



Factors Influencing Competitive Advantage to Enhance Guangxi Province's Tourism Industry

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Abstract

Background and Aims: Tourism in Guangxi Province is growing fast, but its brand power is still weak compared to other places. This study aims to find out the main problems in Guangxi tourism, identify what factors affect its competitive advantage, and suggest ways to make it better. The research looks at how tourism cities compete not just with attractions but also with economic strength and cultural appeal.

Methodology: This study used both numbers and interviews to get information. We gave surveys to 400 people working in tourism in five main areas of Guangxi (Guilin, Nanning, Liuzhou, Beihai, and other parts of the province). We also did detailed interviews with 10 experts from different tourism businesses like travel agencies, tourist sites, transport companies, hotels, souvenir shops, and restaurants.

Results: The study found three main things: (1) Guangxi tourism is developing quickly but city brand strength needs improvement as competition now includes both economic power and cultural appeal; (2) Government Policy (GP) strongly affects Competitive Factors (CF) with a direct effect of 0.914, Marketing Promotion (MP) shows a strong direct effect (0.959) but lower total effect (0.407), and Competitive Advantage (CA) has both direct (0.340) and indirect effects (0.576) on CF; (3) The province needs to build a tourism ecosystem, create industry clusters, and improve brand competitiveness.

Conclusion: To improve Guangxi's tourism competitive advantage, the industry should focus on building an ecosystem where different tourism businesses work together. The province should develop stronger tourism brands that show its cultural heritage and regional character. Tourist

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attractions need better skills in using social media and new marketing methods to attract more visitors and compete with other destinations.

Keywords: Guangxi Province; Tourism Industry; Competitive Advantage; Brand Development

Introduction

Tourism plays a vital role in regional economic development, particularly in areas with distinctive geographical and cultural assets. Guangxi Province, as China's only autonomous region bordering both the sea and ASEAN countries, possesses unique advantages for tourism development. With its exceptional natural landscapes, health-promoting ecological environment, and diverse ethnic customs, Guangxi has established a foundation for tourism service excellence (Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Culture and Tourism Department, 2023).

The tourism industry in Guangxi leverages these resources to provide comprehensive services spanning accommodation, dining, transportation, sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment. Recent initiatives, including the "Belt and Road" and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP), have created favorable conditions for international tourism exchanges and infrastructure development. In response, Guangxi has implemented strategic policies to optimize its tourism environment and accelerate its development as a world-class tourism destination (Li, 2022).

By the end of 2022, Guangxi's tourism infrastructure included 9 national 5A-level attractions, 335 national 4A-level attractions, 133 luxury hotels, and 1,016 travel agencies (Wang & Li, 2024). This robust infrastructure supports a diverse tourism ecosystem encompassing sightseeing, leisure, health tourism, and cultural experiences. Between 2021 and 2023, the provincial government implemented significant policies to advance high-quality tourism development and allocated special funds to support tourism enterprises.

Despite these advances, Guangxi faces challenges including inadequate product diversification, uneven regional development, insufficient cultural integration, and limited technological adoption in tourism offerings. This research investigates the factors influencing competitive advantage in Guangxi's tourism industry, focusing on the relationships between characteristic factors (administrative independence, innovation, enthusiasm), marketing promotion (advertising, target market analysis, brand building), and government policies (economic support, cultural policies, technological development).

By identifying these relationships, this study aims to provide insights for policy-making and strategic planning to enhance Guangxi's tourism competitiveness. The research contributes to



understanding the mechanisms driving tourism success in the region, supporting sustainable industry growth while addressing existing challenges.

Objectives

1. To examine the current development status and competitive advantages of the tourism industry in Guangxi, China
2. To explore the factors currently affecting the competitive advantage of tourism in Guangxi, China
3. To make relevant suggestions for the development of the tourism industry and the improvement of the competitive advantages of Guangxi Province, China

Literature Review

The literature review examines key factors that influence the competitive advantage of Guangxi Province's tourism industry through four interconnected dimensions: characteristic factors, tourism marketing promotion, government policy, and competitive advantage elements.

Characteristic Factors

Tourism characteristic factors represent the distinctive qualities that define destination competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). For Guangxi Province, three key characteristic factors emerge from the literature:

Managerial autonomy provides significant advantages for tourism development in Guangxi, especially through its regional ethnic autonomy system. This autonomy enables ethnic regions to utilize distinctive resources to develop characteristic village tourism for rural revitalization (Hou et al., 2022), with effectiveness dependent on institutional mobilization of social capital.

Innovation is essential for maintaining competitiveness in tourism, primarily derived from suppliers' R&D activities and market-responsive supply methods. Tourism innovation requires collaboration between multiple stakeholders and has become a vital driving force for the industry's development (Ratten et al., 2019).

Positivity, reflecting stakeholders' enthusiasm toward tourism development, plays a critical role in Guangxi's tourism success. When tourism companies, resident groups, and government maintain positive attitudes, sustainable development of ethnic tourism destinations becomes achievable (Zeng, 2010).

Tourism Marketing Promotion

Effective tourism marketing promotion strategies are crucial for enhancing Guangxi's competitive position:

Advertisement strategies are vital for communicating the intangible nature of tourism products. For Guangxi, social media has become particularly significant in tourism advertising, with innovative content like storytelling videos enhancing destination advertising effectiveness. (Ma et al., 2023).

Target market analysis is essential for strategic decision-making, with research showing a positive correlation between market segmentation and marketing performance (Panayides, 2004). For Guangxi, scientific segmentation approaches like "tourist interest segmentation" can clarify target market positioning.

Brand building significantly enhances destination competitiveness by highlighting local distinctiveness and affecting tourists' revisit intentions (Salehzadeh et al., 2016). Systematic brand development approaches can accelerate tourism growth across Guangxi.

Government Policy

Government policies provide critical support for Guangxi's tourism development:

Social and cultural policies are essential since culture is the essence of tourism (Han, 2019). For Guangxi's ethnically diverse regions, these policies protect minority interests while promoting cultural tourism development.

Industrial economic support policies provide financial and infrastructure support (Shone et al., 2008). Studies specific to Guangxi highlight the need for robust brand management and standardized systems in areas like the Lijiang Tourism Industry Economic Belt.

Science and technology development policies address key tourism challenges through technological advancement (Yao, 2024). Digital technologies significantly enhance destination management and visitor experiences, empowering Guangxi's tourism industry at multiple levels (Tang, 2023).

Competitive Advantage Elements

Competitive advantage in Guangxi's tourism industry manifests through:

Destination resource advantages are critical for competitiveness, requiring marketing models based on competitive advantage. For Guangxi, brand resources can provide advantages in institutional arrangements, integration, and differentiation, while big data analysis enhances precision marketing (Cui, 2023).

Industrial chain integrity enables tourism enterprises to find competitive advantages in increasingly competitive markets. Studies specific to Guangxi highlight the importance of leveraging unique geographical positions and cultural resources when developing tourism industry chains (Huang et al., 2021).

Innovation and technology applications enhance tourism competitiveness through technologies like augmented reality (Han et al., 2019). For Guangxi, technological innovation is

crucial in developing unique cultural tourism resources, with digitalization serving as a transformative force (Qiao et al., 2023).

Current Situation of Guangxi's Tourism Industry

Guangxi possesses unique geographical advantages as China's only autonomous region bordering both the sea and ASEAN countries, actively expanding its cultural tourism industry. However, challenges persist, including a lack of economies of scale, inadequate infrastructure, and regional development disparities. Recent enhancements in industrial supply capacity and policy support offer promising directions for future development (Lin, 2024).

This review provides the theoretical foundation for understanding how characteristic factors, marketing promotion, and government policies contribute to competitive advantages in Guangxi's tourism industry, forming the basis for empirical research to enhance the province's tourism competitiveness.

Conceptual Framework

This research examines the factors influencing competitive advantage in Guangxi's tourism industry through a structured conceptual framework based on tourism management theory and competitive advantage theory.

Variables in the Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable (Exogenous):

Characteristic Factors of Guangxi tourism, comprising managerial autonomy (the region's ability to self-manage tourism development), innovation (new ideas and technologies), and positivity (enthusiasm toward tourism development)

Intermediate Variables:

Tourism Marketing Promotion through advertisement (media campaigns), target market analysis (understanding tourist preferences), and brand building (developing destination identity)

Government Policy, including social and cultural policies (preserving cultural resources), industrial economic support policies (financial incentives), and science and technology development policies (technological innovation)

Dependent Variable (Endogenous):

Competitive Advantages of Guangxi's tourism industry, manifested in destination resource advantages (natural and cultural attractions), industrial chain integrity (integrated tourism services), and innovation and technology application (enhancing visitor experiences)

Research Hypotheses

The seven research hypotheses posit interrelationships among these variables:

H1-H2: Characteristic factors directly influence both tourism marketing promotion and government policies.

H3-H4: Both government policies and tourism marketing promotion directly affect competitive advantages.

H5: Characteristic factors directly influence competitive advantages.

H6-H7: Characteristic factors indirectly influence competitive advantages through tourism marketing promotion and government policies, respectively.

This conceptual framework enables analysis of both direct and indirect pathways through which Guangxi's distinctive tourism characteristics impact its competitive position in the market, providing a foundation for developing strategic recommendations to enhance the province's tourism industry.

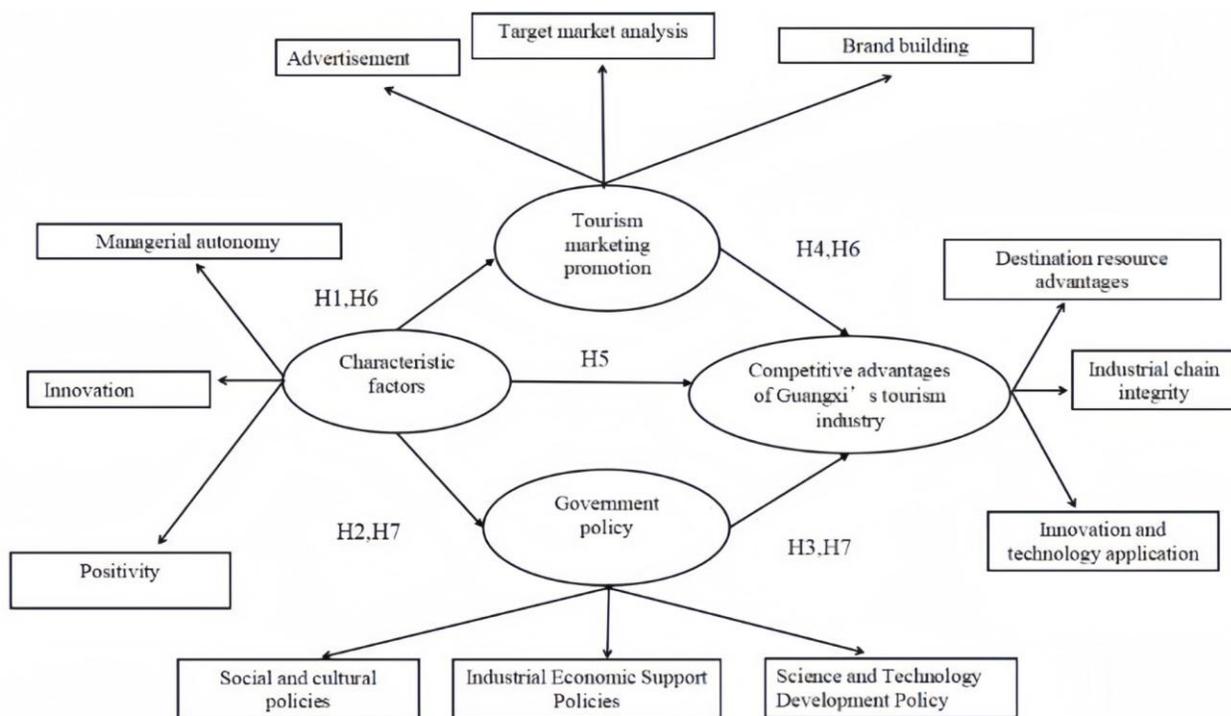


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques (Creswell & Plano, 2007). The research process began with a comprehensive literature review to establish the conceptual framework and identify the dependent and independent variables. Based on the theoretical foundation, questionnaires were designed to collect

quantitative data, followed by in-depth interviews to gather qualitative insights from industry experts. This methodological triangulation enhances the validity and reliability of the findings.

Quantitative Research

Population and Sample

The quantitative component targeted business representatives within Guangxi's tourism industry. According to the Guangxi Provincial Bureau of Statistics (2023), the region hosts 519 star-rated hotels and 1,237 registered travel agencies, employing 37,891 individuals. The study focused on four key urban centers - Guilin, Nanning, Liuzhou, and Beihai - which account for 6,935 employees.

The sample size was determined following Hair's (1998) empirical guidelines for structural equation modeling, which suggest 160-240 participants for a model comprising 12 variables. To ensure adequate representation, the final sample size was set at 400 practitioners from the tourism industry in Guangxi. The sample was evenly distributed across four key urban tourism centers in the province, with 100 participants each selected from Guilin (population 1,963), Nanning (population 1,657), Liuzhou (population 1,857), and Beihai (population 1,458). This distribution approach ensured comprehensive coverage of the total target population of 6,935 tourism industry employees across these major tourism hubs in Guangxi Province.

Probability sampling with random sampling techniques was employed to ensure each individual had an equal chance of selection, enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

Research Instrument

The quantitative research tool was a structured questionnaire divided into five sections:

1. General Information: Demographics including gender, age, education level, position, and years of experience.

2. Characteristic Factors of the Tourism Industry: 9 questions assessing managerial autonomy, innovation, and positivity

3. Tourism Marketing Promotion Strategies: 9 questions evaluating advertisement effectiveness, target market analysis, and brand building.

4. Government Policies: 9 questions examining social and cultural policies, industrial economic support policies, and science and technology development policies.

5. Tourism Competitive Advantages: 9 questions addressing destination resource advantages, industrial chain integrity, and innovation technology application.

All items employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree, with interpretation criteria as follows: 4.20-5.00: Strongly agree, 3.40-4.19: Agree, 2.60-3.39: Neutral, 1.80-2.59: Disagree, 1.00-1.79: Strongly disagree.

Instrument Quality Testing



Validity Testing

Content validity was established by having three experts evaluate the questionnaire using the Item-Objective Congruence Index (IOC). Items with an IOC ≥ 0.5 were considered relevant to the research objectives. The analysis results showed consistency values between 0.60-1.00, confirming the content accuracy, reasonableness, and clarity of the questionnaire items.

Reliability Testing

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951) with a pre-test conducted among 30 non-sample subjects. The reliability testing results demonstrated strong internal consistency across all measurement constructs. For characteristic factors (including managerial autonomy, innovation, and positivity), the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.872. Tourism marketing promotion variables (advertisement, target market analysis, and brand building) showed a reliability coefficient of 0.856. Government policy factors (social and cultural policies, industrial economic support policies, and science and technology development policy) demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.803. Finally, competitive advantages variables (destination resource advantages, industrial chain integrity, and innovation and technology application) achieved a reliability coefficient of 0.821. With the overall scale population of 36 items showing a Cronbach's alpha of 0.838, all values exceeded the 0.7 threshold considered acceptable, confirming the questionnaire's reliability for data collection.

Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed to the target groups according to the quota sample size calculated for each area between November 1, 2023, and March 30, 2024. Researchers explained the study's purpose to respondents and checked questionnaires for completeness. Incomplete or incorrectly filled questionnaires were excluded, and additional questionnaires were distributed until the predetermined sample size was reached.

Data Analysis

The data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistical methods:

1. Descriptive Statistical Analysis: Percentages, means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis were calculated using Statistical Product and Service Solutions software. Z-test statistics were used to test assumptions of skewness and kurtosis.

2. Relationship Analysis: Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (PPMCC) analysis was used to examine relationships between variables, with interpretation criteria as follows: $r > 0.8$: fairly high correlation $0.6 < r < 0.8$: high correlation $0.4 < r < 0.6$: moderate correlation $0.2 < r < 0.4$: low correlation $r < 0.2$: very low correlation.

3. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): LISREL for Windows version 8.80 was used to test the theoretical model against empirical data. Model fit was assessed using multiple indices:



Chi-Square (χ^2): Non-significant value indicates consistency

χ^2/df : Values < 2 indicate a good fit

GFI and AGFI: Values > 0.9 are acceptable

RMSEA: Values < 0.05 indicate good fit; 0.05-0.08 indicate reasonable fit

CFI: Values > 0.9 indicate good fit

SRMR: Values < 0.05 indicate a good fit

4. Factor Analysis: Before SEM, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistics and Bartlett's test of sphericity was conducted to verify the suitability of data for factor analysis. KMO values > 0.7 indicate adequacy for factor analysis.

Qualitative Research

Population and Sample

The qualitative component involved in-depth interviews with ten key informants from Guangxi's tourism industry. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to include representatives from various sectors: travel agencies, tourist attractions, transportation services, hotels, souvenir shops, restaurants, and tourism bureaus. All experts had more than 10 years of industry experience.

Research Instrument

The qualitative data collection employed semi-structured in-depth interviews focusing on four main questions:

1. What are the characteristics of Guangxi's tourism industry?
2. What is your assessment of Guangxi's tourism marketing and promotion activities?
3. How do you evaluate the government policies in Guangxi's tourism development?
4. What are the competitive advantages of Guangxi's tourism industry?

Instrument Quality Testing

The interview questions were validated by experts, with pre-interview testing and adjustments made according to recommendations to ensure clarity and relevance.

Data Collection

The interview process followed a three-step approach:

1. Contacting key informants to request and schedule interviews.
2. Obtaining formal permission from interviewees
3. Conducting the in-depth interviews at agreed-upon times and locations

All interviews were conducted with explicit consent from participants. The semi-structured format allowed for consistent questioning while permitting flexible exploration of topics.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis involved:

1. Grouping information according to the four main components of the conceptual framework: characteristic factors, tourism marketing promotion, government policy, and competitive advantages

2. Collating and organizing respondents' answers.

3. Analyzing and synthesizing the information according to the conceptual framework

The preliminary analysis of the in-depth interviews confirmed the scientific reasonableness of the established framework model, with interviewees generally agreeing that characteristic factors directly affect competitive advantages, while tourism marketing strategies and government policies have indirect effects.

Results

Respondent Profile

The study collected data from 400 tourism industry practitioners in Guangxi, with a balanced gender distribution (51% male, 49% female). Most respondents (56%) were aged 36-55 years, held undergraduate degrees (55.75%), occupied middle management positions (42%), and had 2-5 years of industry experience (48%). This sample represented diverse perspectives from the tourism industry across Guilin, Nanning, Liuzhou, and Beihai regions.

Reliability and Validity Testing

The research instrument demonstrated excellent reliability with Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding the 0.7 threshold for all variables (Table 1)

Table 1 Reliability and Validity Testing

Variable	Cronbach's alpha
Characteristic factors (CF)	0.866
Marketing promotion (MP)	0.871
Government policy (GP)	0.898
Competitive advantages (CA)	0.878

The instrument also showed strong validity, with a KMO value of 0.952 and a significant Bartlett's test ($p=0.000$), indicating excellent suitability for factor analysis.

Structural Equation Model Results

The structural equation model demonstrated good fit with all indices within acceptable ranges ($\chi^2/df=1.765$, $RMSEA=0.074$, $NFI=0.973$, $CFI=0.967$). This confirms the appropriateness of the model for examining relationships between variables.

Hypothesis Testing Results

All seven research hypotheses were supported by the data (Table 2)

Table 2 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Estimate	P-value	Result
H1	CF → MP	0.959	***	Supported
H2	CF → GP	0.914	***	Supported
H3	GP → CA	0.458	**	Supported
H4	MP → CA	0.164	***	Supported
H5	CF → CA	0.340	***	Supported

The characteristic factors of Guangxi tourism showed strong direct influence on marketing promotion (0.959), government policy (0.914), and competitive advantages (0.340). Government policy demonstrated a moderate direct effect on competitive advantages (0.458), while marketing promotion showed a weaker but still significant effect (0.164).

Mediation Effect Analysis

The total effect of characteristic factors on competitive advantages was 0.916, with direct effects accounting for 37.12% and indirect effects accounting for 62.88%. The indirect effects were distributed as follows:

CF → MP → CA: 17.14% (indirect effect = 0.157)

CF → GP → CA: 45.74% (indirect effect = 0.419)

This confirms hypotheses H6 and H7, indicating that characteristic factors influence competitive advantages both directly and indirectly through marketing promotion and government policy, with government policy serving as the stronger mediating pathway.

Qualitative Findings

In-depth interviews with ten industry experts revealed the following insights, aligning with the quantitative results:

1. **Characteristic Factors:** Experts highlighted Guangxi's managerial autonomy through the "three rights separation" reform, innovation in tourism products and services (cultural and creative products, themed experiences), and the need to enhance public enthusiasm and participation.

2. **Tourism Marketing Promotion:** Successful initiatives included the "small sugar orange" tourism campaign, targeted consumer analysis through new media platforms, and traditional festival brand building like "Guangxi March 3rd."

3. **Government Policy:** Financial support and policy incentives have encouraged tourism enterprise development and investment, with calls for stronger implementation and coordination of these policies.

4. **Competitive Advantages:** Natural resources (ethnic minority cultures, coastlines, border tourism potential) and geographical characteristics form the foundation of Guangxi's tourism competitive advantages, supported by high-quality tourism project development.

These findings collectively fulfill the research objectives by identifying the current problems and causes of tourism development in Guangxi, exploring the factors affecting competitive advantage, and providing a basis for relevant development suggestions.

Discussion

The research findings reveal the critical importance of characteristic factors in building competitive advantage for Guangxi's tourism industry, with these factors influencing competitive advantage both directly (37.12%) and indirectly (62.88%) through marketing promotion and government policy. This highlights the need for Guangxi to develop competitive advantages based on its unique local resources and social capital, as Figure 2.

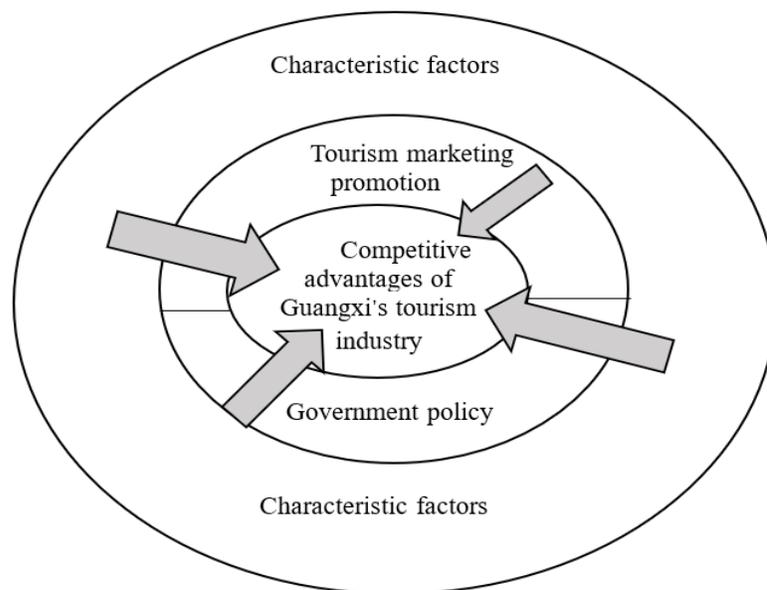


Figure 2 The Influence Mechanism of Characteristic Factors on Tourism Competitive Advantages in Guangxi



Tourism brand development emerges as a fundamental strategy. As noted by Goeldner and Ritchie (2012), effective brands can transform limited regional resources into larger market assets. Different tourism brands in Guangxi—including education tourism, honeymoon tourism, and health tourism—must find their distinctive positions to avoid niche overlap and consequent market competition (Woolfolk, 2019).

Marketing promotion plays a crucial role in cultivating Guangxi's tourism brand identity. Wang et al. (2023) suggest that tourism marketing creates a clear city image with positive associations, generating desire among potential visitors. Cities with distinctive brand personalities (like Paris for fashion or Vienna for music) reflect strong urban competitiveness. Guangxi must similarly define its unique personality through marketing that highlights resources that cannot be replicated elsewhere (Qiu et al., 2014).

Government policy demonstrates the strongest mediating effect (45.74%) on competitive advantage. Chen et al. (2024) observe that Guangxi's policies strengthen regional integration through overall planning and coordination across administrative levels. This creates a supportive ecosystem for tourism development, including infrastructure improvements and route development.

The findings affirm that tourism brands and their external environment form an interdependent system. Miller and Spoolman (2015) argue that tourism brands can only fully demonstrate competitive strength when adapted to their external environment. The political, economic, social, and ecological environments all significantly influence tourism competitiveness by affecting consumer confidence and experience quality (Croes & Rivera, 2016).

Recommendations

This study has examined the key factors influencing the competitive advantage of Guangxi Province's tourism industry. The findings reveal that economic policies, strategic brand marketing, and digital transformation are crucial in shaping the region's tourism competitiveness. Additionally, the integration of cultural heritage into tourism development plays a significant role in differentiating Guangxi from other destinations. While previous research has emphasized the importance of policy-driven economic growth, this study extends the discussion by incorporating qualitative insights on the role of localized business networks and digital strategies in sustaining competitive advantage.

To further strengthen Guangxi's position as a globally recognized tourism destination, government bodies, tourism enterprises, and other stakeholders need to adopt a strategic and collaborative approach. The following recommendations outline key areas for action.

Recommendations

[1045]

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1. Develop an Integrated Tourism Industry Ecosystem

The government should establish a structured policy framework that supports brand development and innovation in the tourism sector. Collaboration between public and private stakeholders is crucial in building a comprehensive tourism ecosystem. Initiatives such as tax incentives for sustainable tourism investments, partnerships with international travel agencies, and cultural tourism promotion can enhance Guangxi's global appeal.

2. Implement Strategic Brand Marketing for Global Recognition

City managers and tourism boards should focus on long-term brand positioning while incorporating short-term marketing campaigns to attract visitors. This includes destination storytelling, influencer collaborations, and immersive media campaigns. A unified marketing strategy across multiple platforms will strengthen Guangxi's tourism identity and ensure consistency in brand messaging.

3. Enhance Tourist-Centric Service Innovation

Tourism enterprises should prioritize service excellence by investing in infrastructure, offering personalized travel experiences, and utilizing data analytics to understand tourist preferences. Long-term strategies should focus on building strong brand equity through continuous service improvement, fostering customer loyalty, and maintaining high levels of satisfaction.

4. Leverage Digital Marketing and New Media Strategies

To remain competitive, Guangxi's tourism sector must embrace digital transformation. This involves training marketing professionals in new media strategies, adopting AI-driven customer engagement tools, and leveraging big data analytics to refine promotional efforts. Destination management organizations (DMOs) and tourism enterprises should collaborate with digital platforms to enhance targeted marketing campaigns and dynamically adjust strategies based on real-time market insights.

By implementing these recommendations, Guangxi can position itself as a globally competitive tourism destination while fostering sustainable economic growth. A well-coordinated approach that integrates policy support, technological advancements, and strategic marketing will ensure long-term success in the region's tourism industry.

Future Research Directions

While this study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing Guangxi's tourism competitiveness, further research is needed to explore additional dimensions of sustainable tourism development. Future studies should consider:

The impact of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality, on enhancing tourist experiences in Guangxi.



The role of cross-border tourism collaborations between Guangxi and neighboring ASEAN countries in boosting regional tourism appeal.

A comparative analysis of Guangxi's tourism strategies with other globally recognized destinations to identify best practices and potential areas for improvement.

Longitudinal studies to assess the effectiveness of policy implementations over time and their impact on sustainable tourism growth.

By addressing these areas, future research can contribute to a deeper understanding of Guangxi's tourism industry and provide actionable insights for policymakers and stakeholders.

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