Integrated Tourism: A Holistic Approach to Resolving Fragmentation Challenges in Tourism Governance

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Abstract: At its core, integrated tourism is a public governance issue. The current fragmented state of local government organizational functions and public governance in China, coupled with the inherent complexity in tourism management, has led to fragmented governance subjects, fragmented resource allocation, and fragmented governance mechanisms in tourism practices. These existing governance challenges increase the cost of governance and, to some extent, hinder the development of the tourism industry. The emphasis on collaboration, co-governance, and sharing in "integrated tourism" aligns seamlessly with the principles of integration, public responsibility, and citizen demands proposed by the theory of integrated governance. It provides a new path for addressing the fragmented governance in the tourism industry. From the perspective of integrated governance, the diversification and comprehensiveness advocated by integrated tourism, along with the coordination and integration of tourism with other industries, and the innovation in operational mechanisms, represent novel approaches to overcoming the challenges of fragmented governance in the tourism industry.

1. Introduction

The 19th National Congress report pointed out that the growing contradiction between the people's increasing demand for a better life and the imbalanced and insufficient development has become the principal contradiction in Chinese society after entering the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Tourism reflects people's pursuit of a better life and is also a significant indicator of the improvement in people's living standards, making the tourism industry a "happiness industry." Against this backdrop, as a universally beneficial project for people's livelihoods, the tourism industry faces a structural transformation, and the concept of "integrated tourism," proposed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, quickly became a national strategic initiative for governing the tourism industry.[1]

2. Problem Statement

Integrated tourism is a faithful practice of Xi Jinping's tourism ideology, aligning seamlessly with the Five Major Development Concepts. It has become a national strategy for governing the tourism industry in the current stage of China's development. The concept of integrated tourism was formally introduced by scholars such as Li Xinjian, who, after investigating tourism in certain regions of Zhejiang province, proposed the academic concept of integrated tourism and provided recommendations for implementing integrated tourism, using Beijing as an example.[2] He believes that "integrated tourism" refers to the active involvement of various industries and the coordinated management of various departments, with all city residents participating together. It fully utilizes all attractive elements of the destination, providing tourists with a comprehensive, all-encompassing experience throughout the entire process and space, thereby satisfying tourists' comprehensive experiential needs. Currently, research on integrated tourism primarily focuses on conceptual discussions, impact and effectiveness studies, and development strategy research in three main areas. However, looking at the overall picture, discussions mainly revolve around the concept of integration without delving into the path characteristics of integrated tourism from a macro perspective. There is also a significant gap in placing integrated tourism within the theoretical framework of holistic governance. Integrated tourism involves multiple aspects, including resource integration, administrative system reform and innovation, and social management systems, essentially falling within the domain of public governance. Therefore, based on the perspective of holistic governance theory, this study elaborates that integrated tourism is an innovative path for the scientific governance of the tourism industry.
3. Problem Analysis - The Fragmentation of Tourism Governance

The term "fragmentation" implies the broken, scattered state of a particular thing. Foreign scholars Perri6, Leat describe fragmented government as follows: "If different functional departments independently address common social issues, lacking coordination, communication, and cooperation, causing the government's overall policy objectives to fail smoothly, then fragmented government is formed." [Perri6, Diana Leat, Kimberly Seltzer&Gerry Stoker. Towards holistic governance: The new reform agenda[M]. London: Palgrave Press, 2002:33]. From their explanation, we can observe that, in the context of public governance, fragmentation refers to the independence of governance entities, lack of collaboration, detachment from government target groups, lack of participation, and the scattered nature of governance tools, lacking comprehensiveness. Given the isolated organization of local governments, the fragmentation of functions, the parochial logic of action, and the complexity of reform and governance in the tourism industry in China, the "fragmentation" dilemma faced by tourism governance in practice mainly concentrates on the following aspects.

3.1. Fragmentation of Governance Entities

The key entities in tourism governance are government departments. However, due to the diversified pattern of administrative management in China, such as vertical management, segmented management, and isolated management, government departments of different levels and functions with distinct governance responsibilities lack effective communication and coordination, resulting in low integration and coordination among them, presenting a "fragmented" situation.

The advancement of tourism work requires support from various functional departments, determining that tourism governance departments need close collaboration with other functional departments in specific practical work.[3] However, the characteristics of the block-by-block segmented management pattern in China's administrative management lead to conflicts of interest among various functional departments. Ultimately, there are frequent occurrences of policy disputes, policy execution deviations, and policy goal deviations in tourism governance. Taking tourism resource development as an example, the initial development funds for tourism resources are borne by the cultural and tourism functional department. However, the later support for transportation infrastructure, comprehensive industry support, etc., relies on the support of transportation, agriculture, science and technology, and even cultural departments. The reality is that in many places, the "fragmentation" governance phenomenon caused by the pattern of segmented management results in a lack of effective communication and connection between various departments regarding tourism governance work. The existence of the fragmentation of governance entities in tourism makes it difficult to shape the overall picture of promoting social development through the tourism industry. In other words, the current state of governance entities in tourism is "not lacking governance entities, but lacking coordination and cooperation among multiple entities." Therefore, we need to explore a new governance path.

3.2. Fragmentation of Resource Allocation and Utilization

The fragmentation of resource allocation and utilization has two meanings here:

Firstly, the "fragmentation" of tourism resource allocation and utilization. Tourism resources are broadly categorized into four types: natural tourism resources, cultural and historical sites, social and cultural resources, religious and cultural resources, and modern artificially created attractions. Currently, the development and utilization of these five types of tourism resources tend to be dispersed, with each operating independently and no way to concentrate and form a collective force of overall tourism resources. However, the uniqueness, monopoly, and heterogeneity of each type of tourism resource inevitably lead to their complementarity. For example, there is complementarity between natural resources and cultural and historical resources. Natural resources gain rich connotations because of the background of cultural and historical resources, while cultural and historical resources appear independent and unique with the supplementation of natural resources.

In summary, the fragmentation problem in the utilization of resources will directly harm tourism development and governance work in two aspects: Restricting the Transformation of Tourism Industry Development: The inability to integrate and utilize tourism resources means a significant weakening of their attractiveness. Meanwhile, the "fragmentation" of unconsolidated tourism resources cannot meet the requirements of the new era for the development of a large tourism industry, severely hindering the transformation of the tourism industry.[4] Increasing the Operating Costs of Tourism Governance Systems: In the tourism governance system, various projects such as characteristic town development, scenic area integration, and various management systems for these projects fall under the management and execution of different functional departments. This inherent systemic deficiency in China's administrative management can lead to issues such as overlapping or missing functions, inconsistent rights and responsibilities, and coordination difficulties, resulting in unnecessary increases in the operating costs of the governance system.

3.3. Fragmentation of Governance Systems

Fragmentation of governance systems refers to the unstable rules in the governance field, lagging policies and systems, and contradictory systems among the relevant systems and institutions governing the tourism industry. This leads to a fragmented situation where governance practices lack sufficient or effective legal
basis. When facing governance conflicts, various departments tend to selectively invoke legal content favorable to themselves for partial and stage-specific responses.[9] At the same time, they formulate systems advantageous to their own work. The absence of a department that can provide a comprehensive explanation leads the institutional system of tourism into a fragmented and misguided path.

4. Whole Tourism - Holistic Governance Practice Against Fragmentation

4.1. Holistic Conceptualization of Whole Tourism

The realization of a theory in a specific location depends on the degree to which the theory meets the needs of that place. Holistic governance theory suggests solving the fragmentation problem in government governance through three key mechanisms: coordination mechanisms, integration mechanisms, and technical mechanisms. The planning of whole tourism embodies rich conceptualizations of holistic governance. Moreover, whole tourism is a localized concept in China, making it a crucial practical test for the scientific validity of holistic governance theory.[6] The holistic conceptualization of the whole tourism strategy includes the following:

Implementation of Holistic Construction of Subjects: "Comprehensive Industry Linkage Model" in Yixian, Baoding:

The holistic construction of subjects is reflected in breaking the limited mindset that tourism is solely the responsibility of tourism administrative departments. It promotes coordination and integration among governments and departments at different levels. This is achieved by strengthening the authority of the central government to enhance the leadership of local governments. Simultaneously, a linkage mechanism for promoting whole tourism involves collaboration among various departments, including transportation, agriculture, science and technology, education, with the tourism department taking the lead.

On the other hand, the diversification and broad participation of subject entities are essential aspects. Unlike traditional tourism governance, where the government plays a singular role, whole tourism involves multiple actors, including the government, market, and society, with the government taking a leading role. Whole tourism is not a simple tourism governance issue; it is a national-level strategic plan and a systematic arrangement. Relying solely on the government, the market, or society is difficult to achieve. Therefore, it requires the involvement of multiple governance entities to practice coordinated governance. Additionally, whole tourism embodies the concept of co-building and sharing development. In the concept of whole tourism, local residents become active participants in tourism development, transforming from beneficiaries of economic dividends to proactive contributors, serving as a powerful driving force for the development of whole tourism.

4.2. Holistic Construction of Resource Allocation: The Case of "Integration of Cultural and Tourism Resources" in Jiyuan, Henan Province

The development model of "urban-rural integration and industry-city integration" in Jiyuan City, Henan Province, is a typical representative of holistic tourism development in resource allocation. Adhering to the principles of "resource integration, industry integration, regional cooperation, and strength aggregation," Jiyuan promotes the "six integrations" in whole tourism. The city's resource allocation in cultural and tourism resources is mainly reflected in three aspects: Integrated Supply of Policy Resources: Jiyuan has achieved integration in the supply of policy resources, addressing the problem of policy fragmentation between internal and external government departments. Jiyuan has formed a collaborative force for whole tourism development, characterized by "government leadership, enterprise participation, and active public engagement." It has overcome administrative restrictions by cooperating with Luoyang City, breaking down administrative barriers. The collaboration ensures unified policies in policy formulation and tourism regulation, promoting integrated policy resource allocation between the two areas. This approach avoids administrative inefficiencies and regulatory errors resulting from inconsistent policy resources. Jiyuan City has been innovative in land policies for tourism, prioritizing land for tourism projects and activating idle land resources. In terms of talent policy, a "think tank" for tourism development has been established to enhance talent attraction and training. In industrial policy, focusing on the construction of a whole tourism demonstration area. Jiyuan has created special funds, coordinated various departments, and completed supporting infrastructure construction, providing comprehensive support for the development of the tourism industry. Integrated Allocation of Tourism Geographic Resources: Jiyuan has achieved the integration of tourism geographic resources, merging scenic resources based on the development of transportation infrastructure. This integration provides tourists with a good experience of whole tourism.

4.3. Holistic Construction of Management System Mechanism: "Party-Government Coordination and Innovative Management" Model in Laoshan District, Qingdao

Laoshan District in Qingdao, Shandong Province, successfully made it to the first batch of national whole tourism demonstration areas. Since 2016, Laoshan District has been leading the comprehensive integration of resources, vigorously developing high-quality tourism, and constructing a "one-body for urban and rural areas, linkage between mountains, seas, and air" comprehensive three-dimensional development pattern. Guided by the coordination of the party and government and the innovation of the tourism management system, Laoshan District has continuously promoted the transformation from scenic tourism to whole tourism, from high-speed
growth to high-quality development, and from sightseeing tourism to leisure vacation tourism. Laoshan District has established a comprehensive leadership system for whole tourism development led by the district party committee. A comprehensive governance and development mechanism for whole tourism has been established, leveraging institutional synergy to address issues caused by fragmented policies and strategic mistakes. At the implementation level, Laoshan District has innovated its tourism management system by enhancing the comprehensive supervision mechanism for tourism, establishing a three-tier tourism consultation service system from district to streets and villages, and launching the first short-code whole tourism hotline in the country. These innovations, driven by citizens' needs, significantly enhance the overall tourism experience in Laoshan District, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for tourists and safeguarding their rights.

5. Conclusion

The strategy of whole tourism is not merely a "happiness project"; its top-level design and grassroots implementation serve as a test of the country's grassroots social governance capabilities. Whole tourism endeavors to integrate and unify with grassroots social governance, promoting the construction of a "public governance mindset" at the grassroots level. From the holistic conception and specific measures of whole tourism, it is evident that this practice responds explicitly to the holistic governance model's comprehensive governance patterns. Moreover, the principles emphasized by the holistic governance theory—citizen demands, coordination mechanisms, integration mechanisms, and the strategic application of technological mechanisms—are undeniably consistent with the direction of whole tourism advancement in China.[7] The practical application of whole tourism demonstrates that it is a new path for transitioning from small-scale tourism to large-scale tourism, effectively addressing the fragmentation in the governance of tourism.

References