

2014

ISSN : 0974 - 7435

Volume 10 Issue 12

BioTechnology

An Indian Journal

FULL PAPER

BTAIJ, 10(12), 2014 [5808-5813]

Development strategies of Kaifeng city's cultural tourism in the process of Zheng-Bian integration

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ABSTRACT

The acceleration of the process of Zheng-Bian integration lays the foundation for the integration of cultural tourism of the two cities. However, the local government of Kaifeng is troubled with the question of how to develop its cultural tourism in this process. Based on real observations and investigations on spot, this paper puts forward the strategic choices of Kaifeng City's cultural tourism from the perspectives of the merging development and the divergence development between Zhengzhou City's and Kaifeng City's cultural tourism. These development strategies resolve the location problem of Kaifeng City's cultural tourism in the process of Zheng-Bian integration and point the way to develop Kaifeng City's cultural tourism. Differentiated from those studies on inter-country integration and intra-city integration, this paper focuses on intercity integration, which puts forward such new ideas as cultural tourism market merging between cities, integration of cultural resources, innovation and upgrading of cultural tourism products.

KEYWORDS

Zheng-Bian integration; Cultural tourism; Merging; Divergence.



INTRODUCTION

The concept of “Zheng-Bian Integration” was put forward in 2005 and the subsequent opening of intercity bus line between Zhenzhou City (abbreviated by Zheng) and Kaifeng City (abbreviated by Bian) ignited the flame of integration. Nevertheless, afterwards, the progress of Zheng-Bian Integration slowed down or was even cooled down, and the concept was occasionally mentioned by the media. The Economic District of Central Plains was approved by the State Council in 2011 and Zheng-Bian Integration became a hot topic again as the administrative barrier was broken up by the construction of the Zheng-Bian New Region and the two cities were being held together by the belt economic embody. In 2012, the essential step was made in aspects of Zheng-Bian financial integration and Zheng-Bian telecommunication integration under the coordination of the development and reform commission of Henan province, Zhengzhou’s development and reform commission and Kaifeng’s development and reform commission. However, those can only be regarded as a prelude to Zheng-Bian Integration. The integration needs to be proceeded in a much broader scope. The integration of cultural tourism is just ready.

The study of integration has a long history, but the majority of the previous researches put emphasis on the integration between nations. Levine and Levine (1978) maintain that it was the government that should formulate relevant programme in urban integration to improve social circumstances and institution allocation^[1]. With the cases of Italian urban system, Dematteis (1997) shows that it is not necessary to separate city and region network in the process of globalization, for cities have certain layering^[2]. Severino (2003) hold that compared with the EU, the eastern Asian integration is at the primary stage because the eastern Asian countries are sensitive to their sovereignty and there exist big disparity among them^[3]. Longhi and Musolesi (2007) point out that there is complex temporal dynamics in the process of economic integration^[4]. The convergence process coexists with the process of divergence in EU countries. Kuran and Sandholm (2008) discuss the cultural integration of different societies. They held that cultural integration is under the influence of behavior adaptations and preference changes^[5]. According to Erll (2010), in the long course of history different groups would from their own cultural memory which affects the negotiation of economic problems and then be used as a “soft factor”^[6]. The cultural memory can either facilitate the process of regional integration or stem it. By comparing the mode of integration between the EU and the east Asia, Hongyu Wang (2013) holds that the eastern Asian countries promoted the regional cooperation to a further degree under the control of the state and the government, the core states are fighting for leadership, and the eastern Asian government network is too weak to control the progress of the regional cooperation^[7].

This paper discusses the integration and divergence strategy of the cultural tourism in Kaifeng based on observation and investigation.

THE INTEGRATION STRATEGY OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN KAIFENG

The merging of cultural tourism market

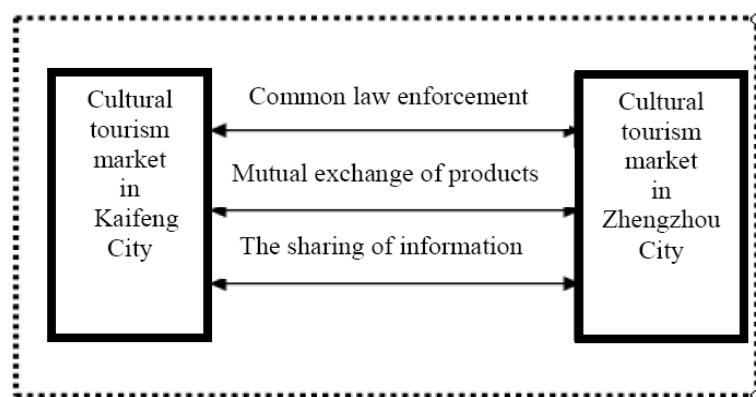


Figure 1 : The integration of cultural tourism market

With the progress of Zheng-Bian Integration, we should regard the two cities as a unitary cultural tourism market as shown in Figure 1. We should have foresight in the exploitation of tourism products, the design of tourism route and the advertising of scenic spots and take concerted measures. It is considered necessary that we coordinate with the relevant departments in Zhengzhou to reduce various sorts of barriers in the process of the flux of cultural tourism products. In this way, the cultural tourism products can flow with no barrier and the two cities have access to them. Law enforcement sectors should be from by the two cities to fight against and expose the illegal activities and uncivilized behaviors in the cultural tourism market so as to create a harmonious, safe shopping environment of high quality. The interaction between the cultural tourism markets of the two cities should be seen as chess playing. They should communicate more in making policies to avoid the mutual conflict in policies and to realize the synchronization and coordination in the administration of cultural tourism markets through mutual integration and forgiveness. It is also advisable that the two parties strengthen their cooperation in the exploitation of cultural products on the basis of their original advantages. Some capable enterprises can dig, sort and develop the new products by common exploitation, innovation and creative design. We should also facilitate information flux and sharing to achieve the win-win market in Zheng-Bian Integration.

The integration of cultural resources

There exists a big space between Zhengzhou and Kaifeng since the two cities are neighboring in location, share the similar dialects and cultural traditions. The cultural resources are not confined to the material resources but can be extended to be inclusive of any elements relevant to the cultural tourism. So, cultural resources are composed of material cultural resources such as heritage relics, former residences of celebrities, intangible cultural resources such as anecdote and legends and cultural human resources such as culture inheritors and practitioners, the latter two of which constitute the main part of cultural resources. The cultural resources in Zhengzhou and Kaifeng are complementary. In Kaifeng, the Song culture is well-known while in Zhengzhou, the ceremony of worshiping Yang and Huang emperors, the Shaolin temple and Kang Baiwan mansion are very famous. However, the cultural resources at both sides are developing of its own. It is imperative that they explore ways to develop together like Figure 2. For example, the cultural tourism enterprises, cultural producing enterprises can cooperate and even non-cultural enterprises alike can participate in the process of the integration of cultural resources. The big non-cultural enterprises can make use of their own advantages in operation, technique and management to transform cultural resources into cultural products, or they may do the second exploitation or in-depth exploitation to cultural resources to lengthen the value chain of cultural resources. Since there are many universities in the two cities, they can cooperate to raise more talents in cultural industries, the talents in the production, design and operation concerning cultural products that has a large demand and enjoy much public praise in particular. The cooperation between universities and between universities and enterprises will have bigger space and be of great importance to the cultural inheritance and development of cultural enterprises and industries.

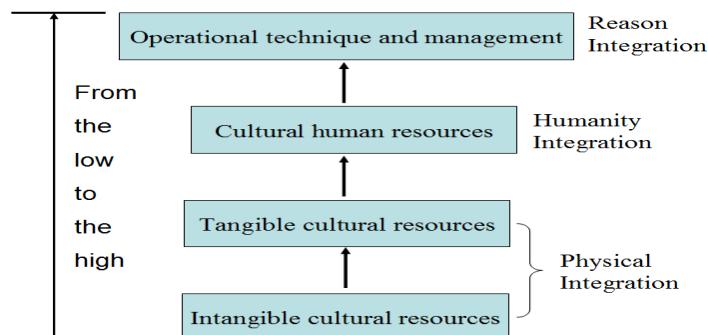


Figure 2 : The integration of cultural resources

Cooperation between exploitation of tourism resources

The tourism enterprises between Zhengzhou and Kaifeng, including hotels, travel agents, tourism transportation enterprises and scenic spots should cooperate to open travel routes and realize the join-up between receptions to tourist groups. The scenic spots can take advantage of their strong points to develop together. The new vacation system initiated in 2008 boosts the short-distance guests during some short holidays. For example, the scenic spots at both sides can attract more tourists by using preferential price of season tickets or they can share resources of scenic spots of contrasting characteristics. A good example is set by Kaifeng to sell its annual ticket to residents in both cities^[8]. As holidays are shortened, the short-time holiday tourism will become normal, which provides a big space for the rural tourism. Both sides should exploit a host of rural areas of characteristics to supply room to the urban tourism. The two cities can consider developing tourism along the Yangtze River. Emphasis should also be put on the exploitation of the tourism souvenirs and cultural tourism products. At the present, there are some cultural products like Bian embroidery and palace porcelain but many cultural resources are yet to be transformed. In future, importance should be attached to digging characters, legends and stories from which movies, TV programs, animation and cartoons and game products can be derived. At the same time, cultural tourism should work together with the food enterprises and textile clothing industry to explore the development of cultural derivative products. Besides, they can open cross-city travel groups to achieve the integration between tourism and operation and attract more tourists making use of the advantageous location of Zhengzhou which displays great mobility. The travel groups can be associated by assets and contracts or loose enterprise network^[9].

Common promotion of tourism advertising

The integrated Zheng-Bian tourism should be established on a uniform platform, we should create the image of "Zheng-Bian tourism" and the concept of the integration of Zhengzhou and Kaifeng under the circumstances of combined development. By way of the advertisement of TV, Broadcasting, newspaper and internet, we should promote publicity and raise awareness. For example, we can open the Zheng-Bian tourism website to help change the idea of isolating the two cities. The government should facilitate the synchronization of the advertising of the two cities by dint of media, explore a plan to share the expenses of advertising and promote the cooperation among TV stations and broadcasting stations to achieve the prejudice-free broadcasting of tourism information and put the tourism resources of the two cities on a par. The cultural tourism enterprises can cooperate to design a common advertising plan and agree upon a plan of sharing advertising fee.

THE DIVERGENCE STRATEGIES OF KAIFENG'S CULTURAL TOURISM

Give more prominence to the Song culture and promote the different division of labor among scenic spots

Kaifeng is known as "half Song quality, half water". The Song culture plays a leading role in the cultural tourism of Kaifeng. At the present, the image of the old city region is to be improved and the streets are to be cleaned. At an opportune moment, the former residents in the tourism core areas can be evacuated and the land should be reorganized and used. The scenic spot should exploit the Song culture, enrich the contents scenic spots and create new elements and programs to elongate the stay of the tourists. They should take full advantage of the modern technology to create stage and performance effect and encourage the participation of tourists by way of participating and experiencing programs. The scenic spots should divide their labor properly instead of imitating one another to provide different experiences to the tourist by displaying the theme, presentation, contents, units, sub-regions and structures of their characteristics. The different division among scenic regions is shown by TABLE 1.

TABLE 1 : Different division among scenic regions

Representative culture	The division among scenic regions
The palace culture	The Dragon pavilion
The religion culture	The Great Xiangguo Temple, Taoist Temple of Lasting Celebrations, the Mosque, the Iron pagoda, Po pagoda
The loyalty culture	Yang's Residence, Memorial Temple to Yue Fei
The culture of state culture	The Prefecture of Kaifeng
The marketplace culture	Qing Ming Riverside Park, the night market, the Miniature Song City
The sacrifice culture	Baogong Temple, Liu Shaoqi's Memorial Hall
The revolution culture	Jiao Yulu's Memorial Hall, the Former Residence of Liu Qingxia
The water culture	The Dragon pavilion lake, Baogong lake, Bian River, the Western Bian lake
The block culture	The Imperial Street, the North Bookstore Street, the Drum tower, Fan Tower

Advance the advertising, improve the eating environment and attract the tourists with catering of characteristics

There are many snacks of characteristics in Kaifeng such as Chicken made by metal bucket, red-skinned duck, peanut paste, Baogong beans, bean curds dried from Zhu Xianzhen town, claviform bean curd from Chenliu town, Lankao fermented bean curd and Weichuan bean curd. The night market in Kaifeng is also well-known and attracts tourists from all over the country. The development of catering advances to a certain degree the development of cultural tourism, which is rare in many tourism cities. But the environment of many restaurants, including some old restaurants is yet to be improved, especially in hygiene and service.

The department of health should also strengthen the regulation and inspection to create an orderly, clean eating environment. The restaurants themselves should raise their awareness of hygiene to make sure that the tourists eat healthy and clean food happily. It is also important to dig the traditional cultures and transform them into catering products of characteristics. As a result, the tourist will not only enjoy the delicious food themselves but only bring them home to share with their family members and friends, which is as a matter of fact a free advertising of the food. Therefore, the government and the restaurants alike should attach great importance to the development of catering with characteristics.

Guide the industry order and accelerate the upgrading and innovation of Bian embroidery, porcelain and pictures printed from an engraved or etched plate

The cultural tourism products: Bian embroidery, porcelain and pictures printed from an engraved or etched plate are peculiar to Kaifeng and are an important source of attraction to tourists. The disorderly competition inner conflicts in industries caused loss to the traditional industries and inhibit their development. Every tourist destination tries to develop its own tourism products. So, the original industries should conform to the new trend and strengthen the exploitation of products to innovate courageously concerning projects, markets, forms, occasions, presentation and contents. Some small scale enterprises should combine when occasions arises to increase their competitiveness. These cultural products are capable of distinguishing between Kaifeng and Zhengzhou. It is a must to deter the overflow and low quality of these products. What they should do is to raise their awareness of developing high-quality products, organize commissions and establish standards to develop orderly and to increase their competitiveness under the guidance of government and industry associations.

Train cultural talents of characteristics and increase the support of performance talents to enrich the cultural recreational activities of Kaifeng

It is beyond dispute that the cultural tourism in Kaifeng is short of talents. The local government can cooperate with the universities such as Henan university, the Yellow River Institute of water conservancy and hydroelectric power, Kaifeng University and Kaifeng's Cultural and Arts Vocational College and some polytechnic schools in aspects of specialties establishment, talent cultivation, curriculum arrangement and short-term training and strive to cultivate more cultural talents, talents

associated closely with the local cultural tourism in particular during the twelfth's five period to ensure the sustainable development of Kaifeng's cultural tourism. Increase the support of the performance talents or introduce performance groups to enterprises to create new programs with the support of enterprises to increase the attraction of performance in cultural tourism. The training of cultural talents and the innovation of cultural programs can enrich the cultural recreational activities of Kaifeng to delight the tourists and add glamour to Kaifeng.

CONCLUSIONS

Cultural tourism plays an important role in the process of Zheng-Bian integration. However, it does not mean the tourism convergence between Zhengzhou and Kaifeng. On the contrary, since they are neighboring, the two cities should develop complementary cultural tourism of their own characteristics and having different division of labor to avoid the competition for tourists. Therefore, the development strategy of Kaifeng city should include integration strategy and divergence strategy.

Concerning the integration strategy, this paper put forward four aspects: the integration of cultural tourism market, the integration of cultural resources, the cooperation of tourism exploitation and the common promotion of tourism advertising.

As regards the divergence strategy, this paper put forward four aspects which are: give more prominence to the Song culture and promote the different division of labor among scenic spots, give more publicity, improve the dining environment and attract tourists by catering of characteristics, guide the industry order, accelerate the industry innovation and upgrading of Bian embroidery, the palace porcelain, and pictures printed from an engraved or etched plate, and attach importance to the training of talents of characteristics, strengthen the support of performance talents to enrich the cultural recreational activities of Kaifeng. Whatever strategies to take, we should on the one hand, grasp the opportunities brought about by Zheng-Bian integration to Kaifeng, and on the other hand, avoid the reduction of competitiveness caused by homogeneous competition.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is indebted to the grant of the National Social Science Project "the Mechanism and Countermeasures of the Development Cultural Creativity Industry from the regional Perspective"(12BJL034), Henan Technology Department Soft Science research project "the Study of Aggregation of Cultural Creativity Industry in Henan Province"(132400410613) and the Philosophy and Social Science planning Project in Henan Province "the Study of Strengthening the Vitality of Henan's Cultural Creativity"(2013BJJ020).

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