

Measures of Travel Agencies' Precaution Against Complaint

LIU Dan^{[a],*}

^[a]School of Business Administration, Shenyang University, Shenyang, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

In recent years, with the development of tourist industry, complaint rate from tourists is ever increasing, among which many are targeted toward tourist agencies. This increase in complaint leads to people's mistrust in tourist agencies, which turns out to be harmful to the whole industry. Through the analysis of the yearly complaint about tourism industry collected in 2011, this paper finds out the causes of such complaint and therefore puts forward some suggestions on how to prevent complaint in advance. Hopefully, this paper will help provide references to other agencies in improving the service.

Key words: Travel agency; Complaint; Precaution; Measures

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1. BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO COMPLAINT

1.1 Definition of Complaint

According to "How to Deal with Tourist Complaint", Complaint of tourism refers to actions which aim at dealing with complaint from tourists concerning the violation of their legal rights during traveling. These actions are carried out by related departments such as Tourism Administrative Department, Tourism Supervision

and Administration Bureau over the Quality of Tourism, or Tourism Law Enforcement Agency.

Since tourists usually complain directly to the travel agencies when they think their legal rights are violated, and then both sides work out ways to get rid of such complaint in a negotiating way. In this sense, complaint can be classified into two kinds: one directly to tourist agencies and one to the administrative departments involved. Furthermore, complaint can be put into two kinds—oral complaint and written complaint.

1.2 Analysis of Complaint Throughout China in 2011

In 2011, Tourism Supervision and Administration Bureau over the Quality of Tourism received 11,060 complaint nation-wide, whose number increases by 1,118 compared with the previous year, and whose rate is 11.25% higher. The cases which come into the legal procedure are 10,003, 1,235 cases more than the previous year and the rate is 14.09% higher. The percentage of the kinds of complaint is listed in the following figure.

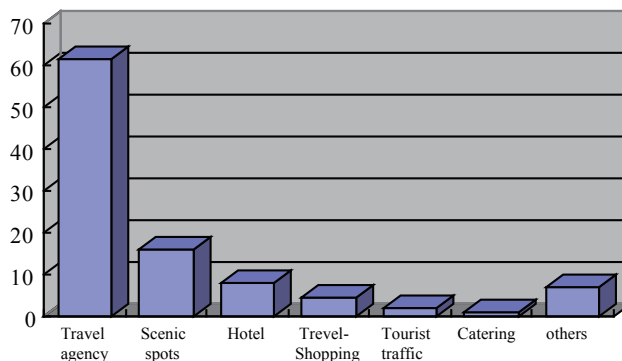


Figure 1
2011 Years of the Tourist in Proportion to Complain

Among the 10,003 legally investigated cases, 6155 cases are aimed at travel agencies, whose percentage reaches 61.53%. This is 1,146 more than 2010, and 22.88% higher in rate. The percentage of complaint on different issues is listed in the following table.

Table 1
Contrast of 2011 and 2010 Travel Agencies Complaint

Type	Number	Percentage in the total amount of complaint	Increase compared with 2010	Percentage higher than 2010
Cut-down in service quality during traveling	2504	40.68	809	47.73
Irresponsibility of tour guide	1224	19.87	85	7.46
Uninformed reduction or increase in tourism arrangements	1104	17.94	267	31.90
Change in schedule due to flight or traffic delay	666	10.82	64	10.63
Others	657	10.67		

From the above statistics, we can clearly see that the complaint that are targeted at travel agencies are the most serious among all. In the complaint aimed directly at tourist agencies, those who complain about the cut-down in service standard and uninformed reduction or increase in tourism arrangements are on ever increase. These mounting complaint cause the mistrust of tourists in tourist agencies, which is definitely harmful for the whole industry.

2. CAUSES THAT TRIGGER OFF COMPLAINT

2.1 Cause From Travel Agencies

The low-qualified service provided by tourist agencies is one of the main reasons why tourists make complaint. These can be further classified into three aspects:

2.1.1 Tourist Agencies' Violation of Contracts due to Dishonesty

In the process of management, travel agencies make false or exaggerated advertisements to delude tourists into their services, work against rules and regulations, and abandon honesty in pursuit of money and profit. All these malbehaviors are the main culprit of complaint.

For example, Pingxiang A travel Agency organized a tour which was set for one-day-tour to Liangshan, Vietnam on 17th October, 2011. But the tour guide a Mr. Jiang made another three-day-two-night tour to Pingxiang-Hanoi, Vietnam-Xiaolong Gulf, which was against the rule and contract. After two days of illegal detention in Vietnam, the touring group returned to China at 14:45 on 19th October, when the tourist agency was sued immediately by the tourists.

2.1.2 Inappropriate Arrangement by Travel Agencies

In the process of making schedules and arrangements, the real needs of tourists have not been taken into serious and thorough consideration. The arrangements are made only in accordance with the interests of tourist agencies or based on the previous experiences and lessons. The inconsideration often leads to repetition in tourist activities, loose or tight schedules, or a glimpse of scenic

spots without a further contact with them, too many times of shopping or too much time spent in stores. These phenomena are undoubtedly the main cause of complaint. For example, the complaint exposed by CCTV about Guilin Tai Lian International Travel Agency is a case in point. This agency shorted the touring time which was supposed to be spent visiting many scenic spots during its one-day-tour in Guilin. Worse still, it squeezed its limited touring time to make way for shopping. This angered the tourists who made complaint eventually.

2.1.3 Misbehaviors of Tourist Guides

As directly responsible for the entertaining service offered to tourists, the guides often make changes in the schedule of the touring activities without permission from tourists. Furthermore, they do not offer the necessary touring service. Moreover, they sometimes miss the flights and miscalculate people who are supposed to be picked up from the airports or stations. Worst of all, their bad temper and other inappropriate behavior always trigger off the complaint. For example, on 30, June, 2011, in Hangzhou, media published a piece of news about the complaint from tourists entitled with "shopping or you are bad tourists; and you will be crashed by cars when setting out. A Travel Agency's Local Guide's Harmful Words". This news exposed a tourist agency which organized a so-called "Hong Kong-Macao Marine Park-double-flight-five-day tour". It was accused of an uninformed increase and alteration of shopping sites in Hong Kong, which violated the legal rights of the tourists.

2.2 Causes From Tourists Themselves

Though travel agencies should take the main responsibility for the ever increasing complaint, the tourists themselves should also be partially responsible for them. There are two main reasons: first, with the development of personal quality of tourists, their awareness of protecting their legal rights is also rising. And the tourism services offered by tourist agencies are far from the tourists' expectations on them. Therefore, there is a distance between the demand by tourists and service offered by agencies. This, in turn, will lead to complaint about the unsatisfied needs from the tourist side. Among complaint of this kind, some are rather unreasonable. And some of them will not be answered at

all. For example, some tourists, without permission from the guide, stray off the group and are cheated by local peddlers and wreak their anger on tourist agencies. This is definitely a case of unreasonable complaint.

Second, tourists have a persistent and obsessive pursuit for cheaper and better goods and services. The expectation on “lower price higher quality” is one of the reasons which trigger off the wars on prices charged by different tourist agencies. With the price down, is it possible that the quality will be higher accordingly? The decrease in price has a direct link to the harm done to the legal rights of consumers, which, in the end, lead to the occurrence of complaint. Eventually, there is a vicious cycle that travel agencies and tourists hurt each other to no small extent.

2.3 Causes From Related Departments

Among the complaint, there are a great number of them which target at related industries such as traffic, hotel, restaurants, scenic sites, entertainment and shopping sites. The misbehavior from these related industries cannot be expected or prevented in advance or they are not in the hands of tourist agencies. However, if not handled properly by tourist agencies, this would lead to the complaint due to the tourists’ dissatisfied mood. Therefore, it will bring harm to tourist agencies.

3. SUGGESTIONS ON RECAUTIONS AGAINST COMPLAINT

Any kind of complaint reflects the dissatisfaction from tourists with tourist agencies. This in turn, will undoubtedly, do damage to the reputation and management effects of a certain tourist agency to some degree. Therefore, tourist agencies should try their best to avoid such things happening. They should take every factor that may lead to complaint into careful consideration. Before these complaint take effect, they should be dissolved beforehand in order to cut down the rate and frequency of complaint to their minimum degree.

3.1 Quality of Touring Service Should Be Arranged Scientifically and Improved Steadily

When arranging schedules for tourists, the following two aspects should be put emphasis on: the practicability of the touring services offered by tourist agencies and the tourists’ demand. For example: whether the touring services are repeated; whether the traffic tools are guaranteed; whether the physical as well as the spiritual needs of tourists are fully met; whether there is unnecessary to and fro journeys and repetition issues. The practicability of the designed touring service has a profound effect on the quality of it while the quality of touring service directly determines its appeal and its vitality. At the same time, the improvement in service cannot be achieve overnight. It should be carried out

in a long, long run. Constant efforts should be made to improve it in avoidance of its temporary fluctuations.

3.2 Salary of the Tourist Guides Should Be Guaranteed and Their Education Should Be Constantly Carried Out

3.2.1 Salary of the Tourist Guides Should Be Guaranteed and Their Sense of Belongings Should Be Encouraged

Tourist guide is the precious and accrued asset in the long run in every tourist agency. Having a good tourist guide means that the agency has a wider space for further development, a valuable reputation wealth, a steady group of customers and an ever increasing reasonable reward. Thus, providing reasonable salaries and welfare is very important to tourist guides. This measure can boost the sense of responsibility and belongings of the guides. And meantime, it can raise their positive and voluntary participation in jobs to a higher level. In this way, they can have the judgment that they are treated equally and honestly in travel agencies. Therefore, they will develop together with their agencies. In the meantime, this is one of the most effective ways to solve the problem of “gray income” and to protect the tourists’ rights. In this sense, the complaint can be minimized to a satisfactory level.

3.2.2 Quality Education Should Be Imposed and Perception That Quality Is the First and Foremost Should Be Established

Travel agencies should be responsible for educating their tourist guides from four aspects: namely quality education, legal education, moral education, and professional education. The concept that “Quality is the first and foremost factor and tourists are our first concern” should be firmly and voluntarily established in the guides’ mind. In the process of tour guiding, tourist guides should have an overview of the whole situation and should have cooperation with each party involved. Politeness to tourists should be promoted and the professional moral standards should be raised to offer qualified and efficient service. Legal awareness should be always called on. Legal means should be resorted to in case of violation of tourists’ legal rights. Tourist agencies should take the responsibility for making practical and satisfactory arrangements for the guides to master their professional skills and hosting abilities in an easy way so that when serving tourists, they can offer high quality services. Hopefully, in this way, the rate of complaint will be reduced to its minimum.

3.3 Related Administrative Departments Should Have an On-Spot Investigation and Simultaneous Supervision Over Tourism Issues

In precaution against these complaint which are targeted at the cut-down in the standard of services from related industries, tourist agencies must have a beforehand investigation into related industries such as restaurants, hotels, traffic departments, scenic sites, entertaining and

shopping sites. Moreover, tourist guides should have a full supervision and communication with both sides. After the tour, guides should have collected the feedback information on the tour offered by tourists to assess and supervise the quality of the tour in order to have a better management in future. Those which are assessed with high scores from tourists should be encouraged to have a long and steady cooperation in the coming days.

In the market economy, trade organization is an indispensable part of it. It is a bridge which connects market, industry, and government. Tourist agency is no exception. Therefore, tourist agencies should be encouraged to join the trade organization to compensate for their insufficiency in collecting information relevant to their own development. The majority of the tourist agencies cannot afford the large-scale research into the real needs of tourists individually. So they cannot predict the real situation in their destination sites such as whether they are beyond hosting tourists or not. In this case, the tourism trade organization can compensate this by providing related information regularly, analyzing the statistics scientifically, and promoting the spread of information among industries which are related to tourism. In this way, prevention against complaint that are aimed at failure of meeting the tourism contracts due to the imprecise prediction on the destined situations will be successfully established.

CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of the yearly complaint about tourism industry collected in 2011, this paper finds out the causes of such complaint and therefore puts forward some suggestions on how to prevent complaint in advance. Hopefully, this paper will help provide references to other agencies in improving the service.

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