

Research on Story Marketing Strategy for Traditional Village Tourism

——Case Study Based on Shidu Village in Jiangxi Province

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Abstract. Traditional villages are rich in tourism resources, but most of them are not well-known and tourism development is still in the initial stage. The Shidu Village is a national traditional village. We can use the story marketing strategy to increase the popularity of Shidu village and the competitiveness of village tourism, through sorting out the story resources of the Shidu Village, determining the core value of the story, enriching the story narrative form, and building a diversified communication channel, etc.

Keywords: Traditional Villages; Story Marketing; Shidu Village.

1. Introduction

Traditional villages refer to villages that were formed earlier. They have richer cultural and natural resources, and have certain historical, cultural, scientific, artistic, economic, and social values, and should be given priority protection [1]. There are many traditional villages with long history and rich culture in China. Since the beginning of 2012, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance have organized a national survey of traditional villages. As of 2023, a total of 8,155 traditional villages with important protection value have been selected and announced in six batches.

Traditional villages not only carry a long history of farming culture, but also have rich natural ecology and cultural values. They usually have beautiful natural ecological environments and long histories, with ancient buildings and colorful folk cultures. They are like beads scattered on the Chinese land, bearing the beautiful homesickness of countless tourists and becoming the travel destinations for people of different classes. Traditional village tourism has also become one of the important ways to revitalize rural areas. A large number of traditional villages, such as Xidi Village in Anhui Province, Yuanjia Village in Liquan County, Shaanxi Province, and HuangLing Village of Wuyuan in Jiangxi Province, have attracted a large number of tourists through the cultural tourism projects, which have brought good economic income to the local area and become a model for rural revitalization. However, most of the traditional villages in China, due to their remote location, lagging economic development and other reasons, are still unknown and urgently need to be promoted. Although some traditional villages have carried out tourism development, they are still in the initial stage of tourism development and lack visibility.

Story marketing is an effective way to improve the communication efficiency between tourist attractions and consumers. A successful story provides a quick association space for tourist attractions, and it is much more effective than rational narration [2]. In 2015, a series of documentaries "Tracing Heritage" was jointly launched by the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television, and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage. The documentaries, organized by the Chinese International Channel of CCTV, tells the story of more than 100 traditional villages in China, each with its own story. "One episode, one village, one legend", the documentary promoted the tourism development and protection of a number of ancient villages, such as Zhuge Village in Zhejiang Province and Zhangbi Village in Shanxi Province. Each traditional village has its own unique story,

so this article takes the example of Shidu Village in Jiangxi Province, to summarize the story marketing strategy and promote the tourism development of traditional villages.

2. Story Marketing and Tourist Destination Story Marketing

2.1 Story Marketing

A story is about past events, precedents, and classical allusions, etc. with a plot, a character, and a certain theme, referring to a real or fictitious thing that happened in the past. There are six elements in the composition of a story, including the narrator, the audience, the story text, the story code, the story medium, and the story context [3]. When people are immersed in a story, they will experience a highly cognitive and emotional involvement, and they will generate vivid psychological expressions, prompting people to change their attitudes and beliefs in reality, like and identify with the characters in the story, produce near-real presence and elicit strong emotional responses [4]. Robert McKee, the father of Hollywood screenwriters, regards storytelling as "the best persuasive tool" and holds storytelling workshops around the world, providing not only screenwriting tutorials for film and television practitioners, but also management and marketing strategies for giant companies. [5]

The story that applied firstly in the field of narrative research has gradually gained prevalence in the field of management and marketing. Story marketing is a common marketing method that conveys the content and value of products through sound, image, or text. Li Guangdou, the first person of the Chinese brand and a well-known brand strategy expert, pointed out that the power of the story was that it can turn an unknown small village into a well-known scenic spot that everyone knows [6]. There are many successful cases of story marketing, such as the story of the Coca-Cola recipe and the story of Ashima. The former made Coca-Cola a world-renowned brand that has thrived for a long time; the latter made Shilin Scenic Area a well-known tourist attraction.

2.2 Tourist Destination Story Marketing

Story marketing of tourist destinations refers to the use of the unique advantages of the natural resources or human resources of the tourist destination to endow the tourist destination with a moving story in a narrative way, then promotes the story through various media, and embeds into the entire process of tourist destination marketing, so as to achieve the purpose of shaping the image and enhancing the market competitiveness of the tourist destination [7].

Through forms such as audio and video, the tourist destination is promoted in a storytelling way, highlighting the intrinsic value of the story, and stimulating the potential consumer's five senses, thereby generating emotional resonance and the internal force of visiting the tourist destination. Traditional villages, as an important type of tourist destination, have a long history and spread many unique and culturally-inclusive stories. These village stories passed down from generation to generation have unique cultural charm. Telling the story of traditional villages is an effective way to combine tourism with culture. Story marketing can enhance the tourist experience, thereby attracting tourists and improving the visibility and market competitiveness of traditional villages [7].

3. General Information of Shidu Village

3.1 History of Shidu Village

Shidu Village is located in Songfeng Township, Guangfeng District, Shangrao City, Jiangxi Province. It is situated on a small plain in a basin with mountains and rivers, and has a mild climate. The Shidu village was built in the Song Dynasty. According to the "Wang's Family Genealogy", the Tong family started their lives in Shidu village. In the late Yuan Dynasty, the population of Shidu Village increased rapidly. In the Ming Dynasty, the paper, wood and bamboo, and tea industries in

Shidu developed. A large number of wealthy merchants emerged from the Wang, Zhu, and Ye clans. They used their accumulated wealth to build houses, streets, weirs and ancestral hall. As a result, the scale of Shidu Village expanded rapidly. In the Qing Dynasty, especially during the Qianlong period, Shidu Village entered its heyday. Many famous merchants emerged, such as Wang Jixian (also known as Wang Zhixian, 1746-1804, known as Sheng Zhai). They built many famous buildings, such as Shidu Grand House and Huatang Gate. In the late Qing Dynasty, under the general circumstances, Shidu Village inevitably encountered economic recession. On May 5, 1949, Guangfeng ushered in the liberation; and in 1984, "Shidu Village" became the official administrative village name. In June 2019, Shidu Village was included in the fifth batch of the List of Traditional Villages in China.

3.2 Tourist Resources of Shidu Village

3.2.1 Natural Resources

Shidu Village is surrounded by mountains and waters, such as Shidu River and Houxi River. The location and layout of the village embodies the human settlement environment concept of "unity of man and nature". The Shidu River is long and beautiful which is winding in the village. It has Six-Stone rocks, ancient camphor trees with a history of hundreds of years. The thousand-year-old Chinese torrey tree is laden with abundant fruit. The bamboo forest is secluded, and the *Camellia sinensis* is fragrant; the mountains are lush, and the pastoral scenery is distinct in all seasons.

3.2.2 Natural and Cultural Resources

Ancient Architecture. The village of Shidu is located at the junction of Jiangxi, Fujian and Zhejiang provinces, 28 kilometers from the county seat, 23 kilometers from Nianbadu Town, Jiangshan County, Zhejiang Province, and 67 kilometers from Pucheng County, Fujian Province. Relying on its geographical advantage of the intersection of the three provinces, it has developed a prosperous business and commercial trade. A large number of merchants gathered here, making it famous for the ancient border trade village. To date, some ancient streets and shops are still preserved, and there are a large number of ancient buildings - more than 1,400 residential buildings, of which more than 30 are Ming Dynasty buildings, more than 150 are Qing Dynasty buildings, and more than 600 are Republic of China buildings. The famous ancient buildings include the Shidu Grand House (known as the "first house in Jiangnan"), Xiuyu Aofeng, Houde Huihong, Shangzhu House, Huatang Gate, Xianbai Ancestral Hall, Tongjia Grand House, Shen's Ancestral Hall, and the ancient theater. The existing ancient buildings cover an area of more than 170,000 square meters.

Folk Crafts. Shidu Village is rich in bamboo, and the production of paper is a traditional handicraft industry in the village. The craftsmanship of paper making is very famous. "Shidu paper" is one of the cultural heritages of Guangfeng. There is a folk saying in Guangfeng - "Shidu paper, Wudu umbrella, Shanxi beautiful girls are all famous", which shows the reputation of Shidu paper. In addition, there are Guangfeng brown sugar new year cake making skills, Pointed Straw Hat making skills, handmade tea, bamboo weaving skills, etc., which have been passed down to the present day.

Folk story. The story of Wang Zhixian getting rich through business has always been passed down. When he built the Wang Family's house (that is Shidu Grand House), he used forty dan (Chinese unit of weight) of rice to exchange for a large piece of land. He selected skilled craftsmen through the technical contest using wooden box packaging paper. There are also other deeds which have become folk legends for hundreds of years.

In addition, since the modern times, due to its remoteness, the Shidu Village has been less affected by the outside world and still retains the relatively traditional customs of Guangfeng, such as "1, 4, 7' market days".

4. Story Marketing Strategy for Shidu Village Tourism

4.1 Sort through the village's story resources

The folk stories passed down in the traditional villages reflect the production and life experience and survival wisdom of the ancestors. Through the stories of the family ancestors, the stories of natural geomancy, and the folk legends, the rich and mixed folk cultural history of the traditional villages is traced, and the depth of the village history is structured. Therefore, a common memory of contemporary rural culture is shaping [8]. The story must have a clear theme and positive value. It is complicated but true and credible, easy to understand. After listening to the story, people can be touched or have an interest to know more about it or the desire to go there.

There are rich folk stories in the hundreds of years of village development history in Shidu village. For example, the story of Fengshui at the time of the village construction tells us about the ancestors how to select the site ; the story of the local paper merchant Wang Zhixian tells us how he made a fortune by selling bamboo shoots. It is said that Wang Zhixian ate up the host's favorite winter bamboo shoots at a friend's house who was also a paper merchant in Shanghai. The winter bamboo shoots were considered the most decent and valuable dish in Shanghai, but in Shidu village, winter bamboo shoots were very common. Wang Zhixian knew the fact, then he left Shanghai and returned home to deliver a few baskets of dried bamboo shoots to his friend, which made his friend very touched. The friend began to teach Wang Zhixian some business tips, thereby Wang Zhixian's paper business was gradually opening up. Furthermore, Wang Zhixian used forty dan of rice to exchange for a large piece of residential base, and recruited excellent carpenters with better skills . In addition ,the superb craftsmanship that the whole house has no nail in the truss structure, and the Wang family's house Feng Shui design was altered, causing the family to fall. There are many stories that are widely acclaimed in Shidu Village.

4.2 Determine the core value of the village story

Story marketing is essentially a marketing method. Therefore, before conducting story marketing, it is necessary to determine the core value positioning of the scenic spot from a strategic height [9], extract the core value of the story, and tell an excellent and attractive brand story. This brand story should have the characteristics of uniqueness, emotional resonance and convey brand values, which can stimulate tourists' emotional resonance and travel willingness.

Shidu Village is an ancient village of border trade, located at the junction of the three provinces. It is an important node of economic exchanges between the three provinces. In ancient times, on the land route, goods of Jiangxi enter and exit Zhejiang and Fujian provinces through Shidu Village. Shidu Village became the gathering place for goods in the adjacent areas of the three provinces. The local paper industry's production and trade have also developed, producing a group of wealthy businessmen. They set up mansions in the village, built streets , weirs and ancestral temples. Therefore, the core positioning of the story marketing of Shidu Village should be its strong business atmosphere. The stories of the rich merchants who made their fortunes through business, the commercial streets and alleys they built, and the ancestral temples and mansions they built are the core selling points of the tourism brand of Shidu Village, which can bring tourists positive and pleasant emotional experiences.

According to the literature research and field survey, Wang Zhixian was selected as the main character of the story and the cultural IP of tourism in Shidu Village. The reasons for the selection are as follows:

- 1) Wang Zhixian's story has a wide range of dissemination between the local people of Shidu and the guests who travel to Shidu. People are talking enthusiastically about these stories ,such as how Wang Zhixian made a fortune from a bowl of bamboo shoots and then built a magnificent and unique Wang family house, and various things happened during the construction of the house.

2) Wang Zhixian's story reflects the commerciality of the ancient village of border trade: a small village on the border of three provinces can become a well-known gathering place for goods, and cultivate a group of wealthy businessmen. Its commerciality is obvious.

3) Wang Zhixian's story has a unique regional character: both the bamboo shoots and the paper industry benefit from the rich resources of bamboo in Shidu Village.

4) Wang Zhixian's story reflects people's constant pursuit of wealth: whether in ancient times or modern times, there is no exception to the pursuit of wealth. Wang Zhixian's legendary story of making a fortune from a bowl of bamboo shoots has unlimited appeal to the audience.

5) Wang Zhixian's story has a high promotion value: We can learn from his talents. And the Wang family house he built has exquisite construction skills and special functions, which is a precious cultural heritage.

4.3 Enrich the narrative form of the story

After sorting out the story and determining its core value, we should analyze the awareness and acceptance of potential visitors, and tell the story through text, video, audio, images and other forms. People of different times and different professions have different forms of acceptance of the story. Therefore, the story should be told in various forms, such as documentaries, films and dramas, text stories, and various self-media platforms.

Taking documentaries as an example, documentaries are realistic films and videos that use real life as the creative material to show real people and real events. The plots are real, and the location environment is real and not fictitious [10]. Because of the non-fictional nature of documentaries, they have a strong appeal to the audience. In recent years, a number of documentaries about traditional villages have been shot and broadcast. "Remembering the Nostalgia"(known as "Tracing Heritage") shows the appearance of the village and sorts out the traditional culture of the village. "Amazing Village" records eastern villages that are about to disappear. "Chinese Village" tells the "little characters" and "little stories" that take place in the village. "Village Story" shows the true appearance of villages in different regions. These documentaries have made a realistic interpretation of the reproduction of reality, the demonstration of forms, and the setting of legendary plots. A large number of traditional villages have become famous in China, and the development of local tourism has been promoted.

For people of different ages, professions and hobbies, we should use different forms to tell stories. For people who like reading, prose, novels, poetry and other text stories are more suitable; for people who like film and television, documentaries, films and television dramas are more attractive to them; for people who are used to knowing the news in fragmented time, various short videos are more in line with their needs. We can create stories in different forms to cater to the aesthetics, habits, needs and acceptance of different target groups, and move different audiences to achieve the purpose of publicity and marketing.

4.4 Build diverse communication channels

Storytelling aims to arouse the emotions of potential tourists, and promote tourism behavior, which can combine village stories with tourist experiences in different contexts, through various media and captivating stories, [11]. The dissemination of stories can be carried out through various channels, such as school education, media platforms, on-site activities, and oral communication.

School education is a traditional and important channel for communication. I heard the story of Wang Zhixian in the classroom of my junior high school. My classmates were all very impressed by it and always remembered this village. Years later, I finally experienced it myself. Some stories told in primary and secondary school textbooks and classrooms, such as Huangshan, Sanwei Bookstore, Tengwang Pavilion, Huanghe Tower, Taohuayuan, etc., have very obvious tourism publicity effects.

Media platforms mainly include newspapers, magazines, radio, film and television, and the Internet. With the increase in the number of netizens, online communication has become an increasingly important way. Online communication quickly disseminates information to a large number of users through channels such as portals, news websites, blogs, and short video platforms, and triggers extensive discussion and attention.

In the era of data intelligence, new media and new platforms are constantly emerging, refreshing users' media contact habits and promoting the diversification and integration of tourism marketing channels. In addition to traditional offline education, paper media, oral communication, and on-site events, traditional village tourism managers must be proficient in the use of digital channels such as social media, online tourism platforms, and mobile applications for more diversified forms of marketing promotion. Through multi-channel and multi-platform integration marketing, the conversion rate and effect of marketing can be improved [12].

5. Conclusion

Traditional villages are rich in historical and cultural heritage, but they are also suffering from the loss of cultural memory and the decline of space. As an important tourist destination, the story marketing of traditional villages can not only enhance the cultural experience of tourists, increase the popularity of villages and the competitiveness of village tourism, but also provide practical reference for the protection and development of the villages, and promote the protection and utilization of traditional village cultural heritage.

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