

Optimizing International Tourism Sales Strategies from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract: With the deepening of globalization and the advent of an era characterized by cross-cultural communication, international tourism has transcended mere economic activity to become a vital vehicle for dialogue, understanding, and peaceful coexistence among different civilizations. In this context, traditional tourism sales strategies, often lacking cultural sensitivity, face significant challenges in effectively reaching and fulfilling the deep-seated needs of tourists from diverse cultural backgrounds. Based on the core arguments of Professor Fan Yuzhou's work on "Cross-Cultural Communication and International Tourism," this paper explores how to optimize international tourism sales strategies from a cross-cultural perspective. The study contends that successful international tourism sales is not merely about product promotion but constitutes a systematic cross-cultural communication process grounded in the fundamental principle of cultural identity, preconditioned on cultural understanding, and implemented through cultural integration. Accordingly, this paper proposes optimization strategies: conducting precise market positioning through in-depth cultural market research; designing tourism products and marketing content that resonate culturally and avoid misinterpretation; establishing culturally friendly sales channels and service experiences; and training professionals equipped with cross-cultural communication skills. The ultimate aim is to enhance the cultural appeal and market competitiveness of China's international tourism through this cross-cultural transformation of sales strategies, enabling it to play a more active role in telling China's story and promoting harmonious global development.

1. Introduction

In the current era, the world is experiencing unprecedented globalization and cultural integration, heralding the arrival of an international "mass tourism" era set against a backdrop of cross-cultural exchange. International tourism, as the most direct and vivid form of cross-cultural practice within this process, is not only a crucial industry for economic development but also a key pathway for dispelling cultural misunderstandings, fostering mutual recognition among peoples, and promoting global harmony. However, traditional international tourism sales strategies often prioritize economic efficiency and market coverage, lacking deep insight into and respect for cultural differences. This can lead to cultural barriers, or even unintentional cultural offense, in marketing

communication, product design, and service delivery, thereby constraining further market expansion. Therefore, within this context, this paper aims to systematically examine the existing shortcomings in the cultural adaptability of China's international tourism sales strategies from the theoretical perspective of cross-cultural communication^[1]. Centering on the core principle of "cultural identity," it proposes a framework for optimizing sales strategies—enhancing their cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and effectiveness—across multiple levels, including market research, product design, marketing communication, and personnel training. This endeavor seeks to provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for enhancing the soft power and global competitiveness of China's international tourism.

2. Core Principles of International Tourism Sales from a Cross-Cultural

When developing international tourism sales strategies from a cross-cultural perspective, it is essential to move beyond traditional product- and price-centric models and instead establish a set of core principles rooted in cultural understanding and respect. These principles form the philosophical foundation and operational guidelines for effective cross-cultural marketing, with the ultimate goal of building cultural resonance to foster trust, stimulate interest, and drive consumer behavior. International tourism is, by nature, a profound cultural experience where travelers seek not only foreign landscapes but also insight into different ways of life and value systems. Therefore, the success of sales strategies largely depends on their ability to sensitively identify, interpret, and respond to the deeper psychological and cultural expectations of tourists from diverse backgrounds.

Central to this approach is the principle of cultural identity. Effective sales communication requires more than mere translation or superficial use of cultural symbols; it demands a deep understanding of the target market's values, social norms, aesthetic preferences, and even historical context. Successful engagement makes potential visitors feel that their cultural identity is recognized, respected, and valued, thereby creating an emotional connection and a sense of psychological security toward the destination^[2]. For instance, promotions aimed at tourists from collectivist cultures may emphasize family packages or group experiences rather than individual adventure, while travelers from cultures with high uncertainty avoidance may require clear, detailed, and reliable service information to alleviate decision-making anxiety. This approach requires marketers to avoid ethnocentrism and refrain from imposing their own cultural standards, instead adopting an attitude of humility, curiosity, and willingness to learn about the "other."

Equally important is the principle of differentiation and adaptability. The global market is not monolithic; cultural diversity necessitates highly flexible and tailored sales strategies. A one-size-fits-all global advertising campaign often fails to resonate across cultural audiences and may even cause offense due to misinterpretation. Thus, strategies must be customized according to the cultural traits of specific source countries. This includes using visuals and colors that align with local aesthetics and symbolism, crafting narratives that evoke emotional resonance, selecting media channels and influencers familiar to the audience, and adapting products to align with local holidays, customs, or taboos. For example, offering special reunion-themed tours during Chinese New Year for the Chinese diaspora, or designing itineraries that accommodate religious practices in Middle Eastern markets. Such thoughtful adaptation demonstrates respect and communicates the core value of the tourism product more effectively.

A further critical principle is fostering two-way communication and dialogue, which serves as the foundation for long-term customer relationships. Cross-cultural sales should not involve one-way communication but should strive to create platforms for sustained and meaningful interaction with potential visitors. This involves making full use of social media and other interactive tools to listen to voices from different cultural backgrounds, respond to questions and concerns in a timely

manner, and encourage audience participation and content sharing. Through such dialogue, companies can continuously refine their messaging, minimize cultural misunderstandings, and cultivate a base of loyal international visitors who become both participants and ambassadors of the destination culture. Essentially, this principle treats the sales process as an opportunity to build cross-cultural friendship and trust, rather than seeing it as a mere transaction. Only when tourists feel genuinely valued—not merely as a source of profit—can cross-cultural sales fulfill its higher mission of promoting mutual understanding and shared benefit.

Together, these principles form a culturally intelligent framework for international tourism sales, guiding efforts to succeed in the global marketplace while contributing to friendly and harmonious exchanges between civilizations.

3. Pathways to Optimizing International Tourism Sales Strategies

In the competitive landscape of international tourism, optimizing sales strategies from a cross-cultural perspective requires integrating cultural understanding into every phase of the process—from market research to service delivery. This approach demands that tourism professionals go beyond superficial translation or symbolic gestures and instead carry out sustained and in-depth cultural market analysis. By applying analytical frameworks such as cultural dimension theory, organizations can systematically examine the cultural traits, social norms, consumer psychology, and communication styles of target source countries^[3]. These insights allow for a precise understanding of the underlying motivations and expectations of travelers from different cultural backgrounds. Such depth of understanding forms the basis not only for market segmentation but also for avoiding cultural misinterpretation and achieving effective positioning. Only with adequate respect and insight into the target culture can subsequent product design, marketing communication, and service delivery genuinely resonate across cultural boundaries and establish trust.

Building on profound cultural insight, the design and development of tourism products must center on "cultural integration" and "authentic experience." Product strategies should avoid reinforcing stereotypes or creating artificial cultural performances, and instead focus on crafting deep experiences that evoke cultural resonance. For example, multi-generational family tours can be designed for East Asian markets that emphasize family values, while customized workshops on intangible cultural heritage or community immersion programs may appeal to Western travelers who value self-actualization and personal engagement. At the content level, marketing materials should thoughtfully incorporate visual symbols, narrative techniques, and emotional appeals that reflect cultural affinity, ensuring that the message is both aesthetically appealing to international tourists and faithful to the authenticity of the destination culture. This means moving away from sensitive elements that may cause misunderstanding and adopting forms of expression that convey shared emotions and mutual cultural respect, thereby building a positive and credible destination image through cross-cultural dialogue.

At the sales and distribution level, the optimized pathway emphasizes selecting communication channels that align with the consumer behavior habits of the target market. For instance, in markets where social media is highly active, priority should be given to content marketing and interactive campaigns on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or local mainstream networks. In regions that still rely heavily on traditional travel agencies, strengthening partnerships with local operators and providing culturally adapted training and materials becomes essential. Equally important is building cross-cultural competence within sales and service teams. Frontline staff should receive systematic training that enables them not only to communicate in multiple languages but also to exercise cultural sensitivity and conflict resolution skills. This empowers them to keenly observe visitors' non-verbal cues and cultural expectations, thereby delivering personalized service that is both

attentive and respectful, and ensuring that tourists feel understood and valued throughout the entire journey—from booking to completion.

Ultimately, optimizing international tourism sales strategy is a dynamic and iterative process whose success depends on establishing effective cross-cultural feedback mechanisms and fostering continuous organizational learning. Tourism enterprises should proactively create diverse feedback channels, actively listening to international visitors' evaluations and suggestions—particularly those relating to cultural experience. Using this feedback, organizations can continuously calibrate marketing messages, refine product offerings, and enhance service quality, forming a virtuous cycle of “insight-practice-learning-optimization.” In the context of intertwined globalization and localization, this optimized pathway—grounded in cross-cultural understanding—will not only strengthen the international competitiveness and market share of tourism businesses but also, on a deeper level, promote friendly dialogue and mutual benefit between cultures, enabling international tourism to truly serve as a bridge connecting people and cultures.

4. Case Analysis and Practical Recommendations

The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)'s tourism promotion campaign targeting Muslim tourists offers a compelling real-world example of successfully optimizing international tourism sales from a cross-cultural perspective. In recent years, with the rapid growth of outbound tourism in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, JNTO identified the specific cultural and religious needs of Muslim travelers. While traditional images of Japan often emphasized cherry blossoms, sushi, and anime, there was limited attention to the daily practicalities of Muslim visitors, such as dietary restrictions and prayer facilities. Rather than applying a pan-Asian marketing strategy, JNTO conducted in-depth cultural research and discovered that a “Halal-Friendly” environment was a critical factor for Muslim tourists when selecting destinations. This insight led to a systematic optimization of their cross-cultural sales strategy.

In practical terms, JNTO implemented a series of measures tailored to the cultural needs of this audience. The organization collaborated with local governments and businesses to increase the number of halal-certified restaurants across Japan and introduced prayer facilities in transportation hubs and popular tourist areas, strengthening the infrastructure to support a welcoming environment. For markets such as Indonesia and Malaysia, JNTO developed tailored promotional materials that highlighted Japan's ability to blend modernity and tradition with cultural respect. Promotional videos featured scenes such as women in kimono gently indicating prayer directions in traditional gardens and close-ups of Japanese cuisine labeled with halal certifications, weaving cultural consideration seamlessly into the narrative. Additionally, JNTO trained and certified local tour guides to knowledgeably address Islamic cultural topics and designed itineraries that included family-friendly activities such as halal cooking classes and Muslim-friendly hot spring visits. These efforts not conveyed practical information but also built emotional trust and connection.

The success of this campaign demonstrates that effective cross-cultural tourism sales extend far beyond multilingual advertisements. It requires end-to-end cultural adaptation—from market insight and product design to service delivery. JNTO's approach embodied the principles of “cultural identification” and “differentiated service.” By addressing core visitor concerns—halal food and prayer—and embedding respect into every touchpoint, they earned the trust and satisfaction of the target market. By 2019, the number of Muslim visitors to Japan had nearly tripled within five years, with significantly higher visitor satisfaction, underscoring both the commercial and social value of a cross-cultural strategy.

Building on such successful cases, several practical recommendations emerge. Tourism destinations should establish dedicated cross-cultural market research functions to continuously

monitor cultural trends and shifting consumer preferences in key markets, avoiding decisions based on stereotypes. There is a need to promote product innovation and supply chain adaptation oriented toward "cultural fit." Industry associations can support businesses through standardization, certification, and training in areas such as halal-friendly, vegetarian-friendly, and accessible services, enhancing the overall inclusivity and capacity of the destination. Marketing and communication should embrace "cultural humility," involving influencers and content creators from target cultures and maintaining ongoing dialogue through social media to address cultural concerns proactively, shaping an open and friendly image. Finally, cross-cultural capabilities must be integrated into human resource development for the tourism industry. Regular cultural sensitivity workshops for frontline staff, marketers, and managers will help cultivate a cohort of professionals with global competence and cultural empathy, ensuring that cross-cultural sales becomes not just a strategy, but a core competitive advantage for the sector.

5. Conclusion

In summary, in an age where cross-cultural communication has become a defining theme, the competition within international tourism is, to a large extent, a competition of cultural appeal and the efficacy of cross-cultural communication. Optimizing international tourism sales strategies cannot be limited to micro-level adjustments in technology and channels; it necessitates a profound cultural shift, requiring a systematic reconceptualization within the macro framework of cross-cultural exchange. This means we must regard cultural identity as the cornerstone of strategy formulation and integrate cultural understanding into every facet of market analysis, product design, marketing communication, and service delivery. The ultimate goal is to fulfill the deep spiritual and emotional needs of international tourists by offering an authentic, respectful, and resonant cultural experience. Only through this approach can China's international tourism industry move beyond a mere "ticket economy," truly becoming a cultural bridge connecting China and the world. This will not only secure a competitive advantage in the intense global market but also contribute indispensably to the grand endeavor of promoting mutual learning among civilizations and building a community with a shared future for humanity.

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