On the Development Situation and Strategy of Night Economy of Baoji

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Keywords: Night Economy, Economy Carrier, Consumption Concept.

Abstract. With the promotion of urbanization and the improvement of material and spiritual needs in west China, consumption at night has been an indispensable part of the lives of local residents and tourists at night. In this paper, Baoji city is an example in west China. Its current situation of night economy was analyzed, and the existing problems of night economy were studied from scattered night economy carriers, backward consumption concept and seasonal night markets, and monotonous form of night economy, respectively. Finally, the countermeasures of night economy in Baoji were discussed and presented in detail: concentration of night economy carriers, cultivation of consumption habits at night and improvement of cultural and aesthetic taste.

Introduction

Nowadays, with the promotion of urbanization and the improvement of material and spiritual needs in west China, consumption at night has been an indispensable part of the lives of local residents and tourists at night. Baoji, which has been known as Chengcang, Yongzhou in ancient times, is famed as “hometown of Yan emperor”, “hometown of Chinese bronze art”, “the birthplace of Zhou-Qin civilization” and “hometown of folk arts and crafts” as well. Baoji is the sub-central city of Guangzhong-Tianshui Economic Zone. Moreover, it is also listed as a national civilized city and a national garden city, model city for environment protection, and a national city for best food as well. It is generally acknowledged that Baoji is one of ideal cities to live and go sightseeing. The 10th Provincial City Games was successfully hosted in Baoji. All these honors require Baoji to carry forward Baoji cultures and attach importance to the development of night economy of Baoji.

As the sub-central city of Guangzhong-Tianshui Economic Zone, Baoji takes the responsibility for boosting the peripheral economic development. In the context of overproduction of traditional manufacturing and emerging real estate bubble, service industry is bound to become strategic pillar industry of Baoji. Therefore, attaching much weight to the advancement of night economy in Baoji and exploiting the potential of Baoji city will be significant economic treasures. These measures help boost internal integration, expansion and regional radiation of this city. More time and space means more profit. Promoting the night economy means the extension of time for economic activities. Theses economic activities at night focus on meals, lodging, transportation, tourism and shopping by creating the form, quality and contents of night activities of local people and visitors. What is more, more business opportunities will be offered to Baoji, this industrial powerhouse, high-end equipment manufacturing base. The promotion of night economy will improve the utilization of public facilities, increase employment and the economic aggregate. Lastly, with the advancement of night economy, the living quality of local people will be improved.

1. The Analysis of the Current Situation of Night Economy of Baoji

In a bid to improve the basic engineering of night economy, Baoji launched and carried out city lighting projects in 2010. Until 2012, main roads and symbolic buildings were brightened throughout the city. In order to answer the call for energy conservation and less light pollution, Baoji attached equal importance to lighting and low-carbon economy. Baoji municipal government has rolled out a scheme on the development of night economy in downtown area in 2014. This
scheme proposed that it would take five years to promote the construction of eight model districts for night economy. These eight model districts include distinctive food palaces of Baoji, commercial pedestrian streets, shopping centers around the high-speed train station and so forth. A special fund has been launched for the development of night economy. Moreover, the total investment has exceeded 100 million yuan. According to incomplete statistics, the total consumption of night economy in Baoji reached 8.7 million yuan in 2014. Compared with 2014, retail sales and revenues in catering sector both rise by more than 20% in 2015. Sales of some popular businesses at night accounted for more than 60% of the total sales. To date, more than 200 cultural activity teams have emerged in park, public squares. These people oriented cultural programs include Qin opera performance, yangko dance, square dance, chorus and so forth. Large folk music and Qin opera show - Grand Theatre of Baoji is made jointly by Shaanxi Grand Media Company and Baoji Shengda Culture Company. Despite rich and colorful activities at night, the night economic development in Baoji still has the following problems.

1.1 Problems of scattered, weak and less active night economy carriers

In the first place, night economy carriers of Baoji are believed to be scattered, weak and less active. In addition to these eight model districts for night economy, the operation of the rest of night markets is spontaneous market behavior. These night markets, most of which are roadside barbecue and snacks, often close till midnight. These markets meet the need for convenient, affordable food as well as for relaxation in the cool at night. However, in the open air markets equipped with simple cooking devices, tableware, and food fail to be closely inspected by the hygiene department. At night, consumers enjoy the meal with smoke swirling and rubbish everywhere. What is worse, no parking space is available to consumers. 24-hour clinics and drugstores can be hardly seen at night in Baoji. Large department stores typically stop their operation around 8 o’clock at night. Small grocery stores which sell daily necessities also close around 9 o’clock at night. All kinds of corner shops also stop their operation at an early time at night. Therefore, the lights after 9 o’clock seem too weak and dim. In addition, these theaters, theme parks and food culture streets that carry forward the Zhou-Qin culture are not distributed evenly.

1.2 Problems of backward consumption concept and seasonal characteristic of night markets

In the second place, the development of Baoji’s economy at night is relatively slow, which should be attributed to the backward consumption concept and the seasonal characteristics of the night market. In west China, many people get used to staying at home after going back from work at night. Since Baoji is a medium-sized city with strong industrial atmosphere, many local people stick to a regular routine working from nine to five. A long and cold winter makes it difficult to go out at night. It is generally known that citizens prefer to stay at home. In western areas of China, citizens are not accustomed to consumption at night. Therefore, it takes a long time to change the traditional consumption concept even though the former daily routine is changed. Influenced by that traditional timetable, the consumption of Baoji is obviously seasonal. People in their forties would like to go out to restaurants and play mahjong at night while younger groups’ nighttime activities include watching movies, eating barbecue food, drinking beer and going to karaoke. Although the local government focuses on these eight model districts and promotes some variety shows rich in traditional Baoji elements, these consumption products popular in summer often get ignored with the temperature going down in autumn and winter.

1.3 Problems of monotonous form and low levels of cultural and aesthetic taste

In the third place, monotonous form of night economy, low levels of cultural and aesthetic taste should be responsible for the slow development of night economy. All types of businesses fail to be combined with one another. Despite those eight models for night economy, eating, lodging, playing and other different economic formats are not given overall consideration. They fail to be complementary to each other. Department stores are not available to consumers at night because they close at an early time. No more buses will be available, either. Fewer policemen go on patrol
duty at night. Citizens are likely to hesitate to go out at night in terms of cost and security. Those eight models highlight the cultural characteristics of Baoji while they are short of cultural and aesthetic connotations. While convenience stores and fast food restaurants can be seen everywhere, 24-hour books and tea bars can be hardly found. In other words, citizens are seldom involved in visual culture and entertainment consumption and leisure consumption. Most of the consumption is about beer and skittles. With regards to the development of traditional Baoji culture, only Qin opera, folk music groups, yangko dance and square dance are paid more attention to.

2. Countermeasures of Night Economy in Baoji

It is no easy task to promote the development of Baoji night economy. Countermeasures need to be taken to boost the night economy development of Baoji according to these three problems mentioned above.

2.1 Concentration of night economy carriers

First of all, unified planning helps improve the development environment of night economy, which involves the support and cooperation of municipal administration, public security, food supervision and culture. The development of night economy requires all kind of resources be integrated and classified into different function modules. Meanwhile, businesses and their operators should be encouraged and supported. In terms of government management, preferential policies regarding the use of water, electricity and tax cuts should be given, which will reduces the cost of business operation at night. The application of new recreational projects should be made easier than others, which includes simplifying the procedure and charging fees. Moreover, the operation time of public transport should be prolonged and bus running for the whole night should be arranged. As for department stores, promotion programs at night can be held to attract more consumers and increase consumer purchase intention. In addition, not only free or cheap movie theaters can be offered, but also stages for Qin opera, dancing and singing performance can be set. Quiet tea bars where consumers enjoy reading and pubs where people enjoy chatting and drinking could be provided. When it comes to night security, patrols are necessary to be strictly enforced in the residential areas and night markets. In short, the advancement of night economy of Baoji needs the cooperation and integration of night business, night recreation, night traffic, night services and night cultural activities and so forth.

2.2 Cultivation of consumption habits at night

Secondly, it is necessary to gather all economic carriers, strengthen the consumption awareness and bring up the consumptive subjects. According to different consumer groups, different measures should be taken. For local residents, it is important to develop a habit of culture consumption at night. For visitors, putting more strength on marketing and highlighting its prominent feature is a must. Recommending its advantages as a livable city is the key to attracting tourists to enjoy food, fun, shopping, and even live in Baoji. To develop night economy is to change the monotonous consumption variety. Human needs not only abide by Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, but they also follow Engel’s coefficient. Non-food consumption accounts for a large part of night consumption. People’s aesthetic taste and desire for enjoyment of culture differ in terms of age, occupation and sex. Thereby, the development of night economy of Baoji not only requires the construction of night markets of food, night markets of entertainment, night markets of commodity, but it also needs to accelerate the development of night market of culture. In addition, much attention should be paid to security maintenance of night markets, solution of emergent events and traffic command.

2.3 Improvement of cultural and aesthetic taste

In the third place, building culture brands of night economy helps highlight prominent features of Baoji. Its unique natural environment and its distinctive cultural deposits are valuable resources of the development of night economy. Due to its diverse natural environment, mountains, forests, gorges, lakes, wetland, ice and snow landscape spread everywhere in Baoji. As one of livable cities
in China, Baoji is also famous for its rich cultural heritage. In terms of spiritual culture, system of rites and music in the West Zhou dynasty is the core value of traditional Chinese culture. In terms of material culture, there are abundant bronze wares and existing cultural relics which show times of peace and prosperity in the Zhou-Qin Culture in Baoji. Therefore, by virtue of advantages and resources, natural scenic spots, food and entertainment areas, sports culture areas can be established respectively. Moreover, culture theme projects like Zhou-Qin culture festival, Baoji rites and music festival, movie and television festival in Diaoyutai can be held. In other words, boosting the night economy means stamping cultural connotation on all kinds of economy carriers. Meanwhile, to strengthen publicity is needed. For instance, newspapers, magazines, television stations, broadcasting stations, and the Internet have an obligation to promote nighttime activities and consumption. Newspapers and magazines should make special programs and columns to introduce commodity information in different economic zones. According to its culture and history, legends, books and movies could be produced.

Conclusion

To conclude, night economy is a product of the integration of economy and culture with the development of city economy and the change of way of life. Night economy reflects directly the city’s consumption level and cultural vitality, which helps promote the development of regional economy and its culture. In a word, accelerating the development of night economy is a complicated and challenging task. It needs joint efforts from governments, enterprises and the mass. With measures mentioned above taken, Baoji is bound to witness its rapid development and prosperity. Despite these key measures, this paper pays more attention to the soft environmental construction of night economy. Objects of night economy, such as the city’s infrastructure, scenic spots upgrade and project-specific design are not to be taken into account in this paper. In addition, this paper only focuses on local residents’ influence on the development of night economy with tourists’ influence ignored. These elements will be the author’s future research orientation on the development of night economy of Baoji.

Acknowledgment

This research was financially supported by the Key Soft Science Program of Shaanxi Province, China (Grant No. 2014KRM32), the Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences Program of Baoji, China (Grant No. BJSKGH2016-06), and the Key Program of Scientific Research of Baoji University of Arts and Sciences, China (Grant No. ZK14041, No. YK2017005)

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