

Discussion on Tourism Experience Based on Postmodernism Perspectives

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Abstract. In the 90's, many fields in China have been involved in postmodernism like economy, culture, Politics, arts, and social psychology. Experience is one of key traits in both postmodern society and tourism. Tourism experience, the bridge between daily life environments and tourist destinations, is exploration of life meanings and it reflects the most important essence in experience economy. This paper discusses tourism characteristics like non-difference, individual experience, contradiction, complexity and diversity in postmodern perspective. Then, it summarizes three aspects of travel experiences of postmodern society: (1) subjective experience is more important than tourism objects; (2) postmodern tourism proposes that travelling is the extension of daily lives, emphasizing relationship between travel experiences and daily lives; (3) postmodern tourism is an experience of "zero" distance, which can be duplicated.

Keywords: Postmodernism; tourism; experience.

1. Introduction

On the issue of whether China has entered into postmodern era, some scholars believe that postmodernism is not likely to be popular in China, but most scholars believe that in the 90's, many fields in China have been involved in postmodernity like economy, culture, Politics, arts, social psychology. Some scholars believe that existence of postmodernity in China is an important historical coincidence. Since the 90's, China is a society with pre-modern, modern and postmodern cultural elements[1]. Scholars have carried out some researches in postmodern perspective, mainly focusing on the characteristics of tourism, the development direction of tourism and the influence of postmodernism on tourism. In postmodern culture, experience is regarded as the most popular discourse in contemporary life[2]. It is the most important feature in postmodern life and the most essential feature in tourism process. Postmodern society attaches importance to life experiences, which reflects people's understanding of life nature. And tourism is an extension of life, embodying people's pursuit of life, so there is an inseparable relationship between postmodernism and tourism. This paper focuses on the essential characteristics of the two and discusses the features of tourism experience in the post-modern perspective.

2. Main Features of Tourism in Postmodern Perspective

2.1 Main Features of Postmodernism.

Postmodernism is a critical thinking and answer to the negative effect of industrial civilization. It has abandoned science' paramount status in modernism for the development of science has led to alienation of people and neglect of spiritual civilization and moral belief. Postmodernism expresses uncertainty and vague, having spiritual state and ideological taste that can not be expressed or set up. Postmodern society tries new sense of rebellious life and the biggest feature of its life style is somewhat game like, with people' constant pursuits to break tradition and abandon institutionalized life. Featherstone(2009)[2] summarized the main features of postmodernism as: Firstly, it is a movement from emphasis on overall, systematic and unified grand narrative to emphasis on local knowledge, fragments fusion, otherness and diversity. Secondly, it dissolves symbolic level at which tastes and values are judged by classics, making distinction between it and mass culture collapsed and deconstructing elegant culture. Thirdly, it reflects the trend of aesthetic daily life and strives to

eliminate boundary between life and art (pop art, dadaism, surrealism, etc.), and illusory surface of continuous replicate symbol covers differences between representation and reality. Fourthly, it is de-centralization of the main body, with its identity and continuity of biography being substituted by patchy, symbols, feelings, and surface display of "multiple spiritual strength". From postmodern perspective and development trend of tourism industry, tourism is not the same as the past.

2.2 Characteristics of Tourism in Postmodern Perspective.

Non-differentiation in time and space. The pursuit of differentiation in time and space is the most important feature in modern tourism, people yearning for different tourist destinations and novel experiences, while the pursuit of non-differentiation in time and space is what postmodernism pursues. In postmodern society, people have new views and perspectives on tourism. The travel time separated with daily life in the past has been challenged[3-4]. There is no clear distinction between tourism activities and daily activities, and tourism is also showing homogeneity and no local characteristics[5]. Similarly, travel time also has new connotation. It is vague, no longer having a very clear distinction with time of daily activities, and the difference between the two is reducing. The connotation of travel time is constantly extended and it depends on attitudes and individual feelings of the tourists to tourism activities, and visitors' recognition on tourism is more determined by their feelings instead of tour activities. People arrange their travel time according to their physical, emotional, aesthetic, educational, social and knowledge needs. Travelling experience is not just coming from tour activities. At the same time, tour activities are showing professional, specialized and functional characteristics. These trends show that tour activities of postmodern society have a lot of separation with those of modern society, and they are combining with work, social and cultural activities, etc., no longer separated from daily activities[5]. With fast speed of daily lives, some new forms of travel are appearing, such as micro tour, visitors go to destinations in a short time and have new understanding and feelings of attractions by personal experience.

Personalized travel experience. Postmodernism emphasizes dominant position of people and appeals for humanization and liberalization of them. It is against pure reason, function, and form of international style in modernism as well as paleness and commonplace of modernism, while it praises highly on happy, natural and elegant life, emphasizing human experience and personality. Therefore, tourists of postmodern society pursue free and flexible tourism products and routes. They display individuality, pay attention to individual creativity and participation, emphasize subjective feelings, seek for unique experience and different emotions, and pursue high quality of material and spiritual enjoyment. In the process of travel, tourists are more self-disciplined, pursuing personalized experience consumption and emphasize protection of ecological environment. They are against rough way of transforming nature for human's entertainment to avoid arbitrary transformation and destruction of environment. People like to enjoy leisure at any time and any places, so personalized tours are quite fit for them.

The contradiction, complexity and diversity of postmodern tourism. Complexity and contradiction of postmodernism are replacing simplicity of modernism. And the content and form of postmodern tourism have become more diverse, tourism objects including from real entity to subjective world such as a large number of copy creation of virtual landscapes. After the process of mass production or copies of deconstruction in modern society, people no longer pursue a uniform way of travelling, instead, they are becoming more accustomed to centerless, scattered, fragmented forms of travel.

3. Travel Experience

Experiences come into being by sensibility, rather than compulsion mode by institutionalization, neither with instrumental and historical reason, nor with pure daily life experiences of subject-object dichotomy[6]. In the same way, the essence of tourism experience is also perception, and it is independent from instrumental reason and historical reason.

3.1 Tourism Experience as Exploration of Life Meaning.

Featherstone(2006)[7] said that people's lives are only once, so they must strive to enjoy and experience lives and express themselves. Tourism can satisfy human's needs of leisure, communication and aesthetics (i.e. self-decision and free experience), and help them express their life attitudes, establish their social identity and division, and making individual creation or even re-invention[8]. People pay attention to tourism experience due to their understanding of living and the nature of life. Appropriate desire and specific feeling of people need to be respected, while individual existence and significance should be taken seriously and the purport in people' life can be followed. In this sense, tourism is the best way to make up the missing in daily life.

3.2 Travel Experience Bridging between Daily Life Environment and Tourist Destination.

Meanings have two aspects: one is based on unity of the universe and the other based on individuality of details. And the purport refers to the latter while the meaning to the former[9]. Institutionalized rationality can not explain all the connotation of the world because reason, science and technology have their own limitations. The background of science and technology is always linked with human environments, namely the scope of human experience[10]. The reason and system are significant to our lives, but they are not everything. Although sensibility is relatively fragmented, isolated and one-sided, the reason and system need to take it as their contents instead of replacing it. In the same way, the reason and system of modernism cannot meet all the desires of people. They have everlasting aspiration for poetic dwelling and seek happy and fun lives. However, People are always living in a systematical, limited and rational world when they are constructing another poetic spirit world in their hearts, so they escape from material reality through tourism to another material reality---tourist destinations, with their thoughts and desires as the bridge for the two worlds. People pay more attention to their own inner feelings, and tourist destinations are just tools to meet their spiritual needs. Tourism is considered to be full of passion and it is the dream of an adventure people can not take in daily life. In travelling, people carry out some activities they do not have chances to do in daily lives and have sensuous enjoyment and spiritual enhancement which is very important to them.

3.3 Tourism Reflecting Essence of Experience Economic.

In experience economy, people's psychology is significant, which should be taken into consideration in development of productivity. What experience economy concerns most is people' spiritual needs which transcends material enjoyment, such as recognition, respect, expression, taste, etc.. So experience economy is more human-oriented and it meets concerns and interests of people's spirit world instead of that of material world. Tourism is a special commodity as experience is its most important content. Tourists can do abundant things like relaxing themselves, acquiring knowledge, meeting other people, etc., but it is more important for them to achieve peak experiences such as respects, identities, self-expressions, individual personalities, release of pressure, and unforgettable joys. Thus, tourism shares many similarities with experience economy.

4. Tourism Experience in the Perspective of Postmodernism

4.1 Subjective Feelings instead of Tourism Objects.

Tourism objects in post-modern society are not necessarily traditional products like sightseeing, holiday travel, ecotourism, wellness Travel, etc., instead, most of them refers to subjective spiritual products such as imaginations, experiences or memories etc. Many new fields of tourism such as film, music, sports, leisure, SPA and health, show that travel objects can be subjective creations[5]. Postmodern tourists pay more attention to essential significance and value of travelling process, turning concerns to human's instinct needs, or even rebellious self-expressions, so that their personalities can be developed in travelling experiences and they can enjoy happiness of lives.

Postmodern tourists put more emphasis on involvement in activities to create a fine and unique memories, actively participating instead of relying on traditional tourism objects.

4.2 Postmodern Tourism Emphasizing Life Experience.

New tours for dating, migratory birds, car camping, home exchanges, etc., are related to people's daily activities, which embodies life orientation of tourism. Also, contents and forms of travel are closely related to people's daily work, entertainment, leisure, sports and other activities. Traditional destinations are separated from people's living or working places and tourists flee normal lives and familiar environments to travel for relaxation and fun with careful arrangements for the trips. They gaze at travelling objects as independent subjects and travelling is just entertainment and supplement of institutionalized worlds for them. Travel destinations and daily environments are always united, and even works and leisure activities can be carried out simultaneously in postmodern society.

4.3 Postmodern Tourism Experience Being a "Zero" Distance and Replicable Experience.

In modern society, people separate themselves from living environment, taking human as the conqueror and natural environment the conquered. They just "gaze" tourism attractions, so the distance between subjects and objects is always existing. But in postmodern society, people mean to discover reasonable spirit basis of the significance of human existence, so tourism bring them other meanings[11]. Postmodernism usually oppose rules and regulations of modernism and it resists serious and elegant culture, while it respects individuals' original nature and desire. Far from modern norms and constraints, postmodern experiences intends to explore life's objectives, with tourists being immersed in happiness of individual experiences and directly expressing their desires.

Postmodern experience has at least the following features: (1) disappearance of distance; (2) separation between the signifier and the signified; (3) pleasure of "hysteria sublime"[8]. Modern travel experience is a kind of practice that emotion is restricted, while postmodern tourism experience is a process of immersion and distance disappearing. In postmodern society, the boundary between elegant culture and popular culture is eliminating, followed by the pursuit of "zero distance" contacts and communications, which is embodied in the direct integration between subjects and objects, with tourists expressing their desires freely. Under the impact of globalization, information and transportation are convenient, and with cultural communication and understanding, familiar scenes and atmosphere can be created at different places. Postmodern destinations can either be real, or copied and created. Moreover, tourism activities and daily activities are no longer distinguished, and people can be tourists at any place at any time [5]. Therefore, postmodern tourists don't pursue long distance travel in fixed time anymore, in contrast, leisure is anywhere at any time for them.

5. Teaching from Tourism Experience Based on Postmodern Perspective

Postmodern life style is a new choice for living after thinking about negative effects of industrial civilization. Postmodern society is not to advocate a new life, but to propose that people should liberate from rational institution to try experiencing lives, and with a kind of fuzzy and uncertain state and taste, people can get rid of a simple symbol of some inevitability. They are living creatively with rebellion instead of stereotyped replication of rational life and pursuing liberation of human nature and development of mind and body, and their inner feelings become more important. So tour experience gets more attention in postmodern society, and it presents some new features, which is raising new expectations and requirements for tourism. Firstly, travel experiences for tourists are richer in local characteristics and diversification instead of being overall standardized; Secondly, postmodern tourists do not seek "worship" activities of elegant and elite culture, so tourism should serve as the bridge between elegant culture and popular culture to make tourists have equal dialogues and selfless peak experience without being dependent of elegant and elite culture. Thirdly, postmodern tourism experiences emphasize on subjects' feelings instead of material objects(such as entity of tourism landscape). Based on the theory that logic of meaning is more important than logic of

productions, postmodern tourists pay more attention to symbolic value, therefore, copies and imitations of travel productions have gradually gained their favor. Fourthly, inner releasing is what postmodern travellers pursue most, so their participation should be given full play to relax themselves both in freedom and emotion.

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