

PROMOTING RURAL TOURISM BY EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING: A CASE OF HAKKA COMMUNITY, PINGTUNG ZHÚTIÁN IN TAIWAN

Hsiang-Yung Feng¹, Yung-Ching Lee²

¹ Institute of Economic and Social Studies, National United University, TAIWAN.

² Kumamoto University, JAPAN.

¹ hyfeng@nuu.edu.tw, ² eiseilee@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

With industrialization, urbanized and socio-economic development, people go to rural areas engaged in recreation and tourism activities in order to obtain relaxation, entertainment and restore physical and mental leisure benefits. The other hand, rural areas also reconstruct and support local economic and social transformation by leisure tourism industry. How to promote rural tourism within a community, there are many different practices in different communities. This study introduces a successfully case, Zhútián of Pingtung county in Taiwan. Zhútián comprehensive community building committee combined rural tourism and community resources to improve the local economic benefits. The committee offers several experiential courses which devised by experiential modules. These courses were managed in experiential marketing include sensory experiences, affective experiences, creative cognitive experiences, physical experiences, behaviours and lifestyles, and social-identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture. They made tourists experience traditional Hakka culture and Zhútián traditional railway station.

Keywords: Rural Tourism, Experiential Marketing, Hakka Community

INTRODUCTION

Around the world face the impact of industrialization and urbanization, set off a return to innocence migrated to a wave of rural. People began the pursuit of natural scenery, experienced the rural simplicity. Vacation in a country could be to achieve sparse pressure, relaxation, entertainment, and the purpose of self-realization. Moreover, it has the quality of life of the wealthy after starting to focus on the sustainable development of society, seek Return to Innocence experience. Rural Tourism is very popular in the last few years by the type of natural landscape, cultural customs, and agricultural or livestock development spindle travel.

To promote rural tourism in Taiwan, there are two methods; one is to proceed from the agricultural products, to provide fresh fruits and vegetables, organizing agricultural festivals to attract urban residents to rural tourism. Another way is through the rural communities building to create and shape the characteristics of rural communities to provide a quality living environment, urban residents away from the metropolitan area to relieve work pressure.

Rural community building aimed at shaping the characteristics of urban and rural communities, to find the most suitable for the development direction and conditions for local communities, and by learning mechanism, the integration of the non-profit community organizations, cultural and historical work units involved in community cultural business, and to draw community residents care to participate in the public affairs of the community, a way to consolidate consensus, the pursuit of a common vision, from the bottom up to present a diverse community values.

Results of some studies of the development community to create contributes to the development of places of tourist leisure industry, this is the revitalization of the Community industry to improve the economy of an effective policy strategy, subject to the policy co-ordination to establish mechanisms and assessment indicators and assist in the cohesion of community residents a total consensus, properly appropriate local building, establish the differences in characteristics of the different communities, and its smooth transition to the Community industry, to confirm that the sightseeing travel industry sustainable direction.

How to promote the outcome of a community building and the characteristics of community, there are many different practices in different communities. This study introduces a successfully case, Zhútíán of Pingtung county in Taiwan. The rural community rebuilt the traditional railway station, combined with the past history outward marketing, different communities have different practices, Pingtung, Taiwan, a rural community - Zhútíán successfully build the railway inn, combined with the community in the past history, "storytelling marketing, the concept of the story managed to import, use moved the story to impress consumers, to attract the attention of consumers and achieve the marketing community, the purpose of promoting rural tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Experiential Marketing

In discussing the evolution of economies, Pine and Gilmore (1998) used a sample of coffee bean to describe the economic four-stage and announced "welcome to the emerging experience economy". In Pine and Gilmore's view, a product had the highest economic value when it becomes an experience product, for example, when consumption of the product focuses on the process of staging a "memorable" experience. Experience economy was a notion that intends to conceptualize a new trend in economic development, in which the driver was people's search for identity and involvement in an increasingly rich society. Now the notion is more encompassing than merely the market for entertainment and culture, or tourism, which are just aspects of the experience economy.

According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), "an experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event". The experience derives from the interaction between the staged event and the individual's state of mind. Therefore, the experience is basically individual, although many individuals may have comparable experiences. Joy and Sherry (2003) have noted that somatic experience is not just the process of thinking bodily but how the body informs the logic of thinking about art. They argued that embodiment can be identified at two levels: the phenomenological and the cognitive unconscious. At the first level, individuals are conscious of their feelings and actions while, at the second level, sensorimotor and other bodily oriented inference mechanisms inform their processes of abstract thought and reasoning.

Schmitt's paper Experiential Marketing (1999) sparked that experiences provide sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational values. However, Schmitt proposed a strategic framework for managing experiences as strategic experiential modules (SEMs). SEMs are strategic experiential modules that managers can use to create different types of customer experiences for their customers. The term "module" has been borrowed from recent work in cognitive science and the philosophy of mind to refer to circumscribed functional domains of the mind and behaviour. Modules have distinct structures and processes. The experiential modules to be managed in Experiential Marketing include sensory experiences (SENSE), affective experiences (FEEL), creative cognitive experiences (THINK), physical

experiences, behaviours and lifestyles (ACT), and social-identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture (RELATE).

Experiential marketing is the process of identifying and satisfying customer needs and aspirations profitably, engaging them through two-way communications that bring brand personalities to life and add value to the target audience (Smilansky, 2009):

- Experiential marketing is an integrated methodology, always engaging target audiences at their will through brand-relevant communications that add value.
- The experiential marketing campaign is built around one big idea that should involve two-way communication between the brand and the target audience in real time, therefore featuring a live brand experience at its core.
- The other marketing communications channels that are selected and integrated are the amplification channels, which amplify the impact of the big idea.

Rural Tourism

Lane (1994) defined rural tourism as a discrete activity with distinct characteristics which may vary in intensity, and by area. It discusses the differences between agri-tourism and rural tourism, and examines why there should be a special relationship between tourism in the countryside and the concept of sustainable tourism. Sharpley & Sharpley (1997) has pointed out that rural tourism is a distinct sector of the tourist industry and looks at the role and potential of tourism in the socio-economic development and regeneration of rural areas.

However, Gannon (1994) pointed out that not all rural areas are equally attractive to rural tourists and simply providing accommodation facilities does not guarantee demand. The total product package must be sufficient to attract and keep tourists, offering suitable opportunities for spending. Roberts (1996) sparked that the quality of products and services must match tourist's demands and expectations. In the Bran region in central Romania, for example, the success of rural tourism was hampered by a failure to meet the needs of overseas visitors. Fleischer & Felsenstein (2000) considered that developing and organising rural tourism may require a significant investment either beyond the means of the business owner or greater than justified by potential returns. In such cases, government subsidies may be required to maintain the social benefits of diversification into tourism. Wilson et al (2001) observed that the focus group results suggest the following 10 factors/conditions are most important for successful tourism development in rural areas: (1) a complete tourism package, (2) good community leadership, (3) support and participation of local government, (4) sufficient funds for tourism development, (5) strategic planning, (6) coordination and cooperation between businesspersons and local leadership, (7) coordination and cooperation between rural tourism entrepreneurs, (8) information and technical assistance for tourism development and promotion, (9) good convention and visitors bureaus, and (10) widespread community support for tourism.

Therefore, King (2002) stress that destination marketing organizations need to get away from promoting the destination to a mass market and relying on an outdated distribution system, and instead engage the customer to ensure they effectively promote and provide the experience they are wanting. Williams (2006) has pointed out that the tourism and hospitality sectors cannot be seen to be immune to fundamental changes in the orientation of marketing. Innovative experience design will become an increasingly important component of tourism and hospitality firms core capabilities. Those who go beyond service excellence, and market experientially will lead the creation of value in the sector.

Numerous studies noted that the development of rural tourism offers potential solutions to many of the problems facing rural areas (Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000; Gannon, 1994; Nel & Binns, 2002; Page & Getz, 1997; Sharpley, 2002; Wilson et al, 2001). These may be summarized below:

- a. Economic growth, diversification and stabilization through employment creation in both new (tourism related) and existing businesses, trades and crafts; opportunities for income growth through pluri activity; the creation of new markets for agricultural products; and, a broadening of a region's economic base.
- b. Socio-cultural development, including the re-population of rural areas; the maintenance and improvement of public services; the revitalisation of local crafts, customs and cultural identities; and, increased opportunities for social contact and exchange.
- c. Protection and improvement of both the natural and built environment and infrastructure.

Local economic development (LED) is a common community-based development response to changes in the economic fortunes of a locality. Various economic strategies are associated with LED, some of the most prominent being those of place marketing and attempts to refocus economic activity along new or previously underused avenues, with tourism promotion being an increasingly common option. The authors examine the responses of the small community of Still Bay in Western Cape Province, South Africa, to economic crisis and the absence of vital social facilities. Critical to the success and sustainability of this LED initiative was the establishment of various community development projects, in which certain key actors took a leading role in bringing the community together. Community cooperation, linked with successful place marketing and tourism promotion strategies, has laid the basis for the economic revival of the town and empowerment of historically disadvantaged groups (Nel & Binns, 2002).

As usual, tourism has principally been concerned with visiting, seeing, and living in a different mode of life. The new element, experience adds a somehow comprehensive living adventure to the short time the tourist spends in his destination. In other words, everything is experience: even Schmitt's experiential modules is complex experience, and is different from the everyday experience of tourists back in their home countries. Rural tourism is also developing rapidly. Farmers and rural populations take advantage of the desire of travellers to go back to nature and experience some authentic rural or agricultural processes. Hence rural facilities are often transformed to leisure activities. Innovative attempts gain new strategic value when viewed from a perspective that experiential marketing as a new method. It seen very important that utilizes experiential marketing into leisure activities to promote rural tourism.

METHODOLOGY

The case-study method has a long and respected history in the social sciences. There have also been seminal examples of case research within the management literature. The philosophy and implications of the case-study method have received considerable attention in the methodological literature and there are a number of standard texts on the approach (Perren and Ram, 2004). Also, case studies are especially useful for researching phenomena, where little empirical evidence is available and to answer the how and why questions regarding these phenomena (Yin, 2003).

The use of case study aims at thorough view of many different properties exist in cases in which the long-term researchers collected through talks, relevant secondary data search and observation data; rather than entirely from the hands of subjective participants. Therefore, case study is generally considered to be a more objective way. Mermam (1988) has pointed out that the heuristic quality of a case study is suggested by these aspects:

1. It can explain the reasons for a problem, the background of a situation, what happened, and why.
2. It can explain why an innovation worked or failed to work.
3. It can discuss and evaluate alternatives not chosen.
4. It can evaluate, summarize, and conclude, thus increasing its potential applicability.

The case study research method was selected in this study for two main reasons. First, taking into consideration the nature of promoting rural tourism by experiential marketing within a traditional community, detailed exploratory research is required if the phenomena were to be understood. Second, experiential marketing is a method using within tourism activities which had to take into account the situations and resources of rural community. This study quotes experiential marketing to promote the rural tourism, so case study is very suitable and also important.

CASE STUDY

Brief Description on Zhútíán

“Zhútíán” is located in the middle of Pingtung prefecture in Taiwan. Climatically, it belongs to tropical zone. In the ancient, the aborigine lived in this plain. “Hakka” came here in “Ching” dynasty. “Zhútíán” was named during Japanese colonial period. In 1943, a military surgeon named Ichiro Ikegami had been worked here for 2 years. Since he had a very good relationship with local people, after he went back to Japan, he still had many communications with Taiwanese people. In memory of him, Ichiro IKEGAMI library has been built in 2001. This is the only one Japanese library in southern Taiwan. “Zhútíán” railway station has been developed as a “Railway culture park” nowadays.

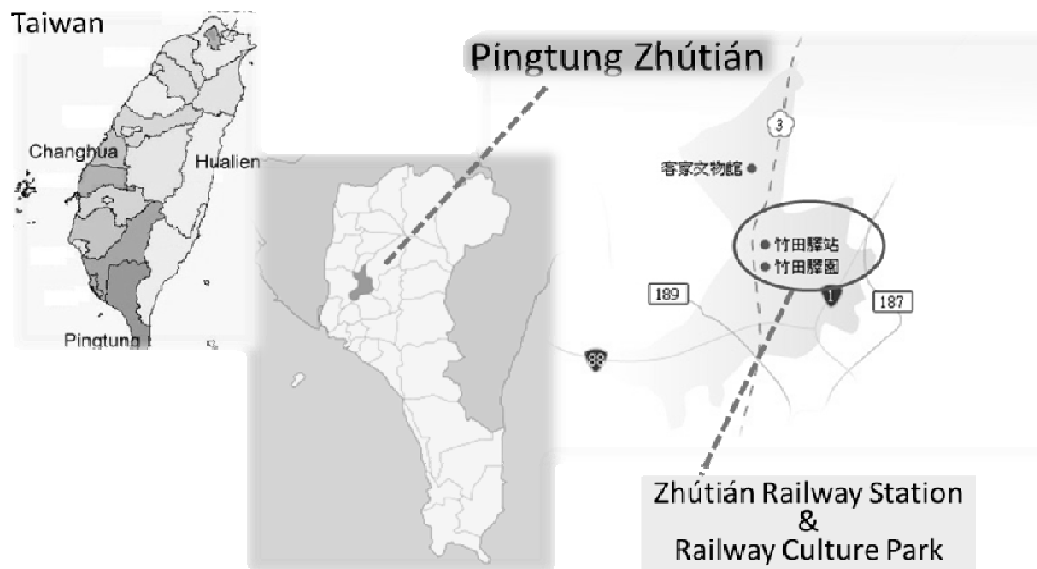


Figure 1. Location of Pingtung Zhútíán in Taiwan

Zhútián residents currently number 18,169, of whom 71.4% Hakka ethnicity. Agriculture is the main industry, the production of lemon, bell apples, bananas and vegetables and other crops. With the transformation of Taiwan from an agricultural society into industrial society, Zhútián agriculture has gradually trend towards tourism.

Zhútián railway station belongs to Arrangement General Office, Transportation Department and TRA, MOTC. on Fangliao line. It's a wooden railway station as Lioukuaicuo railway station. Zhútián was a very important railway town for agriculture product exporting. There were many hotels and public bath here. The public bath has been keeping well in the railway park. Due to the downfall of railway, Zhútián has become a very small station. However, it is allowed to be a "Railway culture park" by grace of local people. The government of Pingtung prefecture combined railway culture and "Hakka" culture by those old buildings and goods, then developing "the bike tour around Zhútián railway station". Meanwhile, local people keep trying to develop a historic leisure resort. Zhútián therefore was the traditional railway stations, and gradually developed to be the railway cultural park.



Figure 2. Zhútián Railway Cultural Park

Comprehensive Community Building and Promoting Rural Tourism

Communities need to have a specific geographic space, in which people live, organized society, the public co-owner traits, as well as some common characteristics and identity (Atkinson & Cope, 1997). Some scholars think that there are many social or economic problems in the area of community in Taiwan. "Comprehensive Community Building" was presented by Council for Cultural Affairs in 1994. It building refers to a transformation movement that seeks community consensus and encourages residents to participate actively in their communities and develop the special cultural features of their communities. This was a time when Taiwan was experiencing a wave of democratization and localism, and concepts such as local community consciousness, a national community and civil society were steadily gaining ground. Comprehensive community building stresses the cultivation of a unified

community consciousness and calls for the participation of residents as well as the injection of public-sector capabilities. Working initially from a foundation of community space redesign, local industry development, and arts and culture events, this model promotes the value systems of community participation, community education and community aesthetics. It constitutes a civil education and social transformation movement that integrates government resources, professional assistance and the unified participation of community residents (Taiwan Ministry of Culture, 2012).



Figure 3. Rural Tourism and Events in Zhútián Railway Cultural Park

The government and private sector employed a comprehensive community building model that led to a steady maturation of demand for cultural, nostalgic and ecological local tourism and recreation. This success in turn created the conditions for the rapid spread of this development model. The Zhútián railway cultural park was a good case to elevate the self-confidence of local residents and raise the public's awareness of the remote settlements in the mountainous regions. It was no doubt that the hit Taiwanese film "Cape No.7" (2008), is love story happened in Pingtung during Japanese colonial period. The film awoke Taiwanese people start to look back the landmarks remained since the colonial period. Meanwhile, it also reminds the friendships between Taiwan and Japan. The movie makes many people to visit Pingtung and nostalgic rural tourism.

In order to keep the local history and humanistic culture, Zhútián comprehensive community building committee is continuing construction of railway cultural park, and promotes rural tourism to improve the local economic benefits. The committee integrates local human resources, and makes some courses to attract tourists. The experiential courses include tour guide, Hakka tea tasting, and DIY on Hakka traditional toys. These courses are emphasized on creating consumer's experiences, and melt these experiences to the consumer behaviour. The product or service value will be upgraded by consumer's experience. Experiential courses of Zhútián railway cultural park use the experiential modules (see table 1).

Table 1. Experiential Courses of Zhútíán Railway Cultural Park

<i>Courses</i>	<i>Experiential Modules</i>				
	<i>SENSE</i>	<i>FEEL</i>	<i>THINK</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>RELATE</i>
1. Zhútíán railway park guiding	V	V			V
2. Hakka food guiding and tasting	V	V		V	
3. Hakka kid's songs	V	V	V		V
4. Hakka tea story guiding and tasting	V		V	V	V
5. Hakka fan drawing	V	V	V		V
6. Engraving guiding	V		V	V	
7. DIY on Hakka traditional toys	V		V	V	V

CONCLUSION

With industrialization, urbanized and socio-economic development, people go to rural areas engaged in recreation and tourism activities in order to obtain relaxation, entertainment and restore physical and mental leisure benefits. The other hand, rural areas also reconstruct and support local economic and social transformation by leisure tourism industry. Thus, rural tourism for reshaping contemporary importance of interaction between urban and rural areas is not self-evident. In Taiwan, the comprehensive community building is aimed on cohering common view by citizen's participation in public affairs. Meanwhile, beautifying the living space and upgrading the life quality in the community. It is also making the local culture and the original landscape revive. Zhútíán comprehensive community building committee wanted to combine rural tourism and comprehensive community to improve the local economic benefits. The committee offers several experiential courses which devised by experiential modules.

These courses were managed in experiential marketing include sensory experiences (SENSE), affective experiences (FEEL), creative cognitive experiences (THINK), physical experiences, behaviours and lifestyles (ACT), and social-identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture (RELATE). They made tourists experience traditional Hakka culture and Zhútíán railway station.

Traditional marketing methods only pay attention to the product's features, functions, benefits and quality of merchandise. Experiential Marketing is important to note that the customer experiences, emotions, interests and so on. Activities of leisure tourism involved in experiential marketing are gradually increased. Zhútíán comprehensive community committee integrated Hakka culture, industry characteristics and humane history to promote Zhútíán railway cultural park is a very successful case. It is worth considering by local tourism planning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was a working group of "The Talent Cultivation Project of Taiwanese Literature, History and Art in Globalization" and supported by grants from the Advisory Office in Ministry of Education, Taiwan.

REFERENCES

- Atkinson, R. & Cope, S. (1997). Community participation and urban regeneration in Britain. *Contested Communities*, 201-221.
- Fleischer, A. & Felsenstein, D. (2000). Support for rural tourism: does it make a difference? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(4), 1007-1024.
- Gannon, A. (1994). Rural tourism as a factor in rural community economic development for economies in transition. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 2(1-2), 51-60.
- Joy, A. & Sherry Jr, J. F. (2003). Speaking of art as embodied imagination: A multisensory approach to understanding aesthetic experience. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30(2), 259-282.
- King, J. (2002). Destination marketing organisations—connecting the experience rather than promoting the place. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 8(2), 105-108.
- Lane, B. (1994). What is rural tourism?. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 2(1-2), 7-21.
- MacDonald, R. & Jolliffe, L. (2003). Cultural rural tourism: Evidence from Canada. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30(2), 307-322.
- Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Nel, E. & Binns, T. (2002). Place Marketing, Tourism Promotion, and Community based Local Economic Development in Post-Apartheid South Africa The Case of Still Bay—The “Bay of Sleeping Beauty”. *Urban Affairs Review*, 38(2), 184-208.
- Oh, H., Fiore, A. & Jeoung, M. (2007). Measuring Experience Economy Concepts: Tourism Applications. *Journal of Travel Research*, 46(2), 119-132.
- Page, S. & Getz, D. (1997). *The business of rural tourism: International perspectives*. Cengage Learning Emea.
- Perren, L. & Ram, M. (2004). Case-study method in small business and entrepreneurial research mapping boundaries and perspectives. *International Small Business Journal*, 22(1), 83-101.
- Pine, B. J. & Gilmore, J. H. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard business review*, 76, 97-105.
- Roberts, L. (1996). Barriers to the development of rural tourism in the Bran area of Transylvania. (pp. 185-97). *Tourism and culture: Image identity and marketing*. Sunderland: Business Education Publishers.
- Schmitt, B. (1999). Experiential marketing. *Journal of marketing management*, 15(1-3), 53-67.
- Smilansky, S. (2009). *Experiential marketing: A practical guide to interactive brand experiences*. London: Kogan Page Ltd.s
- Sharpley, R. (2002). Rural tourism and the challenge of tourism diversification: the case of Cyprus. *Tourism Management*, 23(3), 233-244.
- Sharpley, R. & Sharpley, J. (1997). *Rural tourism: An introduction* (pp.1-165). London: International Thomson Business Press.
- Stamboulis, Y. & Skayannis, P. (2003). Innovation strategies and technology for experience-based tourism. *Tourism management*, 24(1), 35-43.

- Taiwan Ministry of Culture, (2012). Comprehensive community building, Encyclopedia of Taiwan, <http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/en/content?ID=3972>
- Tseng, C. L., Feng, H. Y. & Chu, K. K. (2012). From Experiential Marketing to Explore the Relationship between Internship and Satisfaction of the Polytechnic Students - A Case of Leisure Industry. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 9(2), 73-90.
- Wilson, S., Fesenmaier, D. R., Fesenmaier, J. & Van Es, J. C. (2001). Factors for success in rural tourism development. *Journal of Travel Research*, 40(2), 132-138.
- Williams, A. (2006). Tourism and hospitality marketing: fantasy, feeling and fun. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 18(6), 482-495.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). Case study research: *Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.