

Development Strategy of the Tourism Resort around Taihu Lake based on the Theory of Co-opetition in Tourist Areas

Min Ding

School of Business Administration, Nanjing University of Finance and Economics, Nanjing, 210046, China

Abstract

Taihu Lake is located in the center of the Yangtze River Delta. The area around Taihu Lake has developed economy, a large population, superior location and convenient transportation, and has superior conditions for developing leisure and holiday tourism. Based on the theory of tourism destination competition and cooperation, this paper analyzes the competition situation among tourist resorts around Taihu Lake. There are eight high-grade tourist resorts around Taihu Lake, but the homogenization competition is serious and the cooperation is still in the initial stage. This paper clearly puts forward that the international leisure and holiday tourist area around Taihu Lake should be established from the national strategic height and become a world-class tourist destination, and further puts forward specific countermeasures such as formulating unified planning, creating a rich leisure and holiday product system and developing joint marketing.

Keywords

Competition; Cooperation; Holiday Tourism; Tourist Resort Around Taihu Lake.

1. Literature Review

There must be competition among many tourist destinations in the same region. Since 1960s, foreign scholars have started related research, and the main research methods are gravity model, probability travel model and price demand cross elasticity analysis[1]. Among domestic researchers, Zhang Lingyun (1989) introduced the research results of American scholar William B.Kurtz on the competitive relationship between five large reservoirs located in Arizona by using the cross elasticity of price and demand [2]. Bao Jigang et al. (1991), taking Maoming as an example, applied gravity model to study the spatial competition of coastal beach tourism development [3]. Bao Jigang and Peng Hua (1994) took three famous mountains in southern Anhui as examples to study the non-substitutable competitive relationship among famous mountain tourist destinations [1].

Although the competitive relationship between tourist destinations is universal and inevitable, it is also possible to carry out cooperation, grow bigger and stronger through cooperation, and compete on the premise of cooperation. Guo Kang (1995) proposed that Beijing, Tianjin, Shanxi, Liaoning, Inner Mongolia, Henan and Shandong should be combined to establish a comprehensive tourism spatial coordination system with Beijing as the core[4]; Bao Jigang et al. (1999) made an empirical study on the cooperative development of tourism between Macao and Zhuhai[5]; Wang Tao (2000) put forward the idea of establishing a regional tourism network based on ancient capital tourism by comparing and analyzing the comparative advantages of competition and cooperation among Luoyang, Zhengzhou, Kaifeng and Xi 'an [6]; Xue Ying (2001) analyzed the background of regional tourism cooperation and the practical problems existing in tourism cooperation[7]; Tao Wei (2002) discussed the "competition-combination" mode of regional tourism development by taking three towns in southern Jiangsu

as an example [8]; Yin Yimei (2003) tried to construct an analysis model of tourism space competition and cooperation [9]; Zhou Hui (2005), through the analysis of the evolution process of tourist destinations, thinks that competition and cooperation show a mixed and interlaced relationship in the development process of tourist destinations [10]; Zhu Taoxing (2006) and others put forward the idea of spatial cooperation of ancient villages in Huizhou based on differences [11]; Zheng Yaoxing (2008), taking four islands in Fujian Province as examples, put forward feasible strategies for regional cooperation of island-type tourist destinations by comparing and analyzing their spatial competitive advantages [12]; Xu Guifeng (2013) and others took the Tulou in Yongding and Nanjing, Fujian as examples to study the competitive relationship of brand-sharing tourist destinations [13].

The area around Taihu Lake has always been a hot spot in the research of regional tourism cooperation. Zhang Weibing (1997) put forward the idea of cooperative development of the tourism circle around Taihu Lake [14]; Huang Zhenfang et al. (1999) analyzed the three advantages of the joint development of tourism around Taihu Lake in Jiangsu Province, and put forward the main measures for the joint development of tourism around Taihu Lake [15]; Yu Xuecai (2007) thought that the tourism circle around Taihu Lake should strengthen regional cooperation, break through the restrictions of administrative divisions and share the tourist market, and put forward the strategic goal of building the region around Taihu Lake into an internationally famous tourist destination [16]; Liao Qin et al. (2012) demonstrated the necessity and feasibility of implementing the competition and cooperation mode in the area around Taihu Lake in Jiangsu Province, and put forward the tourism development strategy in the area around Taihu Lake in Jiangsu Province [17]; Li Songbai (2014) analyzed the tourism competitiveness of four cities around Taihu Lake, Suzhou, Wuxi, Changzhou and Huzhou, and put forward some countermeasures to promote tourism cooperation around Taihu Lake [18].

2. Overview of the Research Area

Taihu Lake is located in the south of the Yangtze River Delta, the central area of the Shanghai-Nanjing-Hangzhou Golden Triangle, with Suzhou in the east, Wuxi in the north, Yixing in the west and Huzhou in the south. Taihu Lake is one of the five largest freshwater lakes in China, with a water area of about 2,338 square kilometers and a total length of 393 kilometers. The southwest lakeshore is smooth and circular, and the northeast lakeshore is tortuous, with many islands, peninsulas, bays and headlands. The west and southwest of Taihu Lake are low mountains and hills, while the east is dominated by plains and water networks, which is a typical water town in the south of the Yangtze River.

Around Taihu Lake refers to all the waters and surrounding areas of Taihu Lake, and its scope can be large or small. In the geographical sense, the Taihu Lake Basin has a wide range, bounded by Tianmu Mountain and Maoshan Mountain in the west, the Yangtze River in the north, the East China Sea in the east and Hangzhou Bay in the south, with a total area of 36,900 square kilometers. Its administrative divisions include most of southern Jiangsu Province, Huzhou City in Zhejiang Province, a part of Jiaxing City and Hangzhou City, and most of Shanghai City.

At present, there is no uniform standard for the definition of the tourist area around Taihu Lake in the tourism academic circles. In a narrow sense, the tourist area around Taihu Lake only refers to scenic spots within a few kilometers of Taihu Lake and its surrounding islands, peninsulas and its coastline. In a broad sense, the tourist area around Taihu Lake includes the whole area of Taihu Lake and its surrounding administrative areas. According to the researchers' emphasis, some of them only involve Suzhou, Wuxi and Changzhou in Jiangsu Province, and some of them also include Huzhou in Zhejiang Province.

In the broad tourism area around Taihu Lake, there are various types of tourism resources and numerous scenic spots, but the distribution is extremely uneven, and regional tourism

cooperation is still in the conceptual stage. In the narrow sense, the tourist area around Taihu Lake has three national-level tourist resorts and five provincial-level tourist resorts in addition to the national scenic spots around Taihu Lake, and has formed a tourist area featuring leisure and vacation. That is to say, this paper takes eight tourist resorts around Taihu Lake as the research objects, analyzes their competitive situation, and puts forward corresponding competitive cooperation strategies.

3. Analysis of the Competitive Situation of Tourist Resorts Around Taihu Lake

3.1. Development Course of Tourist Resort Around Taihu Lake

On August 17, 1992, the State Council issued the Notice of the State Council on Issues Related to the Trial Operation of National Tourist Resorts, and decided to pilot the National Tourist Resorts in places where conditions are ripe. In October of the same year, the State Council approved 11 pilot national tourist resorts, including Taihu Lake in Jiangsu, Jinshitan in Dalian, Shilaoren in Qingdao, Yalong Bay in Sanya and Yintan in Beihai. Among them, Taihu Lake in Jiangsu is divided into two holiday centers, Xukou in Suzhou and Mashan in Wuxi. In 1993, it was divided into two independent tourist resorts, namely Suzhou Taihu National Tourist Resort and Wuxi Taihu National Tourist Resort. Since then, a large number of provincial and municipal tourist resorts have been built in various provinces and cities, and five provincial tourist resorts have been built around Taihu Lake.

In 2015, under the leadership of the National Tourism Administration, a new round of evaluation and construction of national tourist resorts was started. As of May 2019, 30 national tourist resorts were reviewed and approved in three batches, and Huzhou Taihu Tourist Resort was among them. Comparing the list of 12 national tourist resorts published in 1992 with the list of 30 national tourist resorts published since 2015, there is only one duplicate in Yalong Bay, Sanya. So up to now, there are 41 national tourist resorts in China, and there are 3 around Taihu Lake, which is the most concentrated area of national tourist resorts. In addition, there are five provincial-level tourist resorts, and there are eight high-level tourist resorts around Taihu Lake, all of which are close to Taihu Lake and rely on Taihu Lake or lakeside hills to carry out leisure and holiday activities. See Table 1 for details.

In addition to the above eight tourist resorts, there are a few provincial tourist resorts, such as Yixing Yangxian National Tourist Resort, Wuxi Yangshan Ecological Leisure Tourist Resort, nanxun town Tourist Resort, Xing Wu Xisai Mountain Tourist Resort, Wuzhen-Shimen Tourist Resort, Jiaying Canal Culture, etc., which can't directly rely on Taihu Lake to carry out tourism activities, so they are not included in the scope of this study.

3.2. The Distribution is Relatively Concentrated, and Provincial Tourist Resorts are Vulnerable to Shielding

Although the coastline of Taihu Lake is nearly 400 kilometers long, not all coastlines are suitable for building tourist resorts. The location of tourist resorts is usually preferred in larger islands, peninsulas or hilly areas along the lake, so the distribution of tourist resorts around Taihu Lake is relatively concentrated in three areas. There are three places in the east of Taihu Lake, namely Suzhou Taihu National Tourism Resort, Suzhou West Ecotourism Resort and Wujiang East Taihu Ecotourism Resort. There are also three places in the north of Taihu Lake, namely Wuxi Taihu National Tourist Resort, Wuxi Shanshui City Tourist Resort and Changzhou Wujin Taihu Bay Tourist Resort. There are two places in the southwest of Taihu Lake, namely Huzhou Taihu Lake Tourist Resort and Changxing Taihu Lake Tuying Tourist Resort.

This relatively concentrated geographical distribution makes the competition between neighboring tourist resorts very fierce. Especially the eco-tourism resort in the west of Suzhou

and Taihu Lake National Resort in Suzhou, Taihu Lake Bay Resort in Wujin and Taihu Lake National Resort in Wuxi, Taihu Lake Tuiyong Resort in Changxing and Taihu Lake Tourist Resort in Huzhou, all of which are provincial-level tourist resorts adjacent to national-level tourist resorts. Usually, tourists give priority to high-grade national resorts, while the neighboring provincial resorts with lower grades are often blocked.

3.3. The Homogenization Competition is Serious

Compared with the traditional sightseeing scenic spots, tourist resorts often lack high-level and unique natural landscapes and historical sites, but take various artificial recreational projects as the main content, which is difficult to form their own characteristics, so it is easier to form homogeneous competition.

The tourist resorts around Taihu Lake are all built around Taihu Lake, with its lakes and mountains as the natural landscape foundation. They belong to the Wu culture area in culture, and their food and drink are all characterized by aquatic products of Taihu Lake. However, as the key entertainment items in tourist resorts, they are not rich enough, and there are obvious similarities. For example, almost every family has an ecological park; There are golf clubs in all three national tourist resorts; Suzhou Taihu Lake, Huzhou Taihu Lake and Wujiang East Taihu Lake all have yacht clubs; There are caravan camping bases in Wujin Bay and eco-tourism resort in western Suzhou.

3.4. The Cooperation of Tourist Resorts Around Taihu Lake is Still in its Infancy

The cooperation among tourist resorts around Taihu Lake has a long history, but the cooperation among tourist resorts around Taihu Lake is still in its infancy. In 2007, Suzhou, Wuxi, Changzhou and Huzhou held the first "Alliance Summit of Tourism Directors around Taihu Lake" and established the "Tourism Cooperation Organization around Taihu Lake". In December, 2017, the 2017 "Around Taihu Lake+" Global Tourism Development Forum was held in Wuxi with the theme of "Creating a Global Tourism Demonstration Zone and Building Tourism Destinations Around Taihu Lake". Tourism directors from 20 counties and cities in the Yangtze River Delta focused on the theme of "Innovation and Creation of Global Tourism" to discuss a new mode of exchanging regional tourism cooperation and development. During the meeting, the heads of tourism bureaus and tourist resorts unanimously reached the "Tourism Development Cooperation around Taihu Lake"

On September 11th, 2018, the first China Huzhou International Lakeside Tourism Festival and China International Tourism Festival around Taihu Lake were held on the banks of South Taihu Lake in Huzhou. During this period, Suzhou, Wuxi, Changzhou and Huzhou jointly established a tourism alliance of four cities around Taihu Lake, and Huzhou Taihu Lake also established a tourism alliance of five lakes in Greater Bay Area, Zhejiang Province, together with Hangzhou West Lake, Ningbo Dongqian Lake, Jiaxing South Lake and Shaoxing East Lake, and released the Huzhou Declaration of the "the belt and road initiative" lakeside tourism revitalization action of the tourism alliance of four cities around Taihu Lake, Huzhou Declaration of the tourism resort alliance around Taihu Lake and Huzhou Declaration of the tourism alliance of five lakes in Greater Bay Area.

The establishment of tourism alliance of four cities around Taihu Lake and tourism resort alliance around Taihu Lake shows that the four cities around Taihu Lake and tourist resorts have reached a consensus on cooperation, but this alliance is only a spontaneous and loose alliance, which has limited effect on the promotion of the overall brand around Taihu Lake. The tourist resorts around Taihu Lake still need to further strengthen cooperation, improve together through cooperation, and carry out healthy competition in cooperation.

4. Competition and Cooperation Strategies of Tourist Resorts Around Taihu Lake

4.1. Create an International Leisure Resort Around Taihu Lake

The Tourism Resort Alliance around Taihu Lake, established in 2018, still stays at the local level, while an important strategy of regional tourism cooperation can be called "package and upgrade", that is, tourist attractions of the same type and similar level within a certain area can be jointly built into higher-level tourist areas. For example, among the world heritages in China, Danxia in China, Karst in South China, Grand Canal and Silk Road are all jointly declared by several heritage units, and 14 ancient towns located in Suzhou, Wuxi, Jiaxing and Huzhou in the south of the Yangtze River will also be jointly declared as world heritages. Using the strategy of "packaging and upgrading" can greatly enhance the popularity and influence of the whole tourist area. Therefore, we explicitly propose to create an international leisure.

Since 2010, China has successively put forward the construction plans of Hainan International Tourism Island, Guilin International Tourism Resort and Wannan International Cultural Tourism Demonstration Zone from the national strategic level. Different from the concepts of national scenic spots, A-level scenic spots and world heritage, the above-mentioned Hainan International Tourism Island is not a single scenic spot, but a large-scale tourist area or tourist destination. If the world heritages (most of them) represent the world-class tourist attractions in China, then another world-class tourist destination system can be built outside the world heritage system.

The area around Taihu Lake is located in the center of Shanghai-Nanjing-Hangzhou Golden Triangle, with convenient transportation, developed economy, large population and high income level. Relying on Taihu Lake to develop leisure and holiday tourism has unique conditions. Through scientific overall planning, the area around Taihu Lake can be built into a world-class leisure and holiday destination.

4.2. Make a Unified Plan

Previously, all tourist resorts around Taihu Lake were independently planned, and the time was early or late, with different planning concepts. Since the first batch of national tourist resorts in 1992, as well as the provincial tourist resorts established in succession, they were all approved before planning and then building, and some even planned and built at the same time. Moreover, most of the early tourist resorts were planned and built as a type of economic development zone, which obviously did not conform to the concept of modern tourist resorts. The new round of tourist resort construction from 2015 follows the process of first planning, then construction, and finally application and evaluation, and already has strict and detailed grading standards.

To create an international leisure and holiday resort around Taihu Lake, we must make a unified plan based on the standard of building a world-class leisure and holiday destination. Planning should not only focus on shaping the overall image, but also highlight their own characteristics to avoid redundant construction and vicious competition. Of course, the final planning scope of the international leisure and holiday resort around Taihu Lake can be appropriately expanded, and it is not necessary to be limited to the existing eight high-grade tourist resorts. Resort areas such as Yangxian in Yixing, Yangshan in Wuxi, nanxun town and Xisai Mountain in Xing Wu, which are not far from Taihu Lake, as well as some traditional tourist attractions, can be included. However, we should always take Taihu Lake as the center and take leisure and holiday as the feature.

4.3. Create a Rich Leisure and Holiday Product System

Compared with traditional sightseeing, the important features of holiday tourism mainly include tourists' long stay, strong spending power, high proportion of secondary consumption

and repeated consumption, etc., which requires tourist resorts to make efforts to build a rich system of leisure and holiday products in planning and construction.

At present, the holiday products of various tourist resorts around Taihu Lake are not rich enough, especially the advantages of Taihu Lake are not fully utilized. Besides making use of the land along the lake, lakeside tourist resort should also make use of the open lake surface to develop rich water, underwater and air amusement projects and build a three-dimensional product system of water, land and air. At the same time, tourists with different spending power should be taken into account. Generally speaking, holiday tourists have strong spending power, but we should also realize that holiday tourism has entered the stage of popularization at present. Therefore, from the perspective of product prices, it is necessary to give priority to mid-range products, giving consideration to both high-grade and low-grade.

In addition, it is necessary to take care of the needs of tourists of different ages. There should be both thrilling projects that attract young tourists and relatively leisure projects that are suitable for the elderly and children.

4.4. Carry out Joint Marketing

In marketing, we should not fight alone, but we should highlight the overall brand image around Taihu Lake and carry out joint marketing. In addition to using traditional TV, newspapers and professional magazines for advertising, all tourist resorts should pay special attention to the establishment of their own independent websites. Internet websites can display comprehensive and rich contents such as tourist products, amusement items, accommodation, food, transportation, etc. of the resort, and at the same time, they should also provide friendly links to other tourist resorts.

Carry out marketing through sports events, conferences and festivals, etc. Although sports events, conferences and festivals don't last long, they can bring a lot of passengers in a short time. Actively participating in large-scale sports events, holding or hosting important national and international conferences, and holding festivals in which tourists can participate extensively can play a very good role in publicity and promotion, expand their influence, and make some athletes, spectators and business guests stay longer and become holiday tourists.

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