

Research on the Optimization of the Marketing Strategy for the Danxia Mountain Scenic Spot in Guangdong Province

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Abstract: Danxia Mountain scenic area is a famous world natural heritage site and national 5A tourist attraction in China. It is renowned for its unique Danxia landform and rich biodiversity, and it has high ecological, scientific research, and tourism value. In recent years, the upgrading of consumption, the promotion of personalized and in-depth tourism, and the wide application of digital technology in culture and tourism have presented many challenges to the current marketing strategy of scenic spots. Based on the 7P marketing mix theory, this paper systematically analyzes the marketing strategy of the Danxia Mountain scenic area in seven dimensions: product, price, channel, promotion, personnel, tangible display, and service process. The analysis reveals several issues, including a limited product selection and a significant tendency toward homogenization. There is insufficient diversity in online and offline marketing channels, a lack of emotional resonance and international vision in promotional content, an imperfect professional talent echelon, traditional and interactive tangible displays, and an unbalanced service process system. These issues make it difficult to fully meet the needs of different customer groups. Based on this analysis, and considering the characteristics of the scenic spot's resources and the tourism market's trends, the paper offers targeted optimization suggestions. These include innovating experience projects, expanding marketing channels, strengthening talent cultivation, enriching tangible displays, and improving the service system. The aim is to enhance the market competitiveness and tourist satisfaction of scenic spots, promote the integration of culture and tourism while protecting natural heritage, and provide a reference for optimizing the marketing strategies of similar natural heritage sites.

Keywords: Danxia mountain scenic spot; Marketing strategy; Tourist experience; Landscape resources

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1. Introduction

In recent years, as consumption has upgraded, tourists' demands have diversified ^[1]. The new format of cultural tourism has accelerated the transformation to high-quality development, meeting the market's personalized, in-depth consumption demands ^[2]. In 2024, China's tourism industry's local market grew strongly, and globalization

accelerated. Simultaneously, policies such as the “Domestic Tourism Promotion Plan (2023–2025)” promoted the high-quality development of the tourism industry ^[3]. According to the data, the number of counties with national A-level tourist attractions increased from 73% in 2012 to 93% in 2023, strongly supporting the local economy. In the first quarter of 2024, domestic tourist spending reached 1.52 trillion yuan, a 17% year-on-year increase, significantly affecting consumption. The number of people entering and exiting the country exceeded 141 million, a 117.8% year-on-year increase. Currently, sustainable tourism and digital transformation are the new directions in tourism development. AR/VR, big data, and artificial intelligence bring new opportunities for marketing scenic spots ^[4]. This paper focuses on the current situation and trends in the marketing strategy of the Danxia Mountain scenic area. It analyzes the root causes of the problem from multiple dimensions, explores breakthrough paths, and proposes feasible optimization countermeasures.

2. Introduction to the Danxia mountain scenic area

Located in Shaoguan City in Guangdong Province, Danxia Mountain is an area with a high concentration of Danxia landforms ^[5]. It is known as “China’s Red Stone Park” because it has the most typical development, the most complete types, and the most abundant shapes of Danxia landforms in the world ^[6]. As a World Natural Heritage Site and a World Geopark, the area’s core feature is its red sandstone conglomerate landforms, which are “as beautiful as Wudan and as bright as Mingxia.” The geological relics span hundreds of millions of years and fully document the formation and evolution of the Danxia landform, making them highly valuable for scientific research ^[7,8]. The area is rich in biological diversity and is home to many rare animals and plants. It is an important base for ecological protection and scientific research. Danxia Mountain also has a rich cultural and historical heritage ^[9]. It contains relics of the ancient Yue ancestors, ancient Shanzhai sites, and cliff stone carvings by literati from past dynasties. The natural and cultural landscapes complement each other. Shaoguan Danxia Mountain Tourism Investment and Management Co., Ltd. (a state-owned enterprise established in 2004 under the direct management of the Shaoguan Municipal People’s Government) is now in charge of operations and management. The company’s business scope covers natural landscapes, geological relics, humanities, history, and other resources. The company focuses on tourism, leisure, and science and technology education, and is committed to providing tourists with a high-quality experience. Currently, it has been awarded national 5A tourist attraction status and national ecotourism demonstration area status.

3. Marketing strategy status of the Danxia mountain scenic spot

3.1. Product and price strategy

The core products of the Danxia Mountain Scenic Spot are designed to meet diverse visiting needs, encompassing essential access and transportation services as well as characteristic experience items. These include entrance tickets, which serve as the primary access pass; the Jinjiang Gallery cruise and Xianglong Lake ferry, offering unique water-based perspectives to appreciate the landscape; interval transportation facilitating convenient movement between scenic areas; the Danxia cruise highlighting the mountain-water integration scenery; and the cableway project enabling effortless access to overlook panoramic views. The entrance ticket is priced at 100 yuan, with a 48-hour validity period that allows visitors to explore the scenic spot in depth without rush. To enhance accessibility and inclusivity, the scenic spot implements a tiered discount policy: full-time undergraduate students and younger individuals enjoy half-price tickets; families of active servicemen are eligible for preferential rates;

and the elderly aged 70 and above, active servicemen, ex-servicemen, journalists, and people with disabilities are entitled to free admission, reflecting both social care and efforts to expand its visitor base.

3.2. Channel and promotion strategy

Online channels release information through official websites, advertise on tourism platforms and social media, and cooperate with tourism bloggers and photographers for promotion. Offline, cooperation with tourism service providers, local farmers, and handicraft merchants will enrich the shopping experience for tourists. The full-price ticket will be reduced by 20% (80 yuan per person) during major holidays, such as May Day, National Day, and Spring Festival. During National Day, visitors can enter the park for free by wearing Hanfu (excluding additional items). Special groups, such as children under 6 and the elderly over 65, can receive free or discounted tickets. Dongguan citizens can receive free admission with valid identification and enjoy a 20% discount on business projects within the park. Additionally, photography contests, carnivals, and tours with thousands of cars and people are held irregularly.

3.3. Service and management strategy

The scenic spot has established a “Civil Air Defense + Technical Defense” supervision system and set up a comprehensive law enforcement brigade. This brigade conducts real-time inspections through the monitoring system. The scenic spot also guides indigenous people to participate in planning and construction, provides employment and training opportunities, and drives the development of surrounding homestay and farmhouse entertainment. The scenic spot cooperates with universities and scientific research institutions to carry out geological and biodiversity research. This forms an integrated model of production, study, and research, making it a model for the sustainable development of a world natural heritage site. Regarding smart tourism, big data scheduling, electronic access control, license plate recognition, and UAV patrol systems are used to optimize management. The construction of 46 kilometers of Yuedan Highway and seven comprehensive service centers promotes the integration of “mountain into city, mountain city.”

4. Problems with the Danxia mountain scenic spot’s marketing strategy

4.1. Product homogeneity and insufficient experiences

Danxia Mountain scenic area is a famous world natural heritage site and national 5A tourist attraction in China. It is renowned for its unique Danxia landform and rich biodiversity, and it has high ecological, scientific research, and tourism value. In recent years, the upgrading of consumption, the promotion of personalized and in-depth tourism, and the wide application of digital technology in culture and tourism have presented many challenges to the current marketing strategy of scenic spots. Based on the 7P marketing mix theory, this paper systematically analyzes the marketing strategy of the Danxia Mountain scenic area in seven dimensions: product, price, channel, promotion, personnel, tangible display, and service process. The analysis reveals several issues, including a limited product selection and a significant tendency toward homogenization. There is insufficient diversity in online and offline marketing channels, a lack of emotional resonance and international vision in promotional content, an imperfect professional talent echelon, traditional and interactive tangible displays, and an unbalanced service process system. These issues make it difficult to fully meet the needs of different customer groups. Based on this analysis, and considering the characteristics of the scenic spot’s resources and the tourism market’s trends, the paper offers targeted optimization suggestions. These include innovating experience projects, expanding marketing

channels, strengthening talent cultivation, enriching tangible displays, and improving the service system. The aim is to enhance the market competitiveness and tourist satisfaction of scenic spots, promote the integration of culture and tourism while protecting natural heritage, and provide a reference for optimizing the marketing strategies of similar natural heritage sites.

4.2. Low marketing channel and promotion efficiency

First, there are shortcomings in online channels. The official website's functions are basic, and updates are delayed. The WeChat official account's content lacks interest, and Dithering and Xiaohongshu mainly feature scenic materials. User-generated content is insufficient and lacks "memorable moments," and coverage is limited. Second, there is excessive reliance on traditional offline travel agencies, and the customer coverage of free and medium-to-high-end customized tours is insufficient. There are no electronic navigation or online queuing functions in the scenic area. Congestion frequently occurs in peak seasons, such as at Jiujiu TIAN TI Zhandao, which negatively impacts the experience. Third, the promotional positioning is vague and does not convey emotional value. The slogan, "Color is like Wudan, can be like Mingxia," only describes the landscape. It does not highlight the international image of "World Natural Heritage," and few foreign tourists visit. New media promotion mainly uses static content with weak interactivity. There is insufficient excavation of local stories, and the publicity lacks highlights.

4.3. Lack of talent and service system

First, most of the staff are local residents who lack professional quality and systematic training. They have problems such as a cold service attitude, low ticket-selling efficiency, and perfunctory explanations by the guides. The management team lacks professionals and relies on traditional experience. They have an insufficient grasp of tourism trends and weak adaptability. Second, there are limitations in tangible displays. The infrastructure is aging; some footpaths are damaged, and guardrails are loose. The number of rest areas and toilets is insufficient, and the sanitary conditions are poor. The exhibition hall mainly consists of static pictures and texts and lacks interactive devices. Third, the service process is not evenly covered. The tourist route is unreasonable. There is no shuttle bus from the gate to the ticket check-in gate, which is about two kilometers away. This is inconvenient for tourists who don't drive. The single entrance design leads to long wait times during peak season. Inconsistent management standards and incomplete information release affect the tourist experience.

5. Suggestions for optimizing the marketing strategy of the Danxia mountain scenic spot

5.1. Innovative products and experience projects

First, introduce the "low altitude + tourism" model. Cooperate with UAV enterprises to provide photography services and develop hot air balloon and helicopter tours to enhance the experience. Design cultural and creative plush toys based on the scenic spot's characteristics to meet consumers' aesthetic and social needs. Second, build campsites to extend tourists' stay time (in line with the 48-hour ticket validity), drive consumption of surrounding catering and accommodation services, and enrich the product system.

5.2. Expanding channels and upgrading promotion

First, optimize the functions of the online platform. Upgrade the official website and WeChat public account.

Add interactive content on Douyin and Xiaohongshu. Guide users to generate content. Create an IP matrix. Sell tickets and cultural and creative works simultaneously through live broadcast promotional activities. Second, expand offline cooperation. Reduce dependence on traditional travel agencies, and strengthen cooperation with medium- and high-end, customized travel agencies. Add electronic navigation and online queuing systems to ease congestion during peak seasons. Third, implement precise positioning and promotion. Highlight the international image of “World Natural Heritage” to attract overseas tourists. Excavate local stories to strengthen emotional resonance. Carry out themed activities in combination with the seasons, such as flower viewing in the spring, boating in the summer, climbing in the fall, and tea making in the winter, to increase appeal.

5.3. Improve talent and service quality

First, establish a regular training mechanism to improve employees’ business ability and adaptability. Simultaneously, train community residents to strengthen their service awareness. Attract professional, multifaceted talent, and optimize the management team structure. Second, enhance the tangible display. Create an exclusive cartoon image of the scenic spot with an animation team or collaborate with “Shiji Niangniang” to strengthen brand awareness. Add interactive facilities, such as ceramic art and bamboo weaving. Introduce AR technology to bring cultural relics to life. Establish a Danxia opera troupe to tell Danxia stories through ethnic minority cultural creations and create a distinctive cultural identity. Third, improve the service system. Clarify job responsibilities to reduce overlap or gaps. Establish an emergency response process and an employee incentive mechanism. Collect tourist feedback through questionnaires and social platforms. Make regular adjustments to standardize the catering and shopping environment and improve the overall experience.

6. Conclusion

Based on the 7P marketing mix theory, this paper systematically analyzes the current marketing strategy of the Danxia Mountain scenic spot and finds shortcomings in product structure, channel expansion, promotional transformation, talent development, physical display, and service processes. These shortcomings make it difficult for the scenic spot to adapt to the current tourism market’s diverse needs and digital trends. To address these issues, the paper proposes several optimization strategies, including innovative experience projects, expanding marketing channels, strengthening talent cultivation, enhancing tangible displays, and improving the service system. These strategies aim to help the scenic spot overcome the challenges of homogenization and enhance its market competitiveness. As a World Natural Heritage Site and a National 5A Scenic Spot, optimizing Danxia Mountain’s marketing strategy is important not only for its own sustainable development but also for the cultural and tourism integration and high-quality development of similar natural heritage sites. Through the implementation of these suggestions, Danxia Mountain is expected to balance resource protection and tourism development, meet tourists’ needs, build a unique brand advantage in the cultural and tourism market, and improve ecological and economic value.

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