

On the Marketing Mix of Fujian Tea Tourism

Yanling Chen ^{a,b}, Rana Muhammad Sohail Jafar ^a, Michael Morley-Bunker ^c, Chang Lin ^a,
Lingcheng Chen ^a, Ruyan Wu ^a, and Peifen Zhuang ^{a*}

^a College of Economics, Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University, Fuzhou 350002, China

^b College of Management, Fujian University of Technology, Fuzhou, 350011, China

^c Faculty of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Lincoln University, Lincoln 7647, Christchurch, New Zealand

* Corresponding author: Peifen Zhuang, pfzhuang@hotmail.com

Abstract

Based on the data from a questionnaire survey of scholars in the tea industry and the tourism industry and by using the 4Ps Theory on marketing strategy, the authors analyze the development and existing issues for the marketing of Fujian tea tourism. The results show that major problems of Fujian tea tourism marketing included inadequate participation of tea tourism companies, and limited involvement of traditional promotion channels. The authors suggest that it is important to improve product positioning, to set prices scientifically, and to enhance the effectiveness of marketing channels and promotion.

Key words: *tea tourism; marketing mix; marketing strategy; tourism issues; Fujian*

1 Introduction

Scientifically recognized as *Camellia sinensis*, tea is both a plant as well as a beverage. The multi-dimensions and long history of tea make it possible to associate tea with culture and tourism; for example, “afternoon tea” represents a culture of setting aside a particular time for the consumption of tea. Jolliffe¹ defined tea tourism as a type of tourism motivated by an interest in the history, traditions and consumption of tea. It is in the areas of tea services, tea attractions, tea tours and tea destinations that tea is directly connected to tourism, as tourists seek out unique and authentic experiences relevant to the consumption and appreciation of the beverage. Tea tourism can be viewed as a type of food tourism. The distinction between food tourism and food as a part of the travel experience is presented in work by Okumus, & McKercher.² By taking the continuum into consideration, the authors redefine tea tourism, in a broad sense, as a type of tourism that involves tea-related elements (single or multiple) including visits to tea producing locations, purchasing or consuming tea and tea-related products, visits to scenery spots associated with tea production and other tourist attractions, and participation in of tea activities associated with tea. A goods and service package including one or more of the above tea-related tourism elements might also include transport to the locale, a guide, together with meals and accommodation for overnight stays.

1.1 Background of the Study

Over the past several thousand years, China has accumulated extensive knowledge concerning the cultivation, production, and consumption of tea. The result is a unique Chinese tea culture.

Tea culture was developed rapidly during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and has been embedded in Chinese society ever since. The history of tea in China is a product of China's vast geographic differences, the rich multi-ethnic group customs, as well as time. The diversity of tea is in part a reflection of the biological, ethnic, and cultural diversity of China. This diversity provides a foundation for tea tourism.

Fujian Province is known as the home of the world's black tea and it is one of China's major tea producing and exporting provinces. It is the only province in China that grows and produces 5 (green, black, white, yellow, and Oolong tea) out of the 6 different Chinese tea types (green, black, white, yellow, Oolong, and dark tea). Located on the southeast coast of China, Fujian is famous for its beautiful seaside scenery, its rich geological diversity, and its typical folk houses. Travelers can enjoy sunshine on a beach or a hike in the mountains - a perfect holiday experience for any visitor. Wuyi Mountain (Mt Wuyi on the north-west of Map 1), listed on the World Heritage List, is famous for its peaks and, also, for Wuyi tea. Anxi, located in the south-east of Fujian Province, is a famous tea village in Fujian Province. Anxi is recognized as one of the listed Top 3 Golden Travel Line locations for Tea Tourism in China and as a Special Tea Township Travel Line in Fujian Province. Anxi has developed tea-related tourism with holiday resorts for tourists, excursions to explore the tea mountains and tea gardens open for visiting. A visit to a tea garden can include a tea ceremony performance, tea tasting and listening to tea songs.



Map 1- Tea-related Map of Fujian Province

2 Literature review

Tea tourism is grounded on a combination of facets relating to tea culture and activities related to tea production and processing in tea houses/gardens. The tea tourism experience also involves the tourists' interaction with the regional and local natural scenery, ecology and the rural landscape. Tea tourism is a new market and is becoming increasingly popular. Tea tourists choose to further their appreciation of tea by exploring tea culture and tea consumption during their visit.³ The basic resources for tea tourism in China are the abundant traditional tea culture resources, the good reputation of different tea varieties, the quality of the tea and the ecological features of natural environment.³ In China, a large number of rural cultural tourism destinations have emerged since the mid-1980s. In 1989, tea tourists from over 33 countries attended the show of Tea and Chinese Culture in Beijing. Tea-related programs have become increasingly popular in China since. According to *Ying and Zhou*⁴, tea has been associated with tourism as a result of the rapid growth of Chinese tourism industry. Tea tourism is now considered a commercial product and a component part of the global production, marketing and consumption of tea. Tea tourism has now been recognized as a new way to diversify the tourism markets and improve the local economies in tea producing countries.⁵

Tea tourism has emerged in China just as it has in other tea producing and consuming countries, notably Japan, India, Turkey, Kenya, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. In India, the tea tourism experience includes sight-seeing, together with tasting tea and food taken with tea. Visitors may also be provided with facilities for yoga, massage and spa therapy, and presented with opportunities to try the local cuisine. *R. K. B. Galagoda et al.*⁶ reported measuring the potential for ecotourism in Sri Lanka up-country tea agricultural estates. Six estates were selected as observation cases and the information collected through a field survey, a community survey, a series of personnel interviews, and questionnaire-based surveys. An index was developed (Tourism Potential Index, TPI) to explain the capacity of each estate to develop ecotourism. The research determined that about 75% of the tea estate communities were in favor of implementing an ecotourism project. In this study about 84% and 78% of foreign and local tourists respectively answered that they would be willing to visit such a project, indicating the importance of implementing sustainable projects to enhance the quality of life of the tea estate community.

A "marketing mix" is defined as a set of controllable marketing tools used by a business for creating a desired response in a targeted market. The elements or tools of a marketing mix are the basic and tactical components of a marketing plan. Known as the Four P's, product, price, place of distribution, and promotion, the marketing mix elements are the primary ingredients in a marketing strategy - the means of translating market planning into practice.⁷ An appropriate marketing mix is commonly used in product development and marketing in various sectors including tourism. *L. Chen et al.*⁸ observed that B&B operators mainly focus on advertising channel. Their study analyzed B&B visitors' motivations and decision-making behaviors. The study was able to help B&B operators make marketing strategies that went beyond promotion.

Numerous tools are used to broaden and develop products for tea tourism. In addition to a case study approach using content analysis,² questionnaire surveys are widely used in tourism-related

studies. Interviews and open-ended questionnaires were conducted in 2007 and 2008 to explore tea tourism development in Xinyang, China.³ A questionnaire survey was used and four clustered segments were identified based on five motivational factors.⁸ R. K. B. Galagoda *et al.*⁶ used questionnaire-based surveys as one of the tools to develop the Tourism Potential Index.

3 Description of questionnaire survey

In order to explore the potential for Fujian tea tourism, the research team developed and conducted a questionnaire survey with the objective of determining what marketing mix that might further develop tea tourism in Fujian. The people surveyed were academics connected with the tea industry and the tourism industry and were drawn from the faculty and staff at Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University and Wuyi University. There were 33 valid questionnaires and the valid return rate was 100%. 52% of respondents work in the field of tea industry and 48% work in the field of tourism. Their ages ranged from 20 to 50 years old. 42.43% of the respondents fell in the range from 20 to 30 years of age, 27.27% age were in the 30 to 40 age year range and 24.24% in the 40 to 50 age year range. 6.06% are above 50 years old. 72.73% of the respondents were female and 27.27% male.

The questionnaire consisted of 20 structured questions and 1 open-ended question. The questions were aimed at determining the profile of the people surveyed and their opinions and suggestions on the 4Ps-based marketing mix of Fujian tea tourism. The open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire aimed to capture all possible answers. Unless otherwise stated, the questions surveyed were single-response questions. A pilot questionnaire involving 2 respondents and the follow-up modifications were implemented to clarify the questions. During the formal survey, the self-completed questionnaires (in WORD format) were sent to respondents by emails and respondents returned the filled-out digital questionnaires to the research team. The respondents from the said two universities were selected on the basis of convenience principle. It took approximately 20 minutes to fill out the questionnaire. The research team further enquired the respondents for clarification while analyzing the data.

3.1 Present situation of Fujian tea tourism

When asked “According to the definition of tea tourism, how much do you know about tea tourism?”, 3.03% of respondents chose “very well”, 57.58% chose “well”, 33.33% chose “average”, and 6.06% chose “a little”. These responses served to indicate that most of the respondents had a good understanding of tea tourism. When asked “How often have you experienced tea tourism during the recent three years?”, 15.15% of respondents chose “never”, while 57.58% chose “1-2times”, 21.21% chose “3-5times”, 3.03% chose “6-10 times”, and 3.03% chose “more than 10 times”. The affirmative responses indicated that most of respondents experienced tea tourism more than once during the recent three years.

In answering the question “What is your impression on tea tourism?”, 9.09% of respondents chose “very good”, 57.58% chose “good”, 30.30% chose “average”, and 3.03% chose “no experience”, indicating that more than a half of respondents had a favorable impression of tea

tourism. When asked “Why would you like to join a tea tourism visit?” (Multi-response Question), 78.79% of respondents chose “tea-tasting”, 57.58% chose “cultural education”, 48.48% chose “sightseeing”, 12.12% chose “healthcare”, and 42.42% chose “personal interest”, showing that tea-tasting, cultural education, sightseeing and personal interest are the main reasons for respondents to join the tea tourism.

Based on the respondents’ answers, it is concluded that not only did the respondents know about tea tourism, but they had also experienced tea tourism during the recent three years. Their choice to join a tea tourism visit was promoted not only by their wish to sample tea but also for cultural education, sightseeing and personal interest.

3.2 Development and issues of the marketing mix of Fujian tea tourism product

When respondents were asked “Which products and projects in tea tourism are you interested in?” (Multi-response Question), most of the responses mentioned tea art, tea, tea sets, tea food, and tea crafts (Fig. 1).

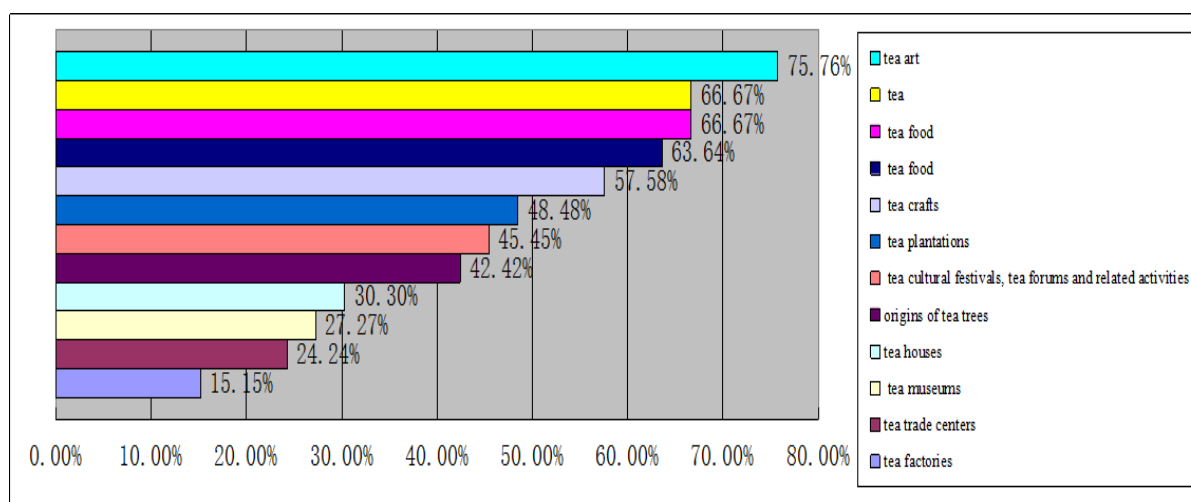


Fig. 1- Products and Projects in Tea Tourism in which Respondents are Interested

When asked about teahouse style with the question “If you can visit the tea house in tea tourism, which style would you like?” (Multi-response Question), 6.06% of respondents chose “high-end”, 96.97% chose “quiet and comfortable”, 57.58% chose “traditional”, and 21.21% chose “western style”. The responses indicated that the respondents generally preferred quiet and comfortable or sentimental style tea houses. As for “Which factors attract you to buy tea-related products during tea tourism?” (Multi-response Question), the responses included “cultural value” (66.67%), “authentic product” (57.58%), and “memory value” (54.55%), which are the main factors that attracted the respondents to buy tea-related products during their tea tourism.

experience (Figure 2). When asked “How many days will you expect to spend when undertaking a tea tourism visit/experience?”, 18.18% of respondents chose “one day”, 48.49% chose “two days (one night)”, 30.30% chose “three days (2 nights)”, and 3.03% chose “four days (3 nights) and above”, indicating that for most of the respondents there was an expectation that their interest in tea tourism would need two or three days exploration to satisfy their interest.

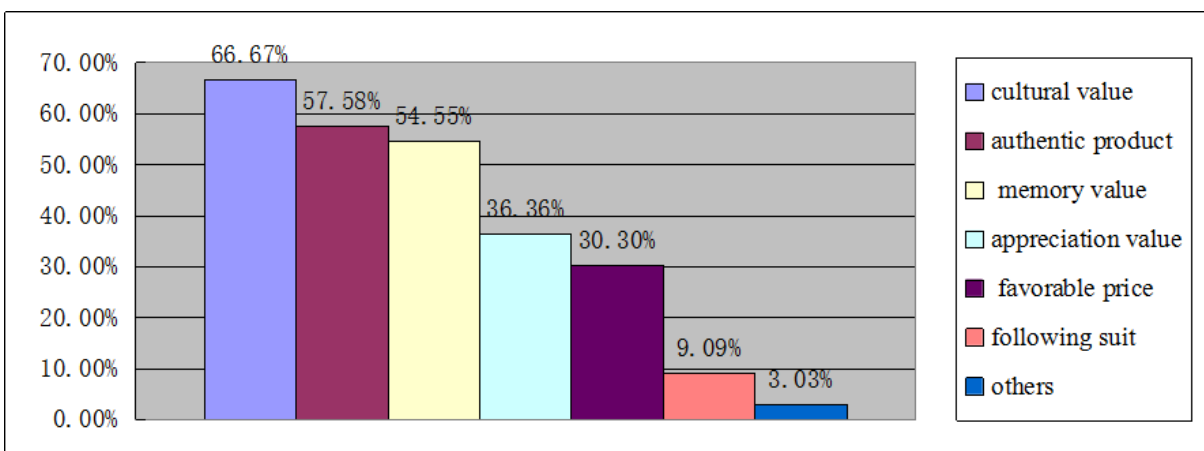


Fig. 2- Factors that Attract Respondents to Buy Tea-related Products during Tea Tourism

It is concluded that most of the respondents had an expectation and/or preference for a two or three-day trip and that this should take place with the provision of a comfortable and traditional sentimental environment. Respondents were also most interested in buying tea-related products when the cultural value, authenticity, and memory value were most notable.

Price

When asked “How much is a single trip for Fujian tea tourism?”, 24.24% of respondents selected “less than 500 (RMB)”, 33.34% chose “500→1,500 (RMB)”, 15.15% chose “1,500→2,500 (RMB)”, 3.03% chose “2,500→3,500 (RMB)”, 3.03% chose “more than 3,500 (RMB)”, and 21.21% chose “no idea” (Table 1). The responses indicated that most of respondents have the impression that the price of a Fujian tea tourism single trip is less than 1,500 RMB. When asked further “What is your opinion about the price of Fujian tea tourism?”, 21.21% of respondents selected “expensive”, 57.58% chose “acceptable”, and 21.21% chose “no idea”, indicating that most respondents think the of Fujian tea tourism, at this point in time, is acceptable. One further question asked the respondents “How much can you afford for tea tourism?”, 36.37% of respondents chose “less than 500 (RMB)”, 36.36% chose “500→1,500 (RMB)”, 21.21% chose

“1,500→2,500 (RMB)”, and 6.06% chose “2,500→3,500 (RMB)” (Table 1). The responses indicated that most respondents think that the affordable price of Fujian tea tourism is less than 1,500 RMB.

Table-1 Price Information on Fujian Tea Tourism

	Do you know the price (RMB) of Fujian tea tourism?	How much can you afford for tea tourism?
less than 500 (RMB)	24.24%	36.37%
500→1500 (RMB)	33.34%	36.36%
1500→2500 (RMB)	15.15%	21.21%
2500→3500 (RMB)	3.03%	6.06%
more than 3500 (RMB)	3.03%	0.00%
no idea	21.21%	

It is concluded that most of respondents think the price of Fujian tea tourism is reasonable and the affordable price for tea tourism is less than 1,500 RMB. Table 1 showed that 500→1,500 (RMB) had the highest frequency in terms of perceived Fujian tea tourism price and the affordable price, indicating that this price range could be suitable for pricing policy for marketers in terms of profit maximization.

Promotion

When respondents were asked “What do you think of the strength of Fujian tea tourism promotion?”, 15.15% of respondents chose “strong”, 48.49% chose “acceptable”, 24.24% chose “weak”, and 12.12% chose “very weak”, indicating that most of the respondents are positive about promotion of Fujian tea tourism industry. Respondents were also asked “Do you know if there are any tea tourism companies?”, 30.30% of respondents chose “Yes” and 69.70% chose “No”, showing that a minority of respondents knew about tea tourism companies operating in Fujian. When asked “Have you gotten in touch with any sales representatives of tea tourism?”, 21.21% of respondents chose “Yes” and 78.79% chose “No”, indicating that a minority of respondents have got in touch with sales representatives for tea tourism. It is concluded that the promotion of Fujian tea tourism can be improved. Although most of respondents know about tea tourism, only a few respondents know about tea tourism companies operating in Fujian. Furthermore, only a few respondents have ever got in touch with sales representatives for tea tourism.

Place

When asked “How do you get the information about tea tourism?” (Multi-response Question), the responses indicated that the main information channels for tea tourism were “word of mouth” (69.70%). Some of the people surveyed said that they used information from new media sources, such as WeChat and Micro Blog (Table 2). The more traditional communication channels such as TV advertisements, tourism company advertisements, and sales person activity would seem to be less important. When respondents were asked “How would you book a tea tourism visit?” (Multi-response Question), 39.39% of respondents chose “via the Internet”, 6.06% chose “via television or broadcast programs”, and 54.55% chose “via tourism companies”, and 51.52% chose “others”. The responses indicated that more than a half of respondents would opt for a tea tourism experience using a tourism company to make the necessary arrangements. Also in the options included in this survey question was “others”, which was chosen by 51.52% of the respondents. This suggests that the respondents believed that there were other options available to make tea tourism arrangements which were not included in the available responses. It is possible that the respondents had in mind a self-help approach using the Internet. This approach would bypass the traditional 3rd party booking channels.

Table-2 Communication Channels of Fujian Tea Tourism

Channels	Percentage
word of mouth	69.70%
WeChat	60.61%
Website	45.45%
Micro Blog	30.30%
television advertisement	21.21%
advertisement of the tourism company	18.18%
sales person	12.12%

It is concluded that respondents have access to tea tourism as an experience through both traditional ways and new media. The Internet creates more channels to organize and make arrangements to experience tea tourism.

4 Conclusions and suggestion

4.1 Conclusions

Firstly, the survey shows that the respondents would choose to undertake a Fujian tea tourism experience for several different reasons. Those reasons included (i) the experience gained from visiting a tea producing property, (ii) experiencing and appreciating the environment of both the location and the tea producing property, (iii) being able to see and purchase tea-related products and (iv) experiencing and appreciating the cultural values inherent with the locale and the production of tea in that locale. Secondly, the respondents think that the price of tea tourism is reasonable. Thirdly, the Fujian tea tourism industry does not appear to attach much importance to the traditional information and communication channels for promoting tea tourism. Fourthly, the surveyed respondents do have access and can undertake a tea tourism experience through engagement via traditional communication channels as well as new media.

4.2 Suggestions

Product

Fujian tea tourism companies could organize tea tourism with a greater focus on tea history and local products. There could also be more teahouse building, near or adjacent to tea plantations. Tea tourism could be further enhanced with the production of more tea products as souvenirs. Further development of informational programs about tea history, tea products and tea appreciation could be undertaken. A long-term strategy for Fujian tourism industry could include further developing tea culture as an important distinctive feature found in the Fujian province. Companies should classify the tea tourism projects depending on the target markets.

Price

Fujian tea tourism companies could attract consumers with competitive prices. They could design their prices depending on the targeted markets and they could adopt different pricing methods for different tourist profiles. Some tourists might prefer a very short and cheap trip. Other tourists may expect their trip be of high-quality and therefore their trip to cost more than an ordinary excursion. The pricing policy should match tourists' expectations.

Promotion

Firstly, tea tourism companies could encourage specialized talents and improve salesperson exposure. Secondly, they could speed up the development of electronic commerce by adding links to other websites, using website review, email campaigns and monthly newsletters. Thirdly, they could organize specific activities, such as tea-tasting get-togethers or tea parties, with tea specialists to expand brand awareness.

Place

Tea tourism companies could sell tea tourism products through multiple channels. It should be possible for travelers interested in tea tourism to purchase a tea tourism product directly through the Internet. Influential travel agencies could play a more active role in selling tea tourism products/packages. They would probably need to be encouraged with some special advantages given to the co-operating agencies. Commission rates could be negotiated and other incentives could be explored.

Some caution should be taken when considering the conclusions of this paper. There are a limited number of people who have been surveyed. The respondents are drawn from only two fields of research, namely the tea industry and the tourism industry. The survey could be more representative if other perspectives had been surveyed.

References

1. *L. Jolliffe*, The lure of tea: History, traditions and attractions. In Hall et al. (Ed.), *Food Tourism around the World: Development, Management and Markets*, Routledge, 2003, 121-123.
2. *B.Okumusa, K.Okumusb, B. McKercherc*, Incorporating local and international cuisines in the marketing of tourism destinations: The cases of Hong Kong and Turkey, *Tourism Management*, 2007, 28: 253–261.
3. *S.Cheng, J. Hu, D.Fox, Y Zhang*, Tea tourism development in Xinyang, China: Stakeholders' view, *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 2012, 2: 28-34.
4. *T.Ying, Y. Zhou*, Community, governments and external capitals in China's rural cultural tourism: A comparative study of two adjacent villages, *Tourism Management*, 2007, 28(1): 96-107.
5. *L.Jolliffe, & M. S. Aslam*, Tea heritage tourism: Evidence from Sri Lanka, *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 2009, 4(4): 331-344.
6. *R. K. B.Galagoda, , K. G. M. C. P. B.Gajanayake, , A. C. S.Silva*, Planning ecotourism in up-country tea estates in Sri Lanka: Testing a 'tourism potential index', *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, 2006,3(1): 65-74.

7. *M. T. Khan*, The concept of 'marketing mix' and its elements (A conceptual review paper), *International Journal of Information, Business and Management*, 2014, 6(2): 95-107.
8. *L.Chen, S. Lin, C. Kuo*, Rural tourism: Marketing strategies for the bed and breakfast in dustry in Taiwan, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 2013, 32: 278-286.