need to be given, while in primary school stage, basic eco-knowledge are to be learnt. During the junior high and high school stages, permeated ecological education should be carried out, and comprehensive practical ecological education should be conducted with the integration of theory and practice during the university stage. Finally, a batch of highly qualified ecological teachers should be trained. The key to the national ecological education system is the teacher, whose ecological literacy has a direct impact on the effectiveness of ecological education. Therefore, it is necessary to implement the strategy of “going out and introducing”, sending teachers to participate in training and inviting ecological experts to give lectures. Scientific research should be promoted to improve the quality of teaching. We should encourage teachers to engage in scientific research on ecology and help them open their horizons and accumulate knowledge of ecological theory and practice.

Accelerate the integration of new and old media, and innovate the popularizing mode of ecological civilization. When using traditional media such as distributing leaflets, holding lectures, and pulling banners, it is even more important to promote online knowledge of ecological civilization with the help of “Weixin”, “Weibo” and online live broadcast platforms.

3.2. Breaking the Bottleneck of Talents in Ecotourism Development with the Policy of “Combination Boxing”

Ecotourism is the advanced stage of tourism development. The development of ecotourism needs multi-participation and multi-disciplinary cooperation. Talents are the key factors affecting the development of ecotourism. With the guidance of “combination boxing”, Dazhou should establish a comprehensive mechanism of attracting talents, retaining talents and using talents. By issuing “Daizhou High-level Talent Introduction Measures for Ecotourism Development”, we can introduce talents at different levels and provide them relevant fiscal incentives and life guarantees. Only in this way will it be possible to retain talents and provide intellectual support for ecotourism development in Dazhou.

Dazhou has two colleges, Sichuan University of Arts and Science and Dazhou Vocational and Technical College, and both universities have tourism management majors. Therefore, the Dazhou Tourism Administration should establish a

collaboration mechanism with the two universities, attracting excellent Tourism teachers and outstanding graduates to join in Dazhou's ecotourism development.

3.3. Formulating a Scientific and Feasible Master Plan for Ecotourism Development in Dazhou

3.3.1. Making Master Plan of Ecotourism Development in Dazhou under the Guidance of "Five Concepts"

By fully applying "Dazhiyun" technology to ecotourism development, Dazhou can establish ecotourism big data, create smart ecotourism and realize the "innovative" development of ecotourism. The development of ecotourism is a systematic project that requires multiple collaborations. Only by adhering to the concept of "coordination" can we unite all the forces that can be united and gather all the resources that can be gathered to form a joint force for the development of ecotourism. The ecological environment is a large system and the ecological environment between different regions maintains a dynamic balance through mutual interaction. In the process of ecotourism development, we should respect the natural laws of the ecosystem and guide the development of ecotourism with the concept of "openness, sharing, and greenness" to ensure the balance of regional eco-environment in Dazhou. Otherwise, we will lose the foundation of ecotourism development.

3.3.2. Setting up a Scientific and Reasonable Overall Planning Team for Ecotourism Development in Dazhou

A great team is the prerequisite for accomplishing organizational goals. The formation of a team is neither a simple patchwork of talents, nor pure introduction of an outside team. To establish a scientific team, we should pay attention to the following aspects. Firstly, a rational geo-structure. Team members should consist both local tourism management talents and introduced tourism experts. Local tourism management talents are well aware of the situation of Dazhou's ecotourism development, ensuring that the plan made is in accordance with the local condition, while introduced talents in tourism development can bring fresh blood to the team, help team members open their horizons and eliminate the limitations of planning by standing at a new height. Secondly, multi-disciplinary coordination. Ecotourism development is a comprehensive discipline that involves many disciplines and requires the collaboration of professionals in various fields. A reasonable team should be composed of tourism management talents with the knowledge of professional planning, aesthetic talented artists, literary talents creative in culture, historical talents who will tap into cultural heritage, and computer talents who can use the "Dazhiyun" technology. Thirdly, moderate age structure. The preparation of planning is not only an intellectual activity but also a physical work. The early-stage work of basic investigation is tiring, so it is suitable for young tourism professionals to complete it. The mid-term work of data analysis should be accomplished by middle-aged tourism talents with a stable mentality and certain working experience, while the lat-

er-stage literary work had better be summarized and refined by elderly tourism professionals with rich experience.

3.4. Developing Quality Ecotourism Products

3.4.1. Functional Positioning of Ecotourism in Dazhou

Referring to Lu Hongsheng's (2004) [9] research on the type of ecotourism and considering the specific conditions of Dazhou's tourism development, the study compares and analyzes the features of existing scenic spots in Dazhou. It finds that the ecotourism in Dazhou can be divided into 8 types, including river rafting ecotourism, geographic landscape ecotourism, rural ecotourism, modern agricultural ecotourism, historical cultural ecotourism, religious cultural ecotourism, red ecotourism and forest ecotourism. Considering the characteristics of tourism resources and regional characteristics of the 8 types of ecotourism, it is believed that they all have tourism functions and other functions, respectively, drifting expeditions, scientific research, rest, agricultural experience, scientific research, moralization, education, and rehabilitation.

3.4.2. Market Positioning of Ecotourism in Dazhou

According to the law of distance attenuation, the primary ecotourism source markets, around 200 kilometers' away from the center City Dazhou, are Bazhong, Guang'an, Wanzhou, Nanchong, Ankang, Chongqing and Chengdu. These cities are important sources of tourists for Dazhou due to easy access to transportation and low travel cost. Wuhan and Xi'an, two major provincial capital cities with a relatively high level of economic development, are ideal secondary source markets for Dazhou, and therefore, should be actively explored. Other cities in China and overseas countries are the three-level source markets for Dazhou's ecotourism, which should be actively pursued after the successful building of Dazhou eco-tourism brand.

3.4.3. Image Positioning of Ecotourism in Dazhou

Based on the analysis of the types, functional positioning and market positioning of ecotourism in Dazhou, it is found that eco-tourism in Dazhou has two major features. First, there are up to eight forest ecotourism scenic spots with large-scale clusters and broad development prospects. Second, its red ecotourism has a monopolistic competitiveness owing to the historical background of the Sichuan-Shaanxi Soviet Area and the reputation of Wanyuan Defending War. Based on these two characteristics, the image of Dazhou's eco-tourism is positioned as "a blessed land of 'red' and 'green', and a city good to mental and physical health".

3.4.4. Development of Quality Ecotourism Products

Through 5 years of construction, we strive to promote infrastructure, improve service facilities, build well-connected transportation and create a favorable ecological environment. We endeavor to establish two 5-A tourist attractions, four 4-A tourist attractions, one national wetland, one national ecotourism demon-

stration zone, two provincial tourism demonstration zones and two provincial tourism counties by 2020.

3.5. Innovating Marketing Strategies for Ecotourism in Dazhou

3.5.1. Mixed Marketing Model of New and Old Media

Traditional media can be used for ecotourism marketing, and meanwhile, the new media platform for ecotourism marketing can be actively promoted by embedding the two-dimensional code of the online website in traditional leaflets and propaganda boards, etc. Ecotourism activities can also be broadcasted online through Betta, 56 and 6 rooms, Panda TV and other platforms, or live broadcasters can be invited to expand the influence. Old and new media will ensure simultaneous online and offline interactions and create a good Internet ecotourism marketing environment.

3.5.2. Online Game Marketing Pattern

Carrying out online and offline cooperation with game developers by inviting them to come to Dazhou to frame and implanting the beautiful scenery of Dazhou into online games. Game players can get Dazhou travel coupons popping out after striking down the beast in the virtual Dazhou scenery. Besides coupons, game players will also have a better understanding of Dazhou's gorgeous view. While traveling in Dazhou, the people with tourism coupons will get online game coupons, which later can be used for online games again. This is a win-win cooperation for both game developers and Dazhou.

3.5.3. Social Networking Marketing Pattern

Ecotourism marketing agencies should apply for instant messaging tools such as Tencent QQ Official Account, WeChat Official Account, Momo, YY, Baidu HI, Fetion, Weibo, etc., and use administrative tools to obtain high-level access to software. Through the instant chat tools, the agencies can push ecotourism marketing information. In addition, the eco-tourism marketing section can be set up in major online forums, where the exquisite graphic, textual, and audio information of ecotourism can be uploaded to form a good ecotourism marketing atmosphere. Pop-out window marketing can be conducted with the help of frequently-used computer software such as Storm Video, 360 Anti-virus Software, Cool Music, etc. [10].

3.5.4. E-Commerce Marketing Pattern

E-commerce marketing can be carried out mainly from the following three aspects. Firstly, built marketing platform, establish a Dazhou eco-tourism marketing website, and achieve independent e-commerce marketing. Secondly, carry out e-commerce marketing through e-commerce tourism websites, such as cooperating with Ctrip, Qunar, Jiji.com, and Pig.com and sharing the marketing data of Dazhou. Thirdly, establish official flagship store of Dazhou ecotourism marketing on Jingdong, Taobao and other shopping websites to sell tickets and travel support services, and accept tourist complaints.

4. Conclusion

Vigorously developing Dazhou's eco-tourism is the implementation of "The Plan for the Revitalization and Development of the Old Revolutionary Base Areas in Sichuan and Shaanxi Provinces" and is an important starting point for the formation of the tourism landscape in Sichuan, Yunnan, Hubei and Shaanxi. Therefore, it has great strategic significances for the national ecotourism development. However, due to the constraints of natural, economic and social conditions, the ecotourism development in Dazhou still has a long way to go. It is urgently necessary for the central government to give preferential policies, the local government to increase investment, and the people to participate.

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