

Advantages in Building of Characteristic Tourism Brand—Based on a Comparison between Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery

Longqi Qi

Hubei Three Gorges Polytechnic, Yichang443000, Hubei

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Abstract. This paper takes the Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery as examples to emphasize the differences between these two tourist destinations. Through the comparison of changes in Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery brand building as well as the difference in tourist number and tourism income growth, pointed out the difference between Guilin Scenery and Qingjiang River .Furthermore, With the help of the tourism supply side analysis framework, this paper further analyzes the advantages of characteristic tourism brand building, and specifically analyzes its mechanism.

Introduction

China has witnessed a fast development of scenic area tourism from the 1990s. At present, the traditional tourism mode has changed thanks to rapid transformation and upgrading of household consumption, the increasing demands of personalized tourism and the competition among similar tourism modes. Taking Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery as examples, it is easy to find that these tourist attractions started earlier than the rest ones and are both non-capital high-quality scenic spots launched by their respective provinces. However, the brands of these scenic spots have changed significantly in recent years, as is shown in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3.

Table I Orientations and Products

Tourist Attraction	Brand Orientation	Core Products
Qingjiang River	“Rear Garden” of Yichang City	Relic Site of Changyang People, Qingjiang Gallery, Gaobazhou hydropower station, Geheyan Hydro Project, Qingjiang National Wetland Park, Wufeng Houhe River, Chaibuxi National Forest Park, Latitude-30°N Island
Guilin Scenery	Chinese Lifestyle, the Most Beautiful Landscape	Lijiang River, Yulong River, Ten-li Gallery, Seven-star Scenic Area, Yangshuo West Street, Yaoshan Cableway, Liusanjie Showplace, Guanyan Scenic Area, Nine-horses-painting Mountain Drift

Source: The Yearbook of China Tourism.

Table II Brand Identity Design

Tourist Attraction	Brand Name	Logo	Slogan
Qingjiang River	None		800-li Qingjiang River is as beautiful as a picture, half of which makes a gallery of wonders in Changyang. Qingjiang River, the mother river of Tujia People.
Guilin Scenery	Guilin Scenery		Guilin's scenery is the best in the world. Rowing a boat on the river, you will feel like you're wandering in a picture.

Source: The Yearbook of China Tourism.

Table III Brand Communication, Maintenance and Evaluation

Tourist Attraction	Brand Popularization	Consumers' Acceptance	Brand Sustainability
Qingjiang River	By Consolidating provincial tourism market, expanding domestic and inbound tourism market. Comprehensive and targeted publicity through four marketing channels: tourism transportation platforms, self-media and new media, tourism festivals and events, and tourism intermediates.	Qingjiang Gallery was awarded the best-order scenic spot in recognition of effective traffic control, stable tourism order and standardized service management.	Based on the elaborate tourism modes and high-quality resorts, it promotes the innovation and development of tourism supply side complying with the diversified and complex tourism mode. Qingjiang River has become the essential part of Landscape and Folk Tourism Corridor in western Hubei province by highlighting Tujia People's custom and local ecology.
Guilin Scenery	The article 'Guilin Scenery' in the of PEP edition of textbook; Yangshuo Xingpin, the real place where the photo on the RMB 20 was taken. Targeting at the multilevel markets, it promotes the traditional market by means of Internet and other new media, festival marketing and overseas marketing.	Tourists' basic perception: "beautiful scenery" and "leisure heaven". With high-level expectation and perception, their overall evaluation of the landscapes of Lijiang River is positive, but lower than their pre-tour perception. Tourists have the highest expectation for the "picturesque" Lijiang River, the best perception for the "peculiar-looking and undulating mountains" and the lowest degree of recognition for "clear water".	Fragmentary tourist group mode, social protection and utilization mode, "G-E-C-R linkage mode"; based on the public service, Guilin is pushing forward reform, innovation, and comprehensive integration of channels in culture's guideline; international high-quality resorts belt. Guilin is developing regimen tourism on the basis of the slogan "Clear water and green mountains of Lijiang, keep you fit in Guilin." Carrying out classified protection and development of Lijiang River. Establishing a long-term mechanism to protect the Lijiang River.

Source: Thirteenth Five-year Plan of Yichang Tourism Development, The Tourism Master Plan of Guilin (2015-2020) .

From the perspective of tourism brand, Guilin Scenery has a higher brand maturity than Qingjiang River. In the history of China, many painters were famous for the paintings about Guilin Scenery; therefore, Guilin Scenery has a better popularity, reputation and tourists' loyalty.

The tourist number and tourism income data are more accurate and comparable compared with brand influence. As is shown in Figure 1, there is a big difference in the growth of tourist number and tourism income between Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery.

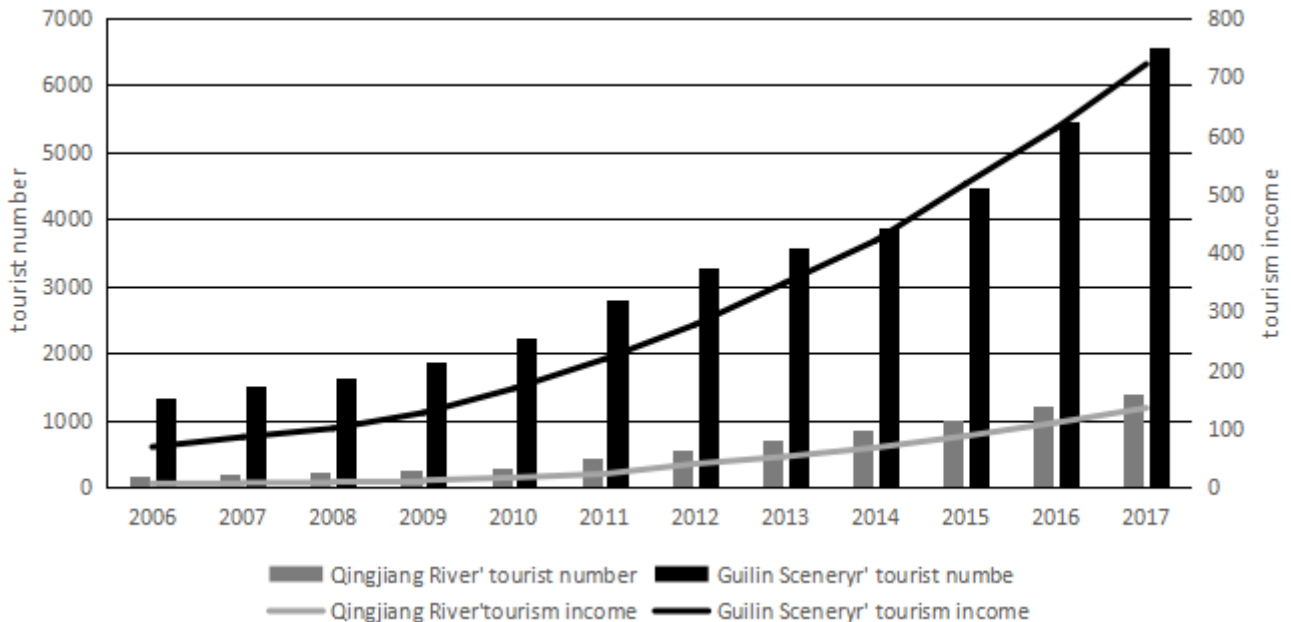


Figure. 1 Number of Tourists and Tourism Income of Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery (2005-2017)

Qingjiang River has invested greatly in the building of tourism brand from the perspectives of regulation, finance, scale and culture. Guilin Scenery, in the same period, just has a simple pattern dominated by the landscapes. While Guilin Scenery still has higher income and attracts more tourists than Qingjiang River. Same phenomenon can be seen in the comparison between Thousand-island Lake in Zhejiang Province and West Lake in Hangzhou. What are the differences between development of Guilin Scenery and Qingjiang River? Why their developments differ so much? Those two questions are the topic of this paper.

Under the framework of tourism supply side, this paper adopts a series of related theories, concepts, technologies and methods to find out the advantage factors in the building of characteristic tourism brand by analyzing the brand elements concretely. All data in this paper comes from The Yearbook of Guilin Tourism and The Yearbook of Yichang Tourism from 2000 to 2017, except for some special points with explanation.

Building of Characteristic Tourism Brands

In earlier times, tourism brands were image-builders, they focused on marketing research and consumer-tourism relationship. As a strategic industry, tourism played a positive role in the post-industrial urban revitalization; therefore, the research about tourism attracted scholars of various subjects. But scholars paid more attention to the diversity, hierarchy and complexity of tourists' demands ignored the difference of tourism supply itself. Therefore, this paper analyzes the differences between Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery from the perspective of tourism supply.

Total Tourism Supply.

Table IV The Total Tourism Supply of Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery

Tourist Attraction	Tourism Resources	Tourist Facilities	Tourism Services
Qingjiang River	Places of interest; National Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Project; rare ecological species; water conservancy projects; historical relics; historical figures and revolutionary martyrs; Goddess of Brine and Lin Jun; religious belief; key water control project; hot spring, bonsai garden, dragon boat, water sports, paragliding, rafting, surfing, international adventure, parachuting, motorboat, diving, outward bound, towing umbrella; specialties and cuisines.	Provincial and municipal leisure agriculture demonstration sites; national rural top-quality farmhouse, starred provincial farmhouse; Three Gorges tourist center; resort hotels, boutique hotels and themed guesthouses; spiritual purification and physical relaxation courses such as hot spring, traditional Chinese medicine SPA, characteristic pedicure, Tai Chi and yoga; Qingjiang health industry pilot zone; urban sports and leisure landscape corridor; ecological landscape corridor.	Improving the tourism public service system, building and managing four major systems: urban distributing centers, information centers, toilets and traffic signs. Developing self-drive camps, recreational vehicle camps, tent camps, family hotels, rural guesthouses and cave hotels. Introducing off-standard accommodation modes such as Tujia and AIRBNB. Accelerating the construction of smart tourism service system; Achieving full 4G network coverage.
Guilin Scenery	Picturesque scenery; heritage sites; unique karst landscape; Dong People, Zhuang People, and Miao People; the legend Liu Sanjie of Zhuang People; reservoirs; bamboo raft; specialties and cuisines.	Accelerating the construction of the second Lijiang River bridge; high-speed railway; Xing 'an General Aviation Base and Le Mandi Theme Park; Yulong River scenic spot upgrading plan; construction of Guilin Southern Tourist Center; sightseeing facilities: information center, guide sign system, bus system; characteristic resort facilities: resort hotels, boutique guesthouses, boutique hotels; sightseeing greenway, garden corridor, cycling and hiking trail.	Tourist through trains, holiday service points, bicycle and self-drive service stations; high-end tourism hub and comprehensive service centers; web-based tourists information system; rural tourism supporting facilities and service system; accessing project, soft service promotion project, tourism information project, leisure trail project, tourists distributing center project; building an international tourists distributing center.

Source: The Yearbook of Guilin Tourism and The Yearbook of Yichang Tourism.

Tourism Supply Quality.

Table V Tourism Supply Quality of Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery

Tourist Attraction	Tourists Resources Quality	Tourists Facilities Quality	Tourists Service Quality
Qingjiang River	Provincial resort area, national forest park, national water conservancy scenic area, national 5A-class scenic area	Diverse accommodation modes, high-quality experience, convenient consumption, optimized route; high-end tourism service facilities; improving tourism and catering services; improving public facilities; developing tourism e-commerce	Yichang aims to establish itself a national tourism standardized model city; focuses on the construction of Qingjiang Gallery international tourism area.
Guilin Scenery	It's a world heritage site and unified totem of China. It has a national 5A-class scenic spot, a national key scenic spot, and the largest and most beautiful karst landscape tourist area in the world.	A leisure and vacation space with a panoramic view of the scenic spot; refined facilities; model ecological leisure footpath.	Internationalization, informatization and standardization.

Source: The Yearbook of Guilin Tourism and The Yearbook of Yichang Tourism.

Tourism Supply Structure

Table VI Tourism Supply Structure of Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery

Tourist Attraction	Personalized product	Tourism supporting industrial production mode	Opening up policy	Tourism management system and mechanism	Talents	Tourism investment and financing	Level
Qingjiang River	Cruise tourism	Outdoor sports products; electric cars; golf clubs, bags, and clothing; ethnic clothing; cruise ships and yachts	China (Hubei Province) Inland Free Trade Zone of Yichang area, model city of cross-border e-commerce, tourism product trade center, The Three Gorges Urban Agglomeration, Three Gorges comprehensive transportation system, "Yichang-Xinjiang-Europe" new international logistics channel of water, road and railway.	establishing a comprehensive evaluation system for tourism market order, establishing and improving the "exit mechanism" of service, establishing a tourists safety prevention and rescue system.	Supporting the innovative talents training mechanism of tourism colleges and universities, such as Three gorges university, Hubei Three Gorges Polytechnic, Three Gorges Tourism Polytechnic College; implementing the rural tourism talent training program.	Tourism bonds, enterprise investment, local investment, business and consortium joint, tourism investment fund, PPP investment mode, tourism credit, boosting the construction of tourism industry insurance system	Low-level, middle-level and high-end.
Guilin Scenery	Health industry, culture and sports, exhibition, forest ecology, towns, shopping, special tourist project, "Travel Plus", international tourist area.	Sightseeing bus, new-model tram, ethical handicrafts, electro-mobile, cruise ship, bicycle and its fittings, sportswear, safety equipment, electronic fittings, food, beverage, photography, wedding ceremony, honeymoon, supplies of mountain-climbing, rock-climbing, golf, and drifting.	China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, China-ASEAN (Guilin) agricultural sightseeing park, Guilin Airport Economic Area, 72-hour transit visa exemption policy for citizens from 51 nations and 6-day Visa-free entry policy for tourists groups with regular passports from the 10 countries of ASEA, The First Pilot City of Land Reform for National Tourism Industry, one of the fifth batch of Mainland cities' residents to visit Taiwan as individual tourists.	Publishing the lifestyle guidelines for residents of villages and towns, integrated harnessing in Lijiang River Basin, intelligent tourism bonus, specialized tourism policies including by-laws of pilot lands for tourism, establishing thorough project management system, the access and exit mechanism of tourism projects.	Turning Guangxi Normal University, Guilin University of Technology and Guilin Tourism College into a state-level talent base of tourism, and establishing a expert intelligence support system.	Innovative Finance-tourism mode, actively striving for a pilot spot in national financial project, establishing the tourism development fund, applying for developing the products of Finance-tourism integration.	High-end and middle-level both at home and abroad.

Characteristic Tourism Brand Building and Its Elements.

Based on the structure analysis of tourism supply, it can be seen that: from the view of the total tourism supply, the homogeneous degree of the Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery is relatively high; from the view of tourism supply quality, Qingjiang River is still at the national level, while Guilin Scenery is at the international level; from the view of tourism supply structure, both are developing towards diversification, and constantly exploring their characteristic tourism resources, except for the fact that Guilin Scenery is in a faster progress of internationalization and informatization. In the rapid development of Chinese tourism industry, it is very important for the tourism destinations to make a full use of their unique advantages to build their brands respectively. The brand building shall never be achieved if the scenic spot still focuses its tourism development on traditional mass tourism instead of characteristic tourism.

From the tourism supply side, many scholars have proposed suggestions on how to build up characteristic tourism brands for Qingjiang River, such as expanding tourism products, optimizing the space combination of products, optimizing and repositioning the brand image, improving tourists' cognition, and enhancing the integration of tourism and related industries. Many suggestions mentioned above have been adopted, in fact, Qingjiang River has indeed made great effort to develop tourism products vigorously, optimize the tourism layout and improve its image. To some extent, these measures have led to certain effects, but failed to achieve the marked characteristics of the tourism brand.

It has been pointed out in the previous studies that the key to the building of characteristic tourism brand lies in search for right advantages. Advantages of characteristic tourism brand building both shape the core competitiveness of the brand, and ultimately lead to differences in the development of different tourism brands. As far as the tourism brand is concerned, the factors should be paid emphasized attention are brand spirit and brand interests, by these two, the effective establishment of the characteristic tourism brand can be done, and hence the characteristics of the tourism brand can be highlighted. Therefore, the proposals mentioned above cannot solve the rooted problem of Qingjiang River's tourism brand building. Here comes the question: how to adjust to promote the establishment of a characteristic tourism brand?

The Advantages of the Characteristic Tourism Brand Building

The previous study just takes brand spirit and brand interests as the components of the brand, and has never associated them with the advantages of brand building of characteristic tourism. Most people reckon that scenic spot should pay attention to the development of tourist products and the construction of tourist facilities. As a result, characteristic tourism brands rely on tourism supply tourist experience.

Pu Chenhao (2014) puts forward in the "Research on the Building of Local Characteristic Tourism Brands" that the main contents of building a local characteristic tourism brand are all about three positioning principles: uniqueness and difference, culture and creativity, experience and friendliness; three basic requirements: to realize all-round resources integration, to establish total-factor supporting facilities, and to construct a sustainable profit mode; and three approaches: to create unique slogans and logos with strong publicity power, to develop innovative forms of recreation and tourism products with local characteristics, and to carry out diversified and targeted brand promotion and marketing policies. Therefore, brand spirit and brand interests are the most important indicators of brand building for Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery. This paper, by comparing the two indicators, aims to analyze the differences in the brand building of the two scenic spots and prove the distinctive advantages of each other.

Brand Spirit.

The establishment of Guilin Scenery's characteristic tourism brand benefited from the formation of brand spirit. Brand spirit is the sum of the comprehensive cultural factors, such as the meaning, symbol, personality, emotion and taste of the brand. However, not all tourist attractions can form a brand spirit in a short period. In a certain period, how the brand spirit of tourism destinations is shaped mainly depends on exploitation of the characteristics of the tourism destinations, discovery of scarce resources, scientific planning of overall tourism and accurate orientation of the brands. There are many similarities in tourism resources between Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery. However, the brand spirit of Guilin Scenery takes precedence over Qingjiang River. The former is of more significance and more appeal. Besides, and its scenic spots and natural resources are better integrated, while the latter is to some extent scattered with a vague theme. If Qingjiang River just aims at building its brand as scenic spot, it will be of much weaker competitiveness. But if all the advantages of Qingjiang River are integrated, the building of its brand will be greatly facilitated, for example, the rare and precious magnolia wufengensis, the Gaobazhou Hydropower Station, the Geheyan Water Control Project, Relic Site of Changyang People, the international piano festival, the Qingjiang whitebait and the white goat, and the National Non-material Cultural Heritage Protection Projects, or literati celebrities are invited to write poetry or articles for Qingjiang River, or poems and calligraphy works, painting and other kinds of artistic works related to Qingjiang River are collected from international community every year to show a vivid picture of Qingjiang River as the "rear garden" of Yichang City to the public.

Functional Benefits of the Brand.

Functional benefits come from the unique utility of brand attributes. From the perspective of tourism supply side, the promotion of functional benefits will directly nudge the construction of tourists attraction's characteristic brand, which is beneficial to the total amount, quality and structure of tourism supply, thus boosts the development of tourism industry. Functional benefit is the motive that drives consumers to search for products or services, and it is the inherent advantage of consumption of products or services. Guilin Scenery is the representative landscape of China, which can meet the functional needs

of consumers for the brand. Then what is the unique highlight the Qingjiang River—geographical advantage of 30 degrees north latitude, cool summer resorts in Wufeng, hot springs in Changyang, and the medicinal treatments in Yidu are good for eco-health and recuperation. Also, Qingjiang River has large water coverage; it is a nice place for water entertainment and the hometown of magnolia wufengensis and dove flowers.

Spiritual Benefits of the Brand.

The influence of spiritual benefits on the building of characteristic brands centers on the method of tourism implantation, the theme of tourism, the construction of core tourism elements, the value of tourism products, the categories of tourism resources and the quality of tourism services. Leisure vacation, “health plus”, “agriculture plus”, “business plus”, “forestry plus” and “education plus” are also necessary elements of public tourism. The emergence of “tourism plus” mode is an important support for the building of characteristic tourism brands; in return, it will boost the development of various categories with advantages. The spiritual benefit is the spiritual source of a brand value. The unique, diverse and creative tourism resources can often bring people different experiences, which is also an important output of spiritual benefits. For thousands of years, it has the reputation “Guilin Scenery is the best of the world” and it’s the world natural heritage, which reflects the international value. Although the Qingjiang River with Ba people’s style and Tujia customs, the content of its brand value is not enough, and it can’t bring fair amount of happiness and satisfaction to the public.

Conclusion and Comments

In recent years, the study of tourist attractions focuses on the comparison of economic benefits. Some scholars point out that the fundamental reason for the difference between tourism scale benefit space and total benefit space lies in the imbalance of regional economic development. Among them, the differences of economic policy orientation, value of tourism production unit and tourism consumption demand are the major effective factors. In addition, the tourist attraction itself also determines the degree of tourism development and the same amount of investment will show different states and levels. Thus, attention should be paid to the difference of tourist attraction in the research of characteristic tourism brand.

This paper takes the Qingjiang River and Guilin Scenery as examples to emphasize the differences between these two tourist destinations. Firstly it points out that the tourism of Guilin Scenery is in a significant structural growth, while Qingjiang River in a relatively sedate one. With the help of the tourism supply side analysis framework, this paper further analyzes the advantages of characteristic tourism brand building, and specifically analyzes its mechanism. The research shows that the promotion of brand spirit and brand benefit determines the highlight of tourism brand characteristics.

The establishment of characteristic tourism brands reflects the degree of local tourism development but does not fully reflect its value orientation. We cannot simply judge the development of tourism in this region by the establishment of characteristic tourism brand. In terms of the Qingjiang River, due to its relatively late development of tourism brands, it is impossible to achieve a significant structural growth in a short period as Guilin Scenery. Yet, Qingjiang River can rely on its rich cultural heritage and historical and cultural leisure tourism, heritage tourism resources development, to develop the high-level eco-health vacation cruises travel, hot springs treatment and business conference and exhibition. With its steady growth of brand spirit and benefits, it is reasonable to foster a structural growth step by step.

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