Current Status of Local Tourist Cultural Creative Products in Taiwan

A case study of Pinglin District, New Taipei City

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1. Introduction

As time changes, along with economic development and increasing labor costs, the secondaries industries in Taiwan have gradually moved to Mainland China and Southeast Asia. After Taiwan entered World Trade Organization (WTO), local industries even faced difficulties in transformation directly.

As the government promoted the local tourism, local industries gradually transformed their traditional manufacture into the tertiary industries which provided featured products and tourist services. As a result, how to strengthen the local tourist features also became the priority. The government hoped to promote Taiwanese brands in the global market through marketing, brand building, and global layout.

As a result, various products featuring local nature and human cultures began to appear in Taiwan. In addition to tangible products, special accommodation or cultural experience activities were also provided. For many and complex products in regions, how to find out the position in the market and understanding the trend of key cultural creative products of the brand in the region became more and more important. Thus, the study aimed to explore characteristics of products and sorting principles through the field research and provide them for the locals as the reference to design directions and future development strategies for cultural creative products so as to protect the local unique cultures.

The study analyzed the categories of 2764 local cultural and creative products in tourism industries published on the website Taiwan One Town One Product and concluded the sorting principles and characteristics of cultural and creative products in tourism industries in Taiwan.

Moreover, the study adopted the local cultural and tourist products in Pinglin, Taiwan as an example to explore the potential market of local tourist cultural and creative products as well as the developing trend of current products. Last, the study provided recommendations for the future application of local tourist cultural and creative products based on the abovementioned result.

2. Sorting standard of tourist cultural and creative products

Cultural and creative products were designed creatively based on the concept of cultural identification with the focus on communication and significance to satisfy the customers’ spiritual needs. Local tourist cultural and creative products were created based on the concept and added with more local features or images that symbolized cultural identification. In addition to tangible products, special accommodation or cultural experience activities were also provided included for discussion.

Among 2764 cultural and creative products published on the website Taiwan One Town One Product, several categories could be sorted based on characteristics of products. The detailed description was as below:

1) Food processing: food produced from processed local produce, livestock products, and aquatic products, including snacks, desserts, tea, alcoholic drinks, and coffee, oil or seasoning, pickled products, frozen products, and rice and noodles.

2) Cultural craft: products which were manufactured from local ingredients or by local traditional industries and had technical values and worth appreciating, including dyeing and weaving art, bamboo art, stone art, wood art, Lacquer art, pottery art, glass art, metal art, paper art, and gems.

3) Creative lifestyle: products which transferred local cultures to cultural identification or symbol through creativity, or creative life articles derived from industrial transformation, which provided deep experiences and high-quality aesthetics, including cosmetics and care products, life articles, toys, and stationery.

4) Recreational services: representative experience activities and services which were provided for the public by local featured industries which were founded based on regional terrain, different resources and smart application of local residents, including accommodation, hot spring, and experience activities.

5) Local gourmet: local signature refreshments which were developed from local ingredients, specialties, or cultural characteristics.

3. Current status of cultural and creative products in Pinglin

3.1 Background of Pinglin District, New Taipei City

Pinglin District was located at the juncture of New Taipei City and Yilan County in Taiwan. Before 1979 where the coastal highway was not yet open, Freeway No. 5 was the only way for...
people living in the North Taiwan to go east. Pinglin was the relay station between the north and east Taiwan. However, as the inauguration of Freeway No. 5, Pinglin lost its advantage of traffic artery, and half of crowds disappeared. Pinglin was also a water-source conservation district and tourist resort.

The main economic crop in Pinglin District was Wen Shan Pouchong Tea. Currently, more than 80% of residents in Pinglin District were tea growers. The production and sale of Wen Shan Pouchong Tea have become the most important economic source in Pinglin District. The area of tea plantation was almost 1000 hectare. The annual income was NT$ 500 million.

The tourist attractions in the district could be divided into nature and human cultures. The natural attractions included construction and planning of mountain trails, bicycle trails, and ecological conservation. Human cultural attractions included shopping areas, historical sites, theme parks, and religion; among them, shopping areas and theme parks were the main itineraries for tourists to visit Pinglin District.

3.2 Current status of cultural and creative products in Pinglin

The study collected 57 relevant cultural and creative product samples based on Pinglin Old Street and Shuiluijia Image Commercial District in Pinglin. According to the sorting principles mentioned in the previous section, the categories were described in detail in the Table 1 as below:

Table 1: cultural and creative product’s categories in Pinglin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food processing (31)</th>
<th>Creative lifestyle (3)</th>
<th>Recreational services (13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>snacks</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tea, alcoholic</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drinks, and coffee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desserts</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice and noodles</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frozen products</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pickled products</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural craft (0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dyeing and weaving</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>art, bamboo, etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local gourmet</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local ingredients</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In five categories, 31 products in the food processing category, which accounted for the most. “Snack” accounted for 32% of food processing products, followed by “tea, alcoholic drinks, and coffee”. Since the district was famous for tea, 26 products were tea-processed food, which had strong local features. However, due to selling locations and environmental factors, the exterior of processed food tended to be simple or without packaging. Such as vacuum packaging tea and tea ice cream shown in the Figure 1,2.

In the recreational services, the number of “accommodation” and “experience activities” was almost the same. Thanks to the abundant natural scenes and water-source conservation district, most of accommodations in Pinglin were for campsite lease, such as Tea food Travel Camp Hills shown in the Figure 3. For “experience activities”, most of them were activities promoted by Pinglin Tea Museum shown in the Figure 4.

In the creative lifestyle category, most of them were cleaning products with the features of tea, such as tea seed powder shown in the Figure 5. The reason for it was the same as the reason why cultural craft did not have products. It was because that Pinglin Tea Museum was currently closed and no space for marketing and selling products of creative lifestyle and cultural craft categories was provided.

4. Conclusion and recommendation

For the study on the current status, the results and recommendations were described respectively as below:

1) Lack of appropriate space for sale and lack of talents in the craft industry; processed food accounted for the most of current cultural and creative products in Pinglin District, followed by recreational services and local gourmet, while almost no products were created in creative lifestyle and cultural craft categories. The reason for it was due to lack of the environment and space for sale. Moreover, most of the locals were tea growers, so craftsmen and craft industries were insufficient.

2) Lack of local brand and marketing: although products in the food processing category were various and featured, no local brand was yet established. For the exterior of products, marketing plans and sales, no specific operating strategies were set up. In the future, the establishment of brand image should be a top priority after the overall market assessment and consideration have been made.

3) Tourism’s failure in taking good advantage of local features: although Pinglin District was rich in natural and human resources, the potential for tourist resources and recreational services provided currently was not taken good advantage of. In the future, short-term and long-term activities related to mountain trails, bicycle trails, and ecological conservation can be planned, allowing tourists to recognize the beauty of Pinglin again. Moreover, such activities can promote and conserve the local cultural features.

Reference