

Research on the Influence of Tourism Overcharging Events on Destination Image: Based on the Moderation of Governmental Efforts

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Abstract: Tourism overcharging events occur time and again, which exert an influence on the destination. In previous researches, scholars have studied much on the concept, influence and coping strategies of tourism crisis events through qualitative research, while quantitative research on the mechanism of tourism crisis events are less, especially from the angle of governmental efforts. In order to deepen the theoretical study of tourism crisis events, using urban destination as the research object, this paper adopted the experimental research method by designing two hypotheses and two experiments. The results of the study show that: first, when tourism overcharging event happened in a urban destination, the evaluation of potential tourists to the tourism destination image decreases significantly; second, comparing to no effort of the government, the government adopted the step of identification to solve the tourism overcharging event can significantly reduce the negative evaluation of potential tourists. On the basis of this above, the paper stated the theoretical and practical significance of the research and then put forward the direction of future research.

Keywords: tourism overcharging events destination image Governmental efforts

INTRODUCTION

In the process of the rapid development of the tourism industry in China, there occurs many discordant voices, such as rip-off guides, uncivilized tourism behaviour and tourism overcharging. In these negative tourism events, tourism overcharging disseminates widely and causes the largest negative influence on the tourism destination. How to reduce the negative impact of tourism overcharging events has become the pressing problem [1]. For instance, during the October holiday period in 2015, Qingdao prawns event was disclosure to microblog and then attracted much attention and discussion of the public after spreading of the Internet and new media propaganda. Tourism overcharging events occurs frequently in tourism destinations, such as Sanya, Lijiang, Xiamen, Harbin and other places. In June 2016, Internet users in China reached 710 million and Internet penetration rate reached 51.7%. Because of popularization of network, Internet users can disclose tourism overcharging events through microblog and we chat from anywhere at any time, which may lead to a crisis in the public. Therefore, one tourism destination occurs overcharging events whether it will affect the potential tourists attitude to the destination? How do tourism overcharging events influence the potential tourists attitude? Whether the government behavior will affect the perception of potential tourists to the destination image perception? These problems are urgent that the city's government departments must face and solve.

Around twentieth century, tourism crisis events were paid much attention by scholars in the rapid development of the tourism industry in Western. Scholars used qualitative methods such as interview and case research to study this theme [2]. Although quantitative research has increased in recent years [3, 4], from the perspective of governmental efforts is still very rare. Tourism overcharging events as a public crisis, whether and how to influence evaluation of potential tourists' perception of tourism destination image in the Internet era? This paper adopted the experimental method to discussion and analysis the mechanism of tourism overcharging event from the perspective of the government, in order to clear the implementation of crisis management strategy of tourism destination government.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As early as 1970s, foreign scholars began to pay attention to the crisis in the tourism industry, especially because the development of the tourism industry in western suffered the threat of energy crisis. In 1974, the travel research association held a "contribution of travel research in the era of crisis" in the annual meeting and discussed the vulnerability of travel and tourism in the urgent moment, which is the beginning of tourism crisis and tourism crisis research. Different from general disaster, tourism crisis has the characteristics of organization and community relationship. In the discussion of tourism crisis events, Faulkner explained the crisis from happening to management by core concept butterfly effect from chaos theory [5]. Because

of different classification criteria, the tourism crisis events are divided into different types. According to the source of the crisis, tourism crisis can be divided into external crisis (such as terrorism and public outbreaks and the financial crisis) and internal crisis (such as natural disasters, fire, management problems) [6]. According to the crisis duration, it is transient tourism crisis and persistent tourism crisis. As for the concept of tourism crisis events, World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 2003 gave the definition of a crisis is any unexpected event that affects travellers confidence in a destination and interferes with the ability to continue operating normally [6, 7]. As an important part of tourism crisis event, tourism overcharging event is that tourists are required high price for tourism products in activities in the destination and may influence tourists evaluation on the destination.

Acceleration of globalization process, especially the United States 911, China SARS epidemic has seriously affected the development of the tourism industry, which has attracted wide attention of scholars at home and abroad. However, scholars have paid little attention to the internal mechanism of tourism crisis events, quantitative research is much less, especially from the perspective of the government. In recent years, with the rapid development of tourism in China, tourism overcharging events occur frequently and spread fast and wide because of network. Under the background of network, scholars such as Guo, Li referred to use smart tourism method to avoid information asymmetry in the tourism market [8]. Lv, Meng, Lu studied how the tourism overcharging events spread and produce influence [9]. Using quantitative method on the inherent mechanism of the tourism overcharging events is rare, and this phenomenon in western is also little. Hence, in the era of quick information dissemination, quantitative research on the internal mechanism of tourism overcharging events from the perspective of the government plays an important guiding role and practical value for domestic destination managers.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Tourism overcharging events and destination image

As an unexpected event of the destination, tourism overcharging event may produce a bad impact on tourism destination image to a certain extent. From the macro level, it directly results in decreasing tourists of tourism destination, and then leads to reducing income and economic benefits of the tourism destination [10]. From the micro level, it may change cognition of potential tourists to the destination and they decide whether to go to the destination after much deliberation [11]. Risk perception theory shows that when the perceived risk of potential tourists to the

destination is high, it will change the perception of tourists on the destination image and ultimately affect their decision. Sonmez and Gray found that tourists' perception of tourism crisis events have a direct impact on the choice of destination and terrorist or political instability is the first influencing factor [12]. Li took the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake as an example, analysed risk perception characteristics of the public and the influence factors in the earthquake and constructed a complete risk perception theory model, which will help to a better understanding of the mechanism of how risk perception impact mental health and response behavior of people [13].

According to the concept of risk perception, risk perception is a subjective perception and personal judgment of risk. Therefore, the perception degree of tourism overcharging events determines the perception of the potential to destination image and influences the final travel decision. If the tourists perceived risk highly, it will affect the cognition travel decision of tourists. Based on this above, the following hypothesis is presented:

H1: tourism overcharging events have negative impact on the destination image of potential tourist.

Governmental efforts and tourism overcharging events

The tourism industry has defects, such as external economy, unfair competition and information asymmetry, and tourism management system is not perfect at the present stage in China, which will inevitably lead to the phenomenon of free-riding. As a result, the destination government must undertake the corresponding economic and social functions. According to the theory of service recovery, when occurs service failures, service enterprises should take remedy actions to reduce negative effects and improve customer satisfaction. What's more, customers may be more satisfied than those never encountered failures after recovery, tend to remain loyalty and are more willing to propagate positive word-of-mouth [14]. Johnston and Finn thought that service recovery is the initiative and prestressing behavior of finding and dealing with service failures in time [15]. Christakis and Brown also believed that the service recovery is the service provider takes actions to alleviate and repair the damages on customers in the process of customer service [16]. Based on the concept of service recovery, this paper refers to governmental efforts is that in order to remedy the defect of market and the negative impact caused by tourism overcharging events, takes the initiative to perform the corresponding functions in a reasonable range [17]. In short, after tourism charging event happens, the tourism government takes measures actively to deal with it to reduce the negative impact.

There are many measures of service recovery, such as confirmation, explanation, apology, punishment, compensation. Boshov studied with remedial strategies of apology, an apology and compensation, apology and compensation and ticket, customer satisfaction and behavior intention was obviously different after recovery and the latter is higher than the former [18]. Lai veske and MacDougall verified the recovery influences of different strategies are different [14]. At present, the service recovery dimensions has not yet unified, which may be relate to level of service failure and expectations of service recovery [18]. Anyway, service recovery strategies of confirmation, apology and compensation have been verified and approved [19-24]. Different from an enterprise, the way of apology and compensation could be more complex for government. Confirmation is an indispensable way to the destination government in the face of the tourism crisis and thus tourists would perceive fairness through attribution [25]. Therefore, this paper chooses confirmation strategy to measure the behavior of the government.

According to the theoretical background of service recovery, after tourism overcharging event happened, if the government actively take measures to deal with the event timely, tourists would perceive to be respected and reduce the negative impact to the destination. Conversely, it will enhance negative effects to the destination. Whether the government take efforts, the impact is different. Hence, a hypothesis is put forward:

H2: The impact of tourism overcharging events on the potential tourists' perception of tourism destination image is moderated by government efforts. Compared to inaction, the government adopting confirmation strategy can significantly reduce the negative effects of tourists perceived evaluation.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

In this study, experimental study was used to test the hypothesis of 2 hypotheses. In order to ensure that the external validity, the experimental material was selected in 2015 occurred in Qingdao "sky-high stewed chicken with mushrooms". The description of the Qingdao image was selected by 200 thousand page views and complete evaluation. Qingdao was virtual city A in order to avoid stereotype of potential tourists to the real tourism destination. Experiments were conducted in two large shopping malls where have a wide range of consumer groups, entertainment, and other characteristics. To ensure good experimental environment, experiments chose to be done at the public dining areas, McDonald's, COSTA coffee, movie waiting areas. The scene was tested by first-person to

help subjects enter into experimental scenario quickly. Before experiments, selected customers who had travel experiences.

Study 1: The main effect of tourism overcharging events

Design

Study 1 was used to validate H1, which measured image perception of potential tourists to tourism destination after occurred tourism overcharging event. In order to test the H1, the researchers designed a 2 (control group vs experimental group *2 (experimental group: before vs after overcharging event) mixed experiment. Before the experiment, the researchers would tell the subjects that the experiment was used to study academic research, ensured that the study wouldn't involve personal privacy and there was no right or wrong answer. In the experimental group, experiment was conducted in two periods to measure the difference of the subjects to the destination image perception. After reading the materials, participants were asked to fill out the image perception of the city A. Thereafter, participants would evaluate the image again after knowing city A recently happened overcharging event. In the control group, the participants would read a real description of city A and then evaluate the general impression to it.

Variables

The core variables measured was destination image. And cognitive and emotional image as the main composition of the destination image had been widely recognized. The measurement of cognitive image was adopted from Macleay Lee Barlow Grove [26], composed of 15 items, in addition to the destination attributes, also including comfortable climate, personal safety, cleanliness, friendly attitude, by 5 point Likert scale. Russell et al. argued that "happy and unhappy", "inspiring and sleepy" 2 scales were enough to measure emotional image [27]. In order to keep the consistency of the measurement items, emotional image was shifted into "happy", "exciting" 5 point scale.

Pretest

Before the beginning of the formal experiment, this study first conducted a pretest to verify the effectiveness of the experimental materials. In the selection of tourism overcharging materials, this study chosen from the ten major tourism overcharging events. In order to avoid stereotype of the subjects on the 2015 Qingdao prawn event just happened, materials were removed out of seafood. The experiment invited 20 graduate students, the subjects were asked to read three material description of tourism overcharging events and judged whether the event belongs to tourism overcharging events. The statistical results showed that 75% subjects thought that the material one was

overcharging event, 60% thought that the material two was tourist overcharging event, 40% thought that the material three was tourist overcharging event. Based on this above, the material one was selected to ensure that the experimental scene had a good effectiveness. Subsequently, this study corrected some guiding words by asking the subjects as well as professors, for example, "black guide" was modified into the "local tour guide".

A total of 90 questionnaires were distributed, and 82 valid questionnaires were recovered. The effective rate was over 91%. Among them, the proportion of male subjects were 57%, women were 43%. Age between 18-35 reached nearly 94%. College degree were 30%, undergraduate and higher education were 55%.

RESULTS

Table 1: Different groups for the evaluation value of destination image

group	scenario	sample	mean value
control group	before the event	39	3.67
experimental group	before the event	43	3.60
	after the event	43	2.74

Study 2: The moderation effect of governmental efforts

Design

Study 2 was used to validate H2, which measured image perception of potential tourists to tourism destination moderated by governmental efforts. According to the way of governmental efforts, the researchers designed a 2 (no overcharging event vs overcharging event) *2 (governmental inaction vs governmental efforts) mixed experiment. Before the experiment, the researchers would tell the subjects that the experiment was used to study academic research, ensured that the study wouldn't involve personal privacy and there was no right or wrong answer. Subsequently, the subjects were randomly assigned to the 2 groups of governmental inaction group and governmental efforts group, which respectively emphasized after the event government had no response and the government had taken confirmation to deal with it. Each group evaluated on the destination image perception before and after the event. At first the participants would read a real description of city A and then be told a overcharging event just happened.

Variables

The government confirmed behavior referred to the attribution investigation after the overcharging event occurred. The measurement of governmental efforts was adopted by Likert 5 point scale from Smith, Wagner, Yang and Zhang, Zhong [28]. With the

In the experimental group, paired samples t test showed that before overcharging event happens, the image evaluation value of the subjects on city A was 3.60 and after the event was 2.74, which meant the image perception of the subjects on city A significantly decreased ($t=7.972$, $df=42$, $p< 0.0005$). In order to eliminate the individual differences, experiment 1 increased the control group for comparison between groups. As shown in Table 1, independent samples t test showed that the subjects in the control group evaluated A image of 3.67. There was no significant difference compared to the experimental group with value of 3.60($t=0.606$, $df=80$, $p> 0.05$), which implied that groups didn't exist the influence of individual differences and the control group and the experimental group after event was significantly decreased ($t=6.680$, $df=80$, $p< 0.0005$). Through analysis of the data above, the event occurred significantly reduced the assessment of potential tourists' perception on destination image. Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported.

timeliness of the event and interviews, determined the government confirmation behavior from "government investigated the event", "government confirmed that the enterprise exited overcharging behavior" two items. In addition, the measurement of destination image perception was consistent with study 1.

A total of 90 questionnaires were distributed, and 79 valid questionnaires were recovered. The effective rate was over 88%. Among them, the proportion of male subjects were 48%, women were 52%. Age between 18-35 reached nearly 92%. College degree were 24%, undergraduate and higher education were 66%.

Manipulation check

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the manipulation, the two level of government efforts were checked. Independent samples t test showed that the evaluation value of the subjects to the behavior of government inaction group was 1.96, and to the behavior of government effort group was 3.97. Thus, the two level of government behavior showed significant differences($t=-10.768$, $df=77$, $p< 0.0005$). The results above showed that the experiment had passed manipulation check.

Results

40 subjects were randomly assigned to the government inaction group while 39 subjects were

randomly assigned to the government efforts group. Used SPSS 19 to calculate two groups the mean value of destination image before and after the event. Through independent sample t test, the results showed the difference between the two groups showed significant ($t=2.229$, $df=77$, $p<0.05$). As shown in Table

2, mean deviation of the government inaction group on destination image was 0.71 while the government efforts group was 0.45, indicating that perceived evaluation of the destination image of the former group government decreases significantly more than the latter. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was validated.

Table 2: Different groups for the evaluation value of destination image

group	scenario	sample	mean difference	significance
governmental inaction	before the event	40	0.71	t=2.229, p< 0.05
	after the event	40		
governmental efforts	before the event	39	0.45	
	after the event	39		

CONCLUSIONS

Discussion and conclusion

From the phenomenon of tourism overcharging events, its impact on destination image and response strategy were studied quantitatively and deeply. Hypothesis 1 and 2 were verified, thus we can get the following two conclusions. First, when the city occurs tourism overcharging events, it will reduce the evaluation of potential tourists' perception on destination image. Second, compared to governmental inaction, destination governmental efforts can effectively reduce the negative effects. According to the risk perception theory, when the tourism destination occurs such event, the potential tourists will increase the degree of risk perception. Tourism overcharging event as a tourism crisis, affects the evaluation of potential tourists' perception on tourism destination image while the degree of perceived evaluation will be affected by the local government efforts. According to the service recovery theory, the local government departments take affirmative action to remedy the service after the event happened can effectively reduce the negative impact of slaughtered tourists and potential tourists. Slaughtered tourists would felt to be valued respected and thus reduce the negative perceived evaluation on the destination. On the contrary, if the local government departments take no action, the slaughtered tourists and the public would think that the destination governments don't pay attention and will increase the negative evaluation on the destination. As a consequence, as compared to governmental inaction, the governmental efforts could reduce the negative perceived evaluation on the destination image.

With the development of the tourism industry, tourism overcharging events in China happens frequently. Especially in the era of network, such as micro-blog, WeChat and other new media, it helps enlarge the negative impact of the crisis. Not only quantitative research on the overcharging events has theoretical significance, but also has practical value. Previous studies focus on tourism crisis concept, type, influence and strategy analysis by case analysis,

interviews and other qualitative methods while quantitative research is very few, especially from the perspective of the government. This study used experiment method to study how the events affect tourism destination image and whether affected by the governmental efforts. This has an important value in deepening the theoretical framework of tourism crisis events. Followed by practical implications, mainly contain two aspects: first, it plays a warning role for the government management of tourism destination. The conclusions of this study show that when the destination occurs overcharging events, tourists will reduce perceived evaluation on the image, which helps to remind the local government must take full attention of such events. Second, provides specific measures to reduce the events on the destination image. The study results indicate that after tourism overcharging events happens, the government taking affirmative action would effectively reduce the negative perceived evaluation of potential tourist on destination image. Therefore, the government departments should pay more attention to the local news and multimedia platform and focus on the local tourist assessment. Once found tourism overcharging events, timely response, take measures such as confirmation, so as to avoid the negative impact of the events.

Limitations and future research

The research has the two following limitations. One is the dimensions of this article selected as confirmation of the government, which is relatively limited to study government response strategy. A follow-up study need to increase the apology, compensation strategy and continue to study quantitatively. In addition, confirmed, apology and compensation strategy can be compared to obtain which one is more effectively reduce the negative perceived evaluation of potential tourists on destination image, providing the government effective measures. The other is the research on destination by horizontal study. Tourism overcharging events has timeliness, with the media and public attention shifted, the event will gradually fade out of the public, however, whether its

negative impact will weaken? Future should increase the longitudinal research on tourism overcharging events and how the negative impact changes after such event occurs, so that the government departments could take corresponding measures in different periods.

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