

Operation of a Bed and Breakfast in E-Commerce and Clan Society

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Abstract

Internet is one of the most widely used channels for the purpose of micromarketing (also called local or individual marketing). The e-commerce platform built on the internet brings new opportunities for the tourism industry. The conventional mass tourism needs to be adjusted in order to attract consumers who are eager for customized tourism service.

Kinmen is dominated by clan society. The influence of clan society can also be seen there on the management and marketing of a bed and breakfast (B&B). The operators of B&Bs have limited knowledge on e-commerce and rely on the supports from relatives to reach their business objectives. This study aims to discuss how the existing marketing approach influence by the clan culture, to examine if the appearance of e-commerce platform will stimulate the adoption of micromarketing and improve the quality of tourism service, to analyze the benefits and cultural struggle of B&B industry when entering new marketing platform.

The methods of secondary analysis and case study are used in this study. The result shows that entering e-commerce marketing platform helps operators to reach more potential customers. But the differentiation of tourism service is the key for matching demand to supply. Its differentiation relies on the provision of festival activities, local food and accommodations supported by clan society. Clan relatives who operate their own B&B can also help to reduce the fluctuation of coming consumers during peak and off peak times. In general, B&B operators have to combine the advantages of e-commerce and clan culture in order to increase the total benefits of their business.

Keywords: B & B operators, internet business, Kinmen, clan society

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Introduction

Kinmen, otherwise called “Wuzhou” in ancient era, has been a place of flourishing literature and culture. In the region of Kinmen, the clan culture is abundant and characteristic. Its traditional, local culture was preserved due to military control under war zone governance, and among the key features of local traditional cultures are clan cultures, which have made uniqueness and potential of the tourism in Kinmen. Cultural activities are considered an important type of travel in the development of tourism. In Kinmen region, activities of clan cultures are exhibited as ancestors ushering, clan gathering and so forth.

Till date, the local people’s attachment to and activities in their clans are not gone in Kinmen. That unique cultural atmosphere appeals, in a unique manner, to Chinese all over the world, particularly the tourists whose roots are related to Kinmen, who are motivated to come to be a part of Kinmen’s clan activities and to make a short travel here.

The 2015 number of people stayed at hostels in Kinmen region was 141,044, which ranked the first among all Taiwan’s offshore islands. How to make good use of information technology to help Kinmen’s tourism develop sustainably would become a major issue. Fast changes in information technology and industrial environment cause people’s behaviors of decision in purchases or productions to change considerably. According to a 2015 report by the Institute for Information Industry, Taiwan, the production of Taiwan’s market for e-commerce of 2015 was about NT\$1,006,900 million, of which NT\$613,800 million was contributed by B2C (business-to-consumer) market. The scale of the C2C (consumer-to-consumer) market was 393,100 million. According to the 2015 report by the MasterCard online shopping website, the items that Taiwanese people shopped online were largely airline tickets, apparel and online games; and as many as 42% of the people consumed NT\$7,710 on airline tickets and tours on internet platform. That indicates that Taiwan people knew very well how to compare tickets and hotels on internet platform.

However, electronic micro-marketing remained a rare marketing means to the hostel owners in Kinmen. Hence, despite the strong characteristics of clan culture, it is still difficult for cultural tourist activities to develop without the promotion of the clan cultures that Kinmen is distinctive with by good media means. While online marketing enables exposure to potential consumers in wider range and helps moderation between high and off seasons, failure to master such marketing skill is a drawback for the development of tourism.

As Kinmen County is home to a unique local humane atmosphere and clan cultures, it began to continuously promote the cultural tourism a few years ago to facilitate development of tourism. Its government and the private sector thus have been promoting the development of tourism-related industries by the electronic approach with much effort. In such context, this article has the objectives of investigation as follows.

Objectives of research

1. To discuss about how the existed marketing mode of the hostel owners in Kinmen is affected by the island's traditional clan culture; and
2. To investigate how Kinmen's hostel owners can employ e-commerce and cyber information technology to modify their marketing modes.

Literature review

Clan cultures

The term "culture" can be dated back in Chinese classics as early as to "I-Ching", where it is given the meaning of "civilizing with literature". In Western world, "culture" has a Latin etymology, with multiple meanings, including reverence for gods, dwelling, practice and paying attention. In modern time, the UNESCO defined, in its Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, culture by that culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs (UNESCO, 2001). Tang Dynasty's poet Bai Juyi wrote a poem clearly describing what Chinese clan culture was distinctively like:

Near or distant, they have kinsmen in every house;
Young or old, they have friends wherever they go.
On white wine and roasted fowl they fare
At joyful meetings more than once a week.
While they are alive, they have no distant partings;
To choose a wife they go to a neighbor's house. [translation by A. Waley]

Chinese clan cultures are characterized by a kindred-centered model constructed with a system of traditional values and beliefs (2011, Zhou). The clan cultures are embodied by traditional architecture, genealogies and clan rules, among other things.

The World Tourism Organization estimated that in the 21st century, the products related to natural landscape travelling that has enjoyed a greater portion of the travelling market will decrease in growth rate, whilst cultural tourism will be given excellent benefit of development. And the factor of cultures will become the subject of the tourist industry that has the strongest nature of stories and is most appealing (Ing, 2008). As clan cultures are widely infiltrating in humanity and arts and affects people's ideology and life and custom, clans on their part are rich in cultural resources. They also are a non-depleting mine of gem. People nowadays take leisure seriously and when they arrange a leisurely trip, they tend to stay at buildings that are characteristic of the local cultures. That is because of the abundant cultural contents that tell stories and offer experiences easy for people to embrace (Hung, 2010).

Culture cycle

The model of culture cycle has a framework that originated from UNESCO's 1986 Framework for Cultural Statistics, which was a cycle model revised in 2005 from a 1986 hierarchical model. The model encompasses different phases of creation, production and dissemination of cultural industries. The model considers that cultures come from a series of procedures and such industrial activities can be systemized.

In terms of domain, the model can embody the production and distribution during the entire production cycle (UNESCO 2009). The advantage of the model is the ability of straightening out how production and cultural activities work.

The model includes the following cycle:

Phase of creation - Ideas and contents emerge or are created. Creation of the nature of story and non-repetitive products.

Phase of production - Forms of culture that can be produced, and professional tools, infrastructure and procedures necessary for realizing repeated production.

Phase of dissemination - By information communicating means, some products or services can go directly from providers to consumers.

Phase of exhibition and reception - the place of consumption and the provision of live and/or unmediated cultural experiences to audiences by granting or selling access to consume/participate in time-based cultural activities.

Phase of consumption - the activities of audiences and participants in consuming cultural products and taking part in cultural activities and experiences.

The model of culture cycle delineates the inter-connection of these phases. In practice, some of the phases can be combined. For some culture-dependent industries, the process can start at any of these phase, while some phases maybe combined or do not exist.

The model of culture cycle is about emphasizing new forms of production that are mostly associated with new technologies. New technologies can create interrelationships between the different functions and, in time, these new forms of culture processes may merge or take place at the same time.

The model is not concerned with how "cultural" any particular aspect of the model needs to be. Rather, what is important is to understand and being able to track the totality of activities and necessary resources that are required to transform ideas into cultural goods and services, as well as the consumption of, participation in or use of them.

Hostels in Kinmen

Article 2 of Taiwan's Act for the Development of Tourism defines home stay facility as a lodging facility run as a family subsidiary business, using the spare rooms of self-used residence to provide tourists with a rural living experience. Such lodging facilities usually incorporate local culture, natural landscape, ecological environment, environmental resources, and agricultural, forestry, fishery or livestock farming activities. Generally a mini hotel that is operated for the purpose of hobbies and travel, such as fishing, or by the people in the areas of tourism, or spare rooms made available to travellers are called hostel (Luo, 1995). Hostels in Kinmen come in two types below.

- A. Fujian-style hostels: this type of hostels is created in the regeneration and reuse promoted by Kinmen's competent authority for the purpose of preserving sustainably the precious traditional cultural architecture and allowing the young generations to inherit the wisdom of their ancestors.
- B. family inns: an unused house having been redecorated, furnished with complete living facilities, and found by relevant department to meet the requirements with relevant permits issued.

Findings

In the model of culture cycle, we had an initial understanding, by field survey, of hostel in Kinmen as follows.

Phase of creation - In this phase, the hostels in Kinmen create subjects of stories from the traditional architecture and traditional system of values in the clan cultures. For instance, the creation of, with Fujian-style traditional architecture, some very old photos or old books, a cultural atmosphere that features Chinese clan cultures.

Phase of production - This phase focuses on hardware facilities and the actually employed techniques. Most of the hostels in Kinmen that enjoy the best rates of occupation are traditional houses of Fujian style that are rent with Kinmen Government; in addition, most of their owners should have certain degree of ability of guide in order to explain the stories about the houses.

Phase of dissemination - Most of the hostels in Kinmen are propagated chiefly by official websites or the interpersonal networks of the owners. Presently a part of the hostels begin to do marketing through websites on e-platforms; for such websites, most of them choose the BOOKING, AGODA and the like.

Phases of exhibition/reception and consumption - With the hostels in Kinmen, these two phases can merge, as they literally happen simultaneously. When a traveller occupies the hostel, he/she experiences the atmosphere of Kinmen's clan cultures on his/her arrival. Inside the hostels, travellers are having culture experience during the process of consumption.

Conclusion

Our initial conclusions are as follows. Going on e-platform for travel can help the hostel industry be exposed to more potential consumers; but, it is crucial whether the variation of the lodging products matches supply and needs. Such variation depends on the festivities provided by clan cultures, activity arrangement and catering and accommodation management. The network of clan cultures can also provide modulation during significant fluctuation of sources of customer. Therefore, on the whole, hostel owners should effectively incorporate the advantages of e-commerce and clan culture in their management and marketing goals in order to increase the total benefit.

What travellers seek when they participate in the tourist activities in the cultures they recognize are the light of a culture other than their own. This, unlike the life experience they are exposed to daily, brings along different mental quests. As such, the hostel owners need to make use of the distinguishing features of clan cultures, because that is an irreplaceable kind of resources. Therefore, the hostels with clan cultural features exist as the vital part of the tourist industry; they will surely give the tourist industry a non-depleted force. As the information era has a high degree of information propagating ability, if the characteristic clan cultures of Kinmen can be disseminated worldwide, it will further spur the innovations by hostel owners on this island based on clan cultures.

Therefore, with clan cultures, we should pursue more than their uniqueness, timeliness and appropriateness, such that the travellers' thoughts and needs can be grasped with the clan cultures. By means of electronic platform, the product information will be more able to be transmitted to both travellers and hostel owners in fast and accurate manner in this world of information, as an important basis for accommodation consumption and marketing management.

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