



Sports travel emerges as a new hotspot of tourism and consumption

Several key factors, be it for family tours, experiential consumption or favorable national policies, are supporting the growth of sports travel in China.

Different travel specialists have different perspective around sports travel, but one point where all converge is the fact that such trips are growing in number in China.

Chen Xiaobing, Founder of Caissa China and President of Caissa Travel points out that sports travel is not only changing the way people spend vacations, but it also being regarded as a new hotspot of tourism and consumption. Moreover, sports travel is an important platform for cultural exchange, says Chen. "We believe that sports travel is an interdisciplinary blend of "tourism + sports" and is a typical example of experiential consumption."

In Caissa's portfolio, both sports travel and outdoor tourism are key segments. In addition to sports watching tours, the company also offers doing/ playing products such as marathon, skiing, cycling and hiking. "In either category, it features repeated consumption and generates revenue. It has gradually attracted the attention of middle- and high-income families," said Chen.

Integral part of tourism

Chen stated that there is no doubt that sports travel now stands at the forefront of China's tourism development.

However, sports travel in China is still in the primary stage with high barriers. Although many companies are interested in this segment, only a few of them can really take the time and efforts to target this business. It takes time to gain the requisite experience in sports travel, market awareness, channels, teams, resources and consumers.

Recently, the General Administration of Sports and the National Development and Reform Commission jointly published a notice on the issuance of the "Action Plan for Further Promoting Sports Consumption". It pointed out that it is necessary to actively guide the sports watching consumption, support social bodies to organize various events at all levels, and create a number of influential, quality and branded events.

It is estimated that by 2020, the total size of sports consumption in China will reach RMB1.5 trillion, the proportion of per capita sports expenditure to total expenditure will increase significantly, and the structure of sports consumption will be optimized.

"The top-level events have arrived in China because they are interested in the huge market. It is also a positive measure under the national policy, which will, to a certain extent, cultivate the Chinese consumers' awareness of sports and enhance the concept of sports consumption. It will help to develop sports consumption habits, optimize our sports consumption environment and enrich the supply of sports products and services," said Chen.

Family tours

Chen mentioned that China's sports watching tourism market has gradually improved in the recent years, especially the outbound watching tours, which are no longer limited to sports fans.

"The middle-class consumers with sound financial position have begun to include high-level sports events as part of their travel experience. And they are highly willing to go watching with their families and children, which makes it a new choice for family tours," said Chen.

When it comes to the events attended by Chinese players, the Olympic Games tours are expectedly popular. At present, Caissa has been authorized as the exclusive ticketing agent for the Chinese Olympic Committee in the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. "This is the fourth time we have been licensed as the ticketing agent of the Olympic Games, following the Summer Olympic Games London 2012, the Summer Olympic Games Rio 2016 and the Winter Olympic Games Pyeongchang 2018. According to our experience, travellers are extremely eager to cheer for Chinese athletes at the Olympics. We have also launched "I want China to win" and other products, which have brought memorable experience to our customers," shared Chen.

In terms of Caissa's product line, the company has launched a number of sports watching tours, such as the "Dream of the Champions League", "Dream of La Liga ", "Dream of NBA", "Dream of Grand Slam" and F1 tours.

"We have also successfully extended the watching products to more top-notch events, including the release and implementation of the first NBA Finals watch tour in China, and the VIP ticketing agency of the National Football League (NFL) Championship Finals (Super Bowl) in China. In addition, we also focus on the sub-brands of "Worldwide Skiing", which provides one-stop skiing services at home and abroad, as well as experiential products, such as "Worldwide Hiking", "Cycling Joy", "Camping Pleasure" and "Global Running". Supported by professional teams, these products integrate the elements of culture, environmental protection concept, self-improvement and pleasant experience, which leads to the growth of repeated purchases," shared Chen.

From a traveller's perspective, the company indicated that for tourists who prefer sports travel, on one hand, every event is unique and irreproducible, offering precious experience on the spot. On the other hand, with the increasing number of international flights and more convenient visa application in recent years, many high-end customers are interested in spending their weekends in watching games in Europe, which is considered to be effective in relieving work stress and tension. "We believe that with consumption upgrades and further integration of cultural travel and sports travel, sports tourism is now at the forefront of China's tourism development. China has published a set of documents to promote the development of sports tourism. Consumers' awareness of sports travel is growing. Due to these factors, sports travel will become an important driving force for the tourism industry and China's sports travel market is now gaining momentum," shared Chen.

During the Spanish Super Cup in August 2017, in the Camp Nou Stadium with a capacity of 100,000 spectators, there was one Caissa customer in every 500 spectators, according to the company. "Later, these travellers again appeared in the stands of the Bernabeu Stadium and witnessed the birth of the Super Bowl champion. In these experiments in the sports travel market, Caissa has found that more and more middle-class families have consciously paid attention to this segment and even made it an option of family vacations. For either overseas sports watching tours or marathon, skiing, cycling RV and other experiential tours, there are repeated consumers, which is extremely inspiring. We are confident that as long as we continue to create high-quality products that meet the personalized needs of consumers, we will get closer to the returns brought by China's sports travel market," said Chen.

Constant improvement

In the face of upgraded consumer demands, Caissa believes that it is important to constantly work hard to enrich the experience of the customers and enhance the derivative services related to the tours, in order to win consumers with product differentiation and quality and to consolidate one's advantages in the sports travel market.

Explaining the same, Chen said, "First of all, select the popular games in the top events to ensure excitement and pleasure. Moreover, sports travel can also adapt to our family, photography, girlfriends, gourmet, honeymoon and other themed tours, light-customized private groups, smart choice for high-end customization and other offerings. Second, strengthen derivative services. "

For example, when watching La Liga, Caissa arranges a meal at Zen Market in Madrid, a restaurant located on the VIP level at the home of Real Madrid, which is frequently visited by Real Madrid players and bosses. Therefore, the travellers may encounter some football stars by chance. Other key initiatives:

- In 2016, as the ticketing agent and reception service provider of the Chinese Olympic Committee of the Olympic Games Rio, Caissa invited five Olympic stars to serve as "Honorable Guides" and work together with Caissa customers to cheer for Chinese athletes.
- In 2017, Caissa partnered with Yang Yi, a well-known basketball expert in China, and launched China's first NBA Finals watching tour.
- In 2018, focusing on the theme of the World Cup, Caissa introduced the watching products along with tours in Russia and surrounding regions, which avoided the simplicity and limitation of the offerings to some extent.

"These successful cases of embedding celebrities and IPs into sports travel products are fruitful experiments to enrich the experience of customers during the watching tours," said Chen.

Popular events

The year of 2020 will witness the European Cup the Olympic Games Tokyo, which are both global events.

"Rooted in Europe, Caissa has a pure European DNA in terms of ticketing resources, destination resources and operating experience. It will bring a rich and diverse product portfolio to the tourists. As the vacation market continues to heat up and the demand for self-guided tours is growing, Caissa continues to strengthen the integration of fragmented resources, and our custom-made and vacation sub-brands will provide more targeted and personalized service," shared Chen. "It is worth mentioning that Caissa boasts leadership in the market of Japanese trips and has launched a number of new tourism products that fit the Japanese culture and trends. As the exclusive ticketing agent of the China Olympic Committee in the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020, Caissa will use the tickets of the Olympic Games Tokyo as a link between watching tours and Japanese trips, so that Chinese consumers will become part of 40 million foreign tourists expected by Japan. The ticketing distribution in Mainland China is expected to start in the second quarter of this year. With our preference to Olympic Games and geographical advantage, Caissa will help Chinese tourists become the largest group of visitors second to Japan's local audience."

With national supporting policies, the coming of the Winter Olympic Games 2022 and the increasing awareness of healthcare consumption, Chen believes that the passion for sports travel will sweep across the country, and the team at Caissa is well prepared to capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Company Profile

Founded in 1993, Caissa Travel focuses on the core business of tourism and rapidly expands in the global market, creating a unique business model covering the whole industry chain, which integrates channels, products, destination resources and operations. It has set up its offices in 7 major offshore cities, including Hamburg, Paris, London and Los Angeles, completed by its options in nearly 50 coastal and core commercial cities in China. It has introduced more than 20,000 high-end travel products serving more than 120 countries and regions around the world. Targeting at three key segments of governments, enterprises and individuals, Caissa has developed the products of high-end group tours, customized private tours, MICE and inbound tours, and has also explore the businesses of cruise, vacation, sports, hiking, healthcare, research, study and polar tours. Caissa has been authorized as the exclusive ticketing agent for the Chinese Olympic Committee in the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 and will serve the Olympics family for the fifth time.