The development and utilization of forest parks based on the experiences strategy

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Abstract
As a piece of forestland under special protection and a specific site for tourism and leisure, national forest parks have already become an important carrier for forest tourism and drawn more and more attention from all walks of the society. This paper is a case study of Baicaowa National Forest Park in Chengde, which focuses on the development and utilization of forest parks based on the experiences strategy. It claims that during the planning of tourism facilities of national forest parks, principles of “thematic experience” (including temporal, spatial and physical experiences), “profound experience” and “educational experience” should be adopted to offer a newly complex tourism product system with “experience at its core” and strengthened experience elements as well as improved experience design, thus propelling the upgrade of the on-going forest tourism products.

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1. The experience economy and the development of forest tourism

The experience economy was first seen in the book Future Shock published in 1970, whose author is an American futurist Alvin Toffler. Toffler argues that the economic development will embrace the upcoming experience economy trend after undergoing stages of agricultural economy, industrial economy and service economy. Human beings are stepping into the age of experience economy which will definitely take the place of service economy [1].

The year of 1998 witnessed the first detailed and explicit elaboration on the exact connotation of experience economy in a co-published Experience Economy by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, who were the founders of American Strategic Horizons LLP Company. Though commodities are tangible and services are intangible, the experiences created are unforgettable. The newest economic development trend that came into being through meeting people’s needs for experience is similar to commodity economy and service economy which are all products of the interaction between the productivity development and the increasing upgrade of people’s requirement.
With the advent of the experience economy, people’s touring activities are not limited to the traditional sightseeing, leisure and shopping, but to acquire certain unique experience, such as entertainment, escape, education, aesthetes and empathy [2]. Experience tourism is actually a comprehensive feeling of tourists. Making a tour plan and the whole process of touring itself are forming the holistic image of subjects’ touring. It is emphasized that participation and incorporation are necessary for tourists to experience culture, life as well as history [3].

The arrival of the age of experience economy has created excellent opportunities for the development of forest tourism. Forest tourism, in essence, aims at providing tourists with an experience of being away from the crowds in the city to embrace the natural ecology. Therefore the operational strategies must be changed so as to answer the calls of the age of experience economy. The forest experience tourism is a nice way for leisure vacation because it enables tourists to join the experience activities in beautiful nature. Such tourism is not only enjoyable, knowledge-increasing, experience-enriching, horizons-broadening and spirit-cheering for tourists, but strengthens their awareness of nature affection and environmental protection [4].

2. The development principles of the experiences tourism of forest parks

2.1 The principle of themed experience

Theme is the foundation and soul of the experience. A vivid theme could fully arouse the sensation of tourists and touch their minds, leaving a strong feeling and deep impression. The determination of experience themes must be in accordance with two premises of the resources and markets, which means to dig out the most representative resources rooted in the local ground connections, the history of clocks and context and to refine and combine the special cultures with the most appealing and practical characteristics so as to make a comprehensive display by the use of landscape architecture, folk customs, scenery specialty, historical legends, producing and living patterns, cultural patterns and other factors under the guidance of the experience demand of tourism market [5]. For example, the tourism program of “finding stamps “in Capilano River Bridge Park is such an thematic and exploratory activity.

2.2 The principle of experience in depth

Any travel experience like a forest adventure, a raft surfing, will be sure to leave a deep impression on experience of those tourists and make their memories of the experience surpass the experience itself, so that the tourists end up with a memorable satisfaction. When travelling, tourists will find touring activities impressive if products and services could stimulate or touch them. So forest parks should strive to keep the experience product unique while maintaining the distinctive characteristics in order to constantly bring fresh feelings to tourists and to meet their personalized and participatory experience requirement and therefore the depth of experience is increased. For example, as the largest national park of New Zealand, Fordland National Park boasts in fjords which are caused by the glacier movement during the Pleistocene and it is known as “the best alpine garden and seaside gorge”.

2.3 The principle of educational experience

Many of the tourists traveling in a certain place aim at obtaining a certain degree of knowledge or expanding their horizon. There is an aim of increasing life experience and insights in almost all of the recreation experience. In fact people enjoy their leisure time in forest parks, meanwhile their life experience is constantly enriched and knowledge gained and such pleasure will accompany the whole process of recreation. A typical example of attaching great importance to the educational principle is the Yellowstone National Park, in which a variety of tourism activities have been concretely presented. Both adults and children, through guided tours, interpretation posts and so on, fully
get to know the history of the park, landscape and animal and plant resources, thereby receiving an excellent environmental education in participating tourism activities.

3 The ASEB analysis on the resource development of the Baicaowa Forest Park

3.1 The overview of the Baicaowa National Forest Park

Located in the southeast of Luan Ping County, Chengde City of Hebei Province, the Baicaowa National Forest Park lies in the middle part of Yanshan Mountains, 40 km east from the historical and cultural city of Chengde, 170 km west from the capital, Beijing and is the crucial gateway to the Beijing-North Golden Travel Line (Beijing – Jinshan Mountain – Baicaowa - Chengde - Magnolia paddock). The Forest Park has a total area of 5396 hectares, which is known as the eco-park of “Four Seas”, namely: sea of woods, sea of grasses, sea of stones and sea of clouds. Here stretches the emerald mountains and gurgling streams, and precious plants and animals are everywhere; not only can tourists enjoy the northern majestic rolling hills, but also see the country’s rare species-- ancient birch clusters, the Pennisetum on the summit of high mountain, sea of stones higher than 1,700 meters above sea level; drink Baicao spring water and bathe in the Mountain. More than 80% of the forest park is covered with natural secondary forests, of which nearly a third are birch, which is a rather large and better preserved area of birth zone with good forest forms in North China(Figures 1,2).

3.2 The ASEB analysis on the resource development

The development and utilization of forest parks based on the experience strategy must meet the people’s requirement to return to nature. Experiential design focuses on the participation of tourists and increases the joy and excitability of forest tourism through the theme rich in educational significances, which stimulates physical comfort, so that tourists not only enjoy the natural beauty, but also a taste of life returning to simplicity. To this end, tourists get to enjoy a full range of physical, mental, and in-depth travel experience.

In order to reflect the ideas and methods of the experience design, an ASEB analysis on the resources and markets of Baicaowa National Forest park is carried out to find weaknesses and negative factors that affect its development and adopt the systematic analysis method to determine the relevant measures of removing or transferring the weaknesses and negative factors (Table 1).

Table 1: The ASEB Grid Analysis on the Baicaowa National Forest Park
4 The measures of park development based on experiences strategy

4.1 Highlighting its own characteristics, running through the theme of experience

In the planning of Baicaowa National Forest Park, first of all through the status quo Analysis and an the ASEB grid analysis of the National Forest Park, two basic themes of the "birch native culture" and "primitive natural ecology" are determined, as follows:

1. The main scenic spot in Baicaowa is the 1000 acres of birch zone and it features in its own brands.
2. The construction of science museum of birch and shows of specimens of rare animals and plants deepen tourists ‘ understanding to the themes of the forest park, increase a sense of reality, so that tourists will receive a unique and memorable experience effect.
3. To ensure the thematic unity of Forest Park. Grass swamp forest park is a three-dimensional collection of attractions, from the forests, mountains, grassland, lakes into the valleys. With numerous attractions, the theme of the park must set space, time, and objects in the display of the overall coordination.
4. According to the features of the Forest Park, by use of the theory of market economy, the travel experience project is introduced around the recreation theme. In the Baicaowa National Forest Park, thousands of acres of birch resort, eco-picking parks, wilderness adventure areas, mountain golf recreation area, hunting and breeding areas are planned and developed to encourage tourists to take part in a rich variety of activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation aspects</th>
<th>A (Activities)</th>
<th>S (Settings)</th>
<th>E (Experiences)</th>
<th>B (Benefits)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S (strengths)</td>
<td>The unique nature of forest recreation; good reputation</td>
<td>Green, ecological, healthy and high-quality birch zone</td>
<td>Sightseeing, adventure, contact with nature; meet a variety of psychological requirement</td>
<td>Increase knowledge; precious memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W (weaknesses)</td>
<td>Tourism products are single and repetitive; no unified theme</td>
<td>Environmental pollution and destruction; habitat fragmentation</td>
<td>The singleness of experience pattern; the lack of depth of experience</td>
<td>The interests of the aboriginals can be hardly guaranteed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O (opportunities)</td>
<td>A certain basis; more diverse needs of tourists; the reputation of forest parks</td>
<td>Natural environment far away from cities; the forest experience is widely concerned</td>
<td>More diverse patterns of experience; forest experience in different depths</td>
<td>Benefit both the aboriginals and tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T (threats)</td>
<td>The lack of theoretical guidance; far away from the city and residential areas</td>
<td>The matching of recreational infrastructure and forest protection facilities</td>
<td>The primitive forest culture is being weakened</td>
<td>A lack of basis for the distribution of interests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Baicaowa National Forest Park Tourism Service Facilities Plan
4.2 Increase the depth of experience and strengthen experience feelings

A theme is simply a base for experience, and it needs creating an indelible impression. To do so, an emphasized thread must be manufactured to constitute the impression which will created experience in the tourists’ hearts, and each thread must support and fit the theme as this will help to create a unique and profound experience [6].

1. Using the two forms of "innovation" and "packaging", through the integration, extraction, concentration, etc., the best viewing place to enjoy birch in Beijing-North is to be created so that in the process of visiting, tourists will enjoy an "unrivaled" feeling and further appreciate the exciting experience of "self-realization".

2. To focus on creating an environment for the experience. For instance, the old trees and the primitive tree houses in the forest tree house scenic zones provide tourists with a place to return to nature and live in, which will make tourists gain a very profound experience effect.

3. To arrange appropriate travel adventures, such as forest adventures, alpine skiing tours, folk customs travel, forest bathing tours. These experiences have a great appeal to tourists in pursuit of novelty.

4. Tourists could feel the all-round recreation in a number of perspectives and that experience of sensory stimulation should support the theme to simulate the experience and feelings of tourists is necessary, thereby to carry out visual design, sound design, sensory design, touch design as well as kinesthesia design.

4.3 Focus on educational experience and improve the experience system

In the development and utilization of Baicaowa National Forest Park, the goals of its educational experience could mainly be achieved from two ways below:

1. The use of signs based on the educational experience. Highlight the signs with an educational character, such as identification plates, ornaments, sculptures and stone and other forms, mainly from scientific knowledge and customs. Logo design usually tend to extract the symbols that have distinct characteristics in order to highlight the peculiarity of education and sustain nature and culture in abstract or concrete forms. For example, through the provision of fragment native cultural landmarks, knowledge posts that contain a variety of biological knowledge and information can be used to mobilize the interest of the public to explore the natural knowledge and cultural practices.

2. To extract scenic spots from the environmental landscape and to improve the experience of the landscape system. Through the discovery, excavation, extraction, improvement, entitlement, interpretation, the environmental landscape, including geomorphologic landscape, biological landscape, weather landscape and astronomy landscape, is displayed. The main scenic spot in Baicaowa namely "1000 arces birch" attraction is designed like this: the distribution of vegetation according to altitude is very clear, which assembles both grassland scenery and a piece of heavily forested natural green thickness. Large areas of natural secondary birch make it seems to go back to nature. (Figures 3-5)
5 Conclusions

A prestigious American landscape architect J.O. Simonds in his Landscape Architecture: A Manual of Site Planning and Design 3rd Edition said: “People are not planning sites, nor spaces, nor objects, but the experiences”. Experience, as a starting point and destination, coincides with the requirement of the age of experience economy. To develop and utilize forest parks based on experience strategy will enrich the landscape experience clues of forest parks, lead to increase the landscape value, meanwhile it will enrich the experience of tourists, increase the tourism value and also cast a theoretical and practical guiding significance on rational development and utilization of forest parks.

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