

Research on the Development of Religious Tourism Resources in the Mount Wutai Scenic Area, Shanxi Province

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Abstract: Mount Wutai is an important religious tourism resource in Shanxi Province, with profound Buddhist cultural heritage, abundant temple architecture, and distinctive natural landscapes. Taking the Mount Wutai Scenic Area as the research object, this paper adopts the literature review method, questionnaire survey method, and comprehensive analysis method to examine the current development status, existing problems, and optimization strategies of its religious tourism resources. The results show that the tourist market of Mount Wutai has gradually expanded from faith-oriented tourists to the broader cultural tourism market. However, the scenic area still faces problems such as unreasonable spatial planning, insufficient religious and cultural experience, pressure on infrastructure and ecological protection, and a lack of diversified tourism products. Therefore, Mount Wutai should further explore religious and cultural connotations, improve facilities and services, promote ecological protection, and enrich tourism products and publicity methods, so as to enhance tourist experience and promote the high-quality development of religious tourism and cultural tourism in Shanxi Province.

Keywords: Mount Wutai, religious tourism, tourism resource development, cultural experience, sustainable development

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

In recent years, with the upgrading of tourism consumption demand, tourists' attention has gradually shifted from simple sightseeing to cultural experience, spiritual perception, and local characteristics. As an important part of cultural tourism, religious tourism integrates religious belief, historical culture, architectural art, and folk experience. It includes not only pilgrimage and blessing activities, but also visits to religious scenic areas for sightseeing, learning, and leisure.

Shanxi Province has a profound historical and cultural foundation and abundant religious tourism resources. As one of the four famous Buddhist mountains in China, Mount Wutai has a long Buddhist history, rich temple architecture, and unique natural landscapes. However, its resource advantages have not been fully utilized, and problems remain in planning layout, cultural experience, infrastructure, ecological protection, and tourism product innovation. Therefore, this paper takes Mount Wutai Scenic Area as the research object and analyzes the development status, existing problems, and optimization strategies of its religious tourism resources. Previous research also shows that religious tourism development should balance traditional culture protection and modern tourism development [1].

1.2 Research Methods

This paper mainly adopts the literature research method, questionnaire survey method, and comprehensive analysis method. First, relevant literature on religious tourism, tourism resource development, and Mount Wutai Scenic Area is reviewed to provide theoretical support for the study. Second, a questionnaire survey is used to collect data on tourists' basic characteristics, cognition of religious tourism, and consumption behavior, so as to understand tourists' needs and evaluations. Finally, the collected materials and survey results are comprehensively analyzed to summarize the main problems in the development of religious tourism resources in Mount Wutai and propose corresponding optimization strategies.

2. Current Development Status of Religious Tourism Resources in Mount Wutai

2.1 Overview of Religious Tourism Resources in Mount Wutai

Mount Wutai is one of the most representative religious tourism scenic areas in Shanxi Province, with profound Buddhist cultural heritage and high tourism development value. As a famous Buddhist sacred place in China, it preserves many temple buildings, Buddhist cultural relics, and religious cultural landscapes. Representative temples such as Xiantong Temple, Tayuan Temple, and Pusa Ding reflect the historical and artistic value of Buddhist culture in Mount Wutai.

Its religious tourism resources include temple buildings, religious activities, Buddhist music, folk legends, and natural

landscapes. Buddhist festivals, scripture chanting, and blessing activities attract many believers and tourists. In general, Mount Wutai has religious, cultural, historical, natural, social, and economic value, meeting tourists' needs for pilgrimage, sightseeing, learning, and leisure. Related research also shows that pilgrimage activities can generate regional economic value and promote local tourism development [2].

2.2 Analysis of Tourist Survey Results

To understand tourists' needs, this study conducted a questionnaire survey on tourists' basic characteristics, cognition of religious tourism, and consumption behavior. A total of 129 questionnaires were distributed and collected. The results show that tourists are mainly young and middle-aged, and ordinary tourists without religious beliefs account for the majority. This indicates that the tourist market of Mount Wutai has expanded from faith-oriented tourists to broader cultural tourists.

From the perspective of cognition and consumption behavior, tourists pay more attention to religious cultural connotations, architectural aesthetics, service quality, and infrastructure conditions. However, their satisfaction with religious cultural experience and scenic area facilities is relatively low. Tourist consumption is mainly concentrated on tickets and incense donation, while consumption on souvenirs, guide services, and cultural experience is limited. This shows that the tourism consumption structure of Mount Wutai is still relatively single.

3. Problems in the Development of Religious Tourism Resources in Mount Wutai

3.1 Unreasonable Planning Layout

Mount Wutai Scenic Area still has deficiencies in overall planning and spatial layout. In some areas, temples, residential buildings, and commercial facilities are mixed together, and functional zoning is not clear enough. This makes it difficult for tourists to form a complete religious and cultural experience. In addition, some buildings are not well coordinated with the overall religious atmosphere of the scenic area, which weakens its solemnity and cultural unity as a Buddhist sacred place. Problems such as unclear functional zoning, mixed temple and commercial areas, and insufficient traffic planning have affected tourist experience and the effective development of religious tourism resources.

3.2 Insufficient Religious Cultural Experience

Although Mount Wutai has abundant Buddhist cultural heritage, the scenic area has not fully explored the connotation of religious culture. Tourists' activities are mainly temple visits, incense burning, praying, and general sightseeing, while participatory and interactive religious cultural experience projects are still insufficient. Resources such as Buddhist music, religious rituals, Manjusri belief stories, and Buddhist art interpretation have not been fully transformed into tourism products that tourists can deeply perceive. Therefore, the scenic area still needs to improve the depth of Buddhist cultural display and enhance the communication of its unique cultural elements.

3.3 Great Pressure on Infrastructure and Environmental Protection

With the increase in tourist numbers, Mount Wutai Scenic Area faces great pressure in transportation, parking, sanitation, and tour guidance. Narrow roads and traffic congestion affect tourists' travel efficiency and experience. At the same time, problems such as garbage disposal, sewage discharge, and insufficient greening maintenance affect the overall image of the scenic area. As a religious tourism destination, Mount Wutai should maintain a quiet, clean, and solemn environment, but insufficient infrastructure and environmental pressure restrict its sustainable development. Bleie's study on pilgrim tourism in the Himalayas also shows that religious destinations face challenges in community, environment, economy, society, and culture, so coordinated planning is necessary [3].

3.4 Lack of Diversified Tourism Products

The religious tourism products of Mount Wutai Scenic Area are still mainly traditional sightseeing and pilgrimage activities, with limited innovation and diversity. Tourists' consumption is mainly concentrated on tickets and incense donation, while cultural and creative products, study tours, meditation experiences, Buddhist cultural interpretation, and immersive projects are insufficiently developed. In addition, some religious cultural projects with development potential have not been fully promoted. Therefore, the scenic area should improve product innovation and market promotion to better meet the diversified needs of tourists.

4. Development Strategies for Religious Tourism Resources in Mount Wutai

4.1 Deeply Explore the Connotation of Religious Culture

Mount Wutai Scenic Area should further explore Buddhist cultural resources and transform temple architecture, Buddhist

art, religious rituals, Buddhist music, and Manjusri belief legends into more participatory tourism products. Since tourists now pay more attention to cultural understanding and spiritual experience, the scenic area can develop Buddhist cultural interpretation, religious story displays, Buddhist music appreciation, meditation experiences, and study tour activities. These measures can help transform religious cultural resources from static viewing to in-depth experience. Digital protection research on folk craft also provides a reference for preserving and presenting cultural resources in a more modern way [4].

4.2 Improve Scenic Area Facilities and Services

Mount Wutai Scenic Area should improve its infrastructure and service system from the aspects of traffic organization, tourist services, tour guidance, and smart management. The scenic area should optimize traffic routes, improve parking lots, tourist buses, visitor centers, rest areas, sanitation facilities, sign systems, and barrier-free facilities. At the same time, staff training should be strengthened to improve interpretation services, reception services, and safety management, so as to provide tourists with a more convenient tour environment.

4.3 Promote Ecological Protection and Sustainable Development

As a religious tourism scenic area, the ecological environment of Mount Wutai is closely related to tourist experience and the maintenance of religious cultural atmosphere. Studies on the sustainable tourism of Pompeii indicate that the synergy between culture and religion can support the sustainable development of tourism destinations[5]. Therefore, the scenic area should adhere to the principle of protection priority, strengthen environmental governance and ecological restoration, and improve garbage classification, sewage treatment, and environmental monitoring mechanisms.

4.4 Enrich Tourism Products and Improve Publicity Methods

Mount Wutai Scenic Area should change its single development mode based mainly on sightseeing, tickets, and incense consumption, and develop diversified religious tourism products according to different tourist needs. For example, it can launch products such as “religious culture + study tour,” “religious culture + health preservation,” “religious culture + folk experience,” and “religious culture + cultural and creative consumption.” Meanwhile, the scenic area should use WeChat official accounts, short video platforms, Xiaohongshu, and other new media channels to display religious culture, natural landscapes, and characteristic activities. The application of digital technology in heritage protection also shows that modern digital methods can help protect and present cultural heritage more effectively [6].

5. Conclusion

Mount Wutai is an important representative of religious tourism resources in Shanxi Province, with profound Buddhist cultural heritage, abundant temple architecture, and unique natural landscapes. However, its resource advantages have not been fully utilized, and problems remain in planning layout, religious cultural experience, infrastructure, ecological protection, and tourism product development.

Therefore, Mount Wutai Scenic Area should further explore Buddhist cultural connotations, improve facilities and services, enrich cultural experience projects, and strengthen publicity while protecting religious cultural heritage and the ecological environment. Through scientific planning and reasonable development, the scenic area can improve tourist satisfaction and promote the high-quality development of religious tourism and cultural tourism in Shanxi Province.

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