



— Hellorf

Ditching reservation requirements can be beneficial for city's tourism industry

Wan Lixin

The lion's share of the more than 3,000 scenic areas, galleries, museums and other cultural establishments in Shanghai have waived any requirement for reservations, or ID-based ticket bookings.

This has given a further boost to the city's tourist sector that has just seen a booming holiday.

During the three-day Dragon Boat Festival holiday (June 8-10), the city recorded 7.6 million tourist visits, up 13 percent from the same period last year.

In a similar move, the Suzhou tourist authority announced ahead of the holiday that, except for a select few key scenic areas and museums, ID-based reservation requirements were waived for tourist attractions, cultural venues or places of religious import.

Resident Qian, a passionate museum-goer, welcomed the move, adding that the requirement for reservations was

a relic of draconian pandemic control measures aimed to curb the number of visitors to meet social distancing requirements, and to track COVID-19 suspects or contacts. That should also be about the only justification for ID-based booking system.

With the pandemic now under control and the social distancing requirement gone, any supposed or imagined benefits from continued control should be greeted with a grain of salt.

Admittedly, there are different types of travelers. Some prefer a well-scheduled itinerary wherein every detail is nailed down beforehand and nothing left to chance.

For these travelers, mostly young people with demonstrative agility in navigating the often complex reservation protocols, the restricted number of visitors might lead to a more exclusive environment, to their gratification.

There are also those who relish the serendipity of seeing a tourist attraction in a chance encounter. Just imagine

their disappointment in being reminded that they have forfeited their rights to enter, for their failure to reserve before-hand.

I once found myself in such a predicament on entrance to a library after traveling a long distance. I tried to remonstrate with a clerk, in vain, about the dubious practice of reservations at a time when nearly all pandemic controls had been lifted.

When I complied with the reservation requirements on my subsequent visits to the library, I found that so limited were the seats available that I needed to schedule a couple of days previously.

It was definitely not easy for senior citizens having to slog through the digital processes, even if they had succeeded in hunting out the right mini-program.

It is tempting to moralize about cultivating digital agility today, but such is the inexorable decline of the physical and mental conditions of senior citizens, that ultimately everyone of us

might be afflicted with failing eyesight, unsteady hands, and a myriad other senescent symptoms that would overtax us in meeting the mundane demands in daily life, not to say digital challenges.

We should also allow for the growing number of foreign visitors who might find reservations or ID-based bookings complicated in ways unique to them.

For cultural or tourist attractions of a public nature, admissions should be facilitated in light of the principle of the lowest common denominator, with particular concerns for the needs of the aged, children and overseas visitors.

The management of these cultural venues, in ensuring easy access for all, should probably take a leaf from urban planners, who as a rule show an uncanny fervor for creating infrastructure for the handicapped, such as dedicated lanes for the blind, or ramps for wheelchairs.

When it comes to drafting admissions policies, it's important to heed this: stay simple and stay foolish.