

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOMESTIC TOURISM EDUCATION IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

In 2020, the world faced a new challenge. The coronavirus, which in a few days turned into a pandemic, completely changed human consciousness and lifestyle. The pandemic also affected the tourism sector, which led to some changes. In the conditions of the pandemic, the borders in China were closed, as a result of which Chinese citizens were restricted from traveling abroad. The closure of the borders prompted the development of domestic tourism in China. Most popular became Tourism trips to the mountainous regions. The article examines the features of the growth of tourist flows on the example of Guilin as a result of restrictions during a pandemic. After the spread of the COVID-19, domestic tourism has become the most interesting and developing direction of tourism. I would like to point out that the development of domestic tourism is especially important for the development of peripheral regions, where lower-income people live compared to other large regions, whose living conditions are quite harsh, they have to solve quite severe problems at the beginning of each tourist season. This article clearly discusses the problem of low education, which hinders the development of domestic tourism in China and the growth of economic income of the population living in tourist areas.

Keywords: tourism, domestic tourism, domestic tourism education, COVID-19

I. INTRODUCTION

The impact of the coronavirus on tourism and related sectors has been hard. The pandemic had a negative impact on all sectors of the economy, especially in tourism, epidemiological fears and closed borders have paralyzed this economy field. According to the information provided by the Chinese National Tourism Administration, tourist flows have decreased by 0.7% only in February, The damage caused by the pandemic has not been determined yet, as we still have to fight with the virus and live with the restrictions. Due to the current situation, many countries retain hope for the development of domestic tourism.

The statistics has been published of the second quarter of 2020 local tourism, although compared to the first quarter, the number of tourist arrivals will certainly be reduced (1).

The aim of our study was to determine the impact of the pandemic on the development of domestic tourism, as it is not yet possible to calculate the damage caused by the pandemic to the tourism industry in China. In our opinion, it is quite relevant and interesting to understand the opinion of domestic tourists towards the tourism routes in China. Our main goal was to find out if local tourists would travel to Guilin if was not pandemic. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international tourist traffic is reduced by up to 3%, which indicates that revenues from international travel will be reduced by 30-50 billion dollars. According to the same organization, the countries of the Asia-Pa-

cific region suffered the most, where the number of international tourist trips fell by 9-12%. (2)

A. Tourism

Tourism is a multifaceted and dynamic industry that encompasses the movement of people for various purposes, including leisure, business, cultural exploration, and adventure (3). Here are key aspects to explore in the realm of tourism:

1. **Economic Impact:** Tourism is a significant contributor to global and local economies. The industry generates revenue through activities such as accommodation, transportation, attractions, and services. Research delves into the economic impact of tourism, assessing its role in job creation, GDP growth, and infrastructure development.
2. **Cultural Tourism:** Cultural tourism involves travelers seeking authentic experiences that connect them with the local culture, history, and traditions of a destination. Studies explore how destinations preserve and promote their cultural heritage, creating sustainable tourism models that benefit both visitors and local communities.
3. **Technological Trends:** The integration of technology, including mobile apps, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence, is transforming the tourism landscape. Research explores how technological advancements enhance the traveler experience, from trip planning to on-site navigation and post-travel engagement.
4. **Sustainable Tourism:** With a growing emphasis on environmental conservation, sustainable tourism practices aim to minimize the negative impact of travel on ecosystems and local communities. Research investigates strategies for implementing sustainable tourism, including eco-friendly accommodations, responsible wildlife tourism, and community-based initiatives.
5. **Tourism Marketing:** The marketing of tourist destinations involves understanding consumer behavior, effective branding, and strategic promotion. Researchers explore digital marketing trends, social media's impact on destination marketing, and innovative strategies to attract and engage diverse target audiences.
6. **Impact of Global Events:** Natural disasters, health crises, and geopolitical events can significantly impact tourism. Research in this area assesses the resilience of tourism destinations, the effectiveness of crisis management strategies, and the role of communication in mitigating the effects of unforeseen events.
7. **Adventure Tourism:** Adventure tourism caters to thrill-seekers and those seeking unique, adrenaline-fueled experiences. Studies in this field explore the growth of adventure tourism, risk management, and the economic benefits of attracting adventure enthusiasts to specific destinations.
8. **Tourist Behavior:** Understanding tourist behavior is crucial for destination management. Research investigates factors influencing travel decisions, such as socio-demographics, motivations, and the impact of online reviews. This knowledge informs strategies to enhance the overall tourist experience.
9. **Medical Tourism:** The globalization of healthcare has given rise to medical tourism, where individuals travel to seek medical treatments abroad. Research explores the factors influencing medical tourism, including cost, quality of care, and the role of technology in facilitating cross-border healthcare services.
10. **Tourism Policy and Planning:** Governments and destination management organizations play a pivotal role in shaping tourism policies and plans. Research examines the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks, infrastructure development, and public-private partnerships in fostering sustainable and responsible tourism.

1. Pandemic

It is crucial to acknowledge that global tourism has weathered various crises in the past. From the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001 to the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003, the global economic crisis of 2008/2009, and the 2015 Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) outbreak, the industry has demonstrated resilience. Notably, none of these events resulted in a prolonged downturn in global tourism development, and some, such as SARS

(-0.4%) and the global economic crisis (-4.0%), only led to temporary declines in international arrivals. While these instances suggest the overall resilience of the tourism system to external shocks, there is a growing body of evidence indicating that the impact and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will be unparalleled. (4)

Pandemics, border closures, and routine changes have caused many psychological and social problems in humans. At the initial stage of the pandemic, people were locked up, but after a while, people woke up to the desire to travel, so they started looking for safe tourist places inside the country, which led to the movement of domestic tourists. An article stated „When the borders shut” discusses the psychological changes that have led to the closure of borders and the interest in tourist destinations within the country (5). Many researchers consider domestic tourism as one of the most important tools for the development of the country. In many countries, domestic tourism is a major source of income for the country as more and more people try to get to know their country better. The educational institution teaches young people the culture of getting to know and traveling their own country. The development of domestic tourism is vital. The development of domestic tourism leads to the improvement of the social and economic situation of the country’s population, it contributes to the development of roads and infrastructure in places of interest and inaccessibility.

The development of domestic tourism contributes to the development of rural and agro-tourism, thanks to which people living in the highland region are given the opportunity to receive additional income in their places of residence (6). The importance of domestic tourism in the conditions of the pandemic was especially important. The borders were closed in China, which forced people to travel inside the country.

2. Educational Tourism

Education is one of the key strategic priorities of the UNWTO. We recognize the vital need of supporting our member states in training and supporting the tourism workers of today and of tomorrow, giving them the skills and knowledge they need to meet changing employer demands and build a truly resilient and competitive sector. (2)

Educational tourism, often referred to as academic tourism or study tourism, is a form of travel that combines learning and leisure (7). This niche within the broader tourism industry involves individuals, such as students, scholars, or professionals, traveling to various destinations with the primary goal of acquiring knowledge and skills. Educational tourism encompasses a wide range of activities, including language immersion programs, cultural exchanges, study abroad experiences, and participation in workshops or conferences. The destinations chosen are often rich in historical, cultural, or academic significance, providing a conducive environment for intellectual growth and exploration. This form of tourism not only facilitates cross-cultural understanding but also contributes to personal development and the exchange of ideas on a global scale. Educational tourism has become increasingly popular, with institutions and organizations worldwide recognizing its value in fostering lifelong learning and fostering a more interconnected and knowledgeable global community.

One of the aims of our research was to show the impact of closed borders on the development of domestic tourism. In the conditions of the closed borders during the summer season, many resorts and tourist destinations were given the opportunity to continue their business activities at the expense of receiving domestic tourists. For the development of domestic tourism and the formation of a domestic tourism culture among the population, it is necessary for the state to develop appropriate educational programs that will shape the culture and awareness of traveling within the country for the next generation.

II. DISCUSSION

Although many scientific articles have been devoted to the impact of the pandemic on tourism, no article or study has yet been found that directly examines the impact of the pandemic on domestic tourism, which in turn underscores the importance of our research.

In our research, the target group was people who visited Guilin in the summer of 2020, 46 people were interviewed by a snow ball principle, they were sent a pre-designed questionnaire that included a questionnaire. Each module of the questionnaire consistently allowed us to identify the main provocative factors that contributed to

the travel of tourists to Guilin. According to the survey, 30% of people traveling to Guilin believe that the pandemic facilitated their arrival in the region and that if not the closed borders they would not have traveled to Guilin, which was unexpected news for us. People living in Guilin who are in the tourism business said in an individual survey that they predicted a fall of the tourist season. This is evidenced by the fact that the tourist season started later, because they did not expect high interest of the local population in the tourist routes of Guilin.

The seventh module of the questionnaire included a question – “In your opinion, does Guilin need to provide more information to domestic tourists in the development of tourism?”- 100% of respondents believe that the popularity of Guilin tourism routes will increase among domestic tourists if they are provided with more information about tourism routes in the region. The research showed that it is possible to increase tourist flows in Guilin with more interest from the local population, however, it should be noted that tourists named difficult roads as one of the most challenging factor to travel to Guilin, the rehabilitation of roads will also contribute to the growth of tourist flows in Guilin.

Our research shows that the pandemic contributed to the development of domestic tourism in China. Module 5 which included question -If the borders were not closed in the country, would you spend summer vacations in Guilin? 53.6 of the respondents indicated that they would not travel in Guilin, if borders were not closed.

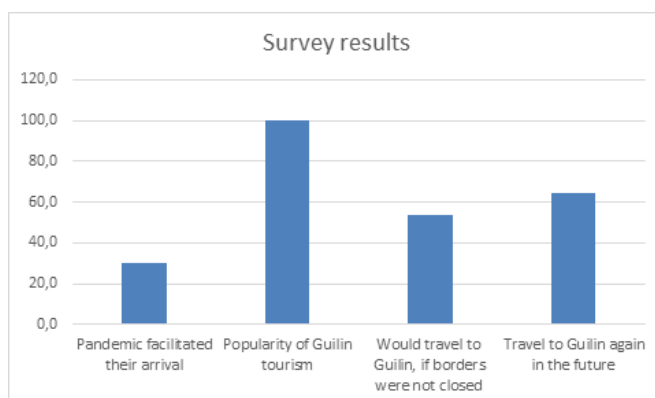


Figure 1 Survey results

One of the goals of the research was to determine the interest of tourists visiting Guilin to

travel again in the future. To the question - will you travel to Guilin again in the future? 64.7% of the respondents indicated that they will travel to Guilin again, which indicates the uniqueness of the region. Based on the results of this module, the problem of informatics in the population of China was once again identified, as shown in Figure 1.

Our small research has revealed new opportunities for the development of domestic tourism in conditions of pandemics. The research also revealed the problems that exist in the development of tourism routes in Guilin. The study revealed that the main obstacles to the formation of tourism routes in Guilin are lack of information, low level of education in the field of domestic tourism and faulty roads.

III. CONCLUSION

The pandemic has affected all sectors of the economy. Its consequences for the tourism industry are especially dangerous. Coronavirus put in front of the World a lot of new challenges, China is still struggling to maintain economic stability, which in turn involves investing more resources in the development of domestic tourism (8). Our research has shown that there is a tourism resource in the country that can provide relief from the critical situation and have a positive impact on the incomes of the local population. It should be noted that despite the pandemic, the tourist season in Guilin took place and the population was able to earn some income. Of course, open borders would be an opportunity for them to earn more income, but the development of domestic tourism in the face of pandemics has made a major contribution to maintaining economic stability. In our opinion, after the epidemic, the necessary tourist information should be provided to the local population, as well as tourist routes should be created based on the opportunities of the local population.

The Involvement of state services and the effectiveness of the measures taken by them for the education of the population and the formation of a culture and awareness of traveling within the country are very important for the development of domestic tourism.

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