

Accelerating the Development of Tourism Attractions with IP Strategy

-- Case Study: Wuzhizhou Island (Sanya, China)

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Abstract

In China, many tourism attractions are trying to integrate the value of IP into their marketing strategy. Rapid development of Wuzhizhou island(Sanya) these years is undoubtedly a successful case. From the perspective of IP-building, this essay aims to explore the IP-building process of Wuzhizhou island and to demonstrate innovations made by operating company in terms of products, service and marketing to facilitate IP strategy. In the end, some problems are pointed out by the author but related suggestions are also presented.

Keywords

Sport Island; KOL; Omni-channel Marketing.

1. Introduction

Cultural and tourism IP is an emerging concept in China's tourism industry in recent years. IP (Intellectual Property) originally refers to some intangible assets created by human intellect, but now the value of IP is used in tourism to boost innovation and creativity for tourism attractions.

In China, the concept of Tourism IP was first put forward by Hong Qinghua(2015) in his publication *Taking the IP, Commanding the World*. He regards IP as a business power guided by a specific consumption value, if applied in tourism, this kind power will transform into super tourism IP. Other Chinese scholars Wu Sheng(2016) and Wang Rui(2017) believe that super tourism IP is something iconic and highly recognizable that endows destinations with personality and vitality.

Creating IP image is important for destination branding and, to some extent, establish emotional connection between tourists and destinations (Marzano & Scott, 2009). With Millennials and Generation Z as major segments of today's tourism industry, attractions require more and more diversification and identity to attract consumers who look for unique and authentic travel experiences.

To find IP is to find their unique products and services which differentiate themselves from other players in the marketplace. For tourism attractions, every distinctive feature, such as culture, local story, natural resources and so on, can be the tourism IP. With local culture at its core, tourism IP tells interesting stories, spreads values and attracts a certain tourist group who recognize its identity.

Therefore, attaching the concept of IP to tourism destination will produce massive commercial value, upgrade tourism productions and facilitate integration of culture and tourism (Zhang & Kou, 2020)

Five-thousand-year history left China tons of historical heritages and abundant natural resource makes the number of China's tourism destinations even bigger. However, in every type of attractions, numerous similar destinations make it hard for travelers to make choices.

Without obvious features, homogeneous tourism attractions are not able to meet personalized demands of tourists. Brand of hotels create various IP images that gives customers deep impression of what features they have and what kind of services they provide, also left a distinct image that differentiate from other brands. As for places of interest, IP strategy is also an essential way to create the perception of unique products and services and thus influences consumers' purchasing decisions.

2. IP Strategy in the Development of Wuzhizhou Island

In China, many tourism attractions are trying to integrate the value of IP into their marketing strategy. Wuzhizhou island(Sanya) is one of these tourism attractions that made the best use of IP strategy.

Wuzhizhou Coral Island (Sanya), 30km away from Sanya downtown, is home to more than 2,000 varieties of plants. In the sea water, there are sea cucumbers, sea chestnuts, lobsters and many colorful tropical fishes. Besides, Wuzhizhou island has rich intact coral resources and its southern water area is teeming with well-preserved coral reefs. The surrounding water area is quite clear and clean, the visibility under water reaches 6-27 meters. No rocks and cobbles makes it more suitable for diving.

Based on these irreplaceable advantages for diving, marketers decided to establish a special island famous for its diving and other aquatic sports. In 2001, Wuzhizhou Island first opened to the public. The IP image of diving in 2017 attracted 3million tourists to this island, creating in total 1.2 billion RMB income for Sanya city. In 2019, Wuzhizhou island ranked the second most popular water activity destination of China.

Nowadays, there are more than 30 aquatic activities and diving-related activities in Wuzhizhou island. Besides something for diving professionals, most of products in this island are leisure diving for amateurs. Tourists can enjoy many diving activities, such as Luxury diving around the island, fun diving, advanced diving, coral reef diving, underwater walking and sunshine diving are best received, which is easy for unprofessional divers to have a shot.

The goal of establishing an IP of sport island is to become the leading water entertainment island in China. Under this guidance, tourism products and services on this island should be continuously upgraded, more marketing strategies and better advertising results are needed, said vice president of Wuzhizhou island tourism attraction (2021).

Wuzhizhou island aims to not only meet consumers' demand, but also create more fantastic memories to them. So, in terms of tourism products, it provides visitors diverse, elaborate and professional travel activities from four dimensions--in sky, on land, on the water, under the water. Helicopter-sightseeing, parasailing, paragliding are available attractions in sky and horse-riding, bus-sightseeing are for land. In addition, tourists have chances to try surfing, water scooter, flyboard Flying, dolphin-shaped submarine on the water and scuba diving, sea photograph under the water.

Wuzhizhou island is the first tourism attraction to put surfing, submarine, jet boat, flyboard flying into commercial use and these large-scale and systematic water services brought Wuzhizhou Island more visitors than any other sports island in China.

3. Innovations in Service and Products for IP Strategy

Although tourists come to this island for same sport island IP, their demands vary from person to person. Courageous youngsters look for fresh and exciting experience, while gentle and introverted people prefer relaxing and peaceful activities. Moreover, gender and age also influence people's purchasing behaviors. Under this circumstances, Wuzhizhou island attaches

variable services and multiple products to its IP strategy, which make visitors realize how diverse and professional water sports can be.

This island offers multiple water entertainment packages for different segments, such as Extreme-Player package in 2016 and Jet-Boat-Player package in 2019. These visiting packages include all tourism entrance tickets, boat tickets, a lunch buffet, fast pass, shuttle service, tour guide and different water activities. Extreme-Player package is designed for young consumers and Jet-Boat-Player package is for visitors with higher budget. Diving Blind Box, a brand-new product in 2021, contains Luxury diving, advanced diving, underwater walking. Every activity can be selected through drawing lots, which produces lots of fun and surprise to participants.

In terms of services, Wuzhizhou island provides customized butler services for various segments. For example, consumers of Jet-Boat-Player package will have tailor-making products and seamlessly thoughtful services, including exclusive tour guide, exclusive shuttle service and personalized water activities. Extreme-Player package buyers have unlimited chance to experience 17 types of water extreme sport within one day, besides, professional tour guide, free travel-plan-making service and seamless reception services definitely give consumers a pleasant journey.

In terms of operation mode, Wuzhizhou island imported professional resources and started club management system. The membership of club-style management creates connections between the tourism attraction and travelers, thus it effectively enhances customer loyalty. With this management mode, Wuzhizhou island highlights its IP image of sport island and integrate customized service into IP strategy to create professional diving experience for customers.

4. Marketing Innovations for IP Strategy

In addition to innovation of service and products, the creative marketing is also indispensable for IP production. In this digital era, a successful IP can boost awareness of its brand and influence consumers' decision-making process. But a single IP image for Wuzhizhou island is not enough, thus more IPs according to market demands are needed. In this aspect, it takes many actions.

In the past year, many events were held on this island, such as music theme party, electronic music festival, beauty pageant, family game contest, parkour contest, water scooter contest, new-year-celebrating activities and other creative events. These events are efforts made by Wuzhizhou island to add new elements to simplex form of water sports. Integration of water sports and other industrial resources and technology is a big breakthrough that enable us to reach every niche demographic group. This original integration produces a new form of fashionable, energetic, technological diving to the travelers.

As the LARP (live action role-playing) game is increasingly popular in China, Wuzhizhou island is expected to follow the trend and apply LARP game into island activities, hoping this multi-sensory game can trigger travelers' consumption desire on this island.

As for advertising, omnichannel marketing is used to enable customers gain information and make purchase wherever they are. In particular, omnichannel removes the boundaries between different sales and marketing channels to create a unified, integrated whole. The distinctions between channels--websites, social medias, massage apps, short-video platforms--disappear as a single IP image and perceived value emerges. China's popular social medias--TikTok, Kuaishou short-video and Little Red Book (Xiao hongshu) are also marketing tools for Wuzhizhou island to create the IP of entertainment and social island.

What's more, Wuzhizhou island also applies KOC, KOL, KOS marketing. In recent China, online influencers give more important and relevant suggestions to consumers than mass media. As

KOLs (Key Opinion Leaders) are often regarded as trustworthy and authentic experts on certain topics, sport or travel KOL will certainly help Wuzhizhou island target ideal audiences. In this e-commerce period, the value consumer opinion in marketing is more important. KOSs (Key Opinion Spreaders) and KOCs (Key Opinion Consumers) are almost entirely involved in product reviews on social media. Because their authentic and reliable content is more trusted by consumers, so they are the key to consumers' purchase decisions.

5. Weaknesses and Suggestions for Wuzhizhou Island's IP Strategy

IP strategy of Wuzhizhou island and its multi-channel marketing and spreading is generally successful. In 2017, Wuzhizhou island received the award of "Annual Best IP Tourism Attraction" and in 2021, it was awarded as one of the most influential AAAA tourism attractions in China.

But IP strategy of Wuzhizhou island still miss some key points. Firstly, although it attracted tons of diving lovers every year, the intensive and extreme water sports are impossible for the elderly and children to get involved. It's joyful to see that operating team set up many entertainment facilities for children on the island, but leisure choice for the elderly is still limited. Besides, more soft and relaxing attractions should be designed for people at different ages. Second, tourism IP without any value of local culture may not last long. The process of exploring and creating a tourism IP should be supported by local history and culture, including historic story, local eating habits, literature culture and so on. Located in the southern Hainan province, Wuzhizhou island has many ethnic minorities, whose ethnic history and cultures are definitely distinctive features for this destination.

Water activities and scenery sightseeing can't spread any unique cultural value, so it's hard for visitors to appreciate diverse culture. It is suggested that Wuzhizhou island hold more ethnic-related events to enhance travelers' cultural experience and increase the number of repeat visitors.

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