



# Current Situation and Development of Tourism under Pandemic Situation

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**Abstract.** Around the Spring Festival of 2020, a sudden sweeping pandemic hit the domestic tourism industry heavily, and put forward new requirements for the future development of tourism. This paper intends to use quantitative analysis to carry out an in-depth investigation into the current situation of domestic tourism before and after the pandemic, discuss the problems encountered by domestic tourism at present, and try to put forward corresponding suggestions for improvement. The results clearly show that in view of the tourism changes caused by the pandemic situation, in the post pandemic circumstances, we should promote the high-quality development of China's tourism economy through effective measures such as industrial integration, innovation, coordinated development, upgrading the cultural connotation of national characteristics, transformation of marketing mode, and systematization of the tourism industry. This is of far-reaching significance to tourism as well as the upstream and downstream industries radiated by tourism.

**Keywords:** Domestic Tourism, Pandemic, Quantitative Analysis, Status Quo, Suggestions

## 1 Introduction

Tourism economic income includes domestic tourism income and foreign tourists' inbound tourism income. At present, China's tourism economic income mainly comes from domestic tourism. Nonetheless, ever since the outbreak of the Spring Festival pandemic in 2020, the downward pressure on the Chinese economy has increased, and the unemployment rate has surged: In June this year, the unemployment rate of the population aged 16 to 24 in China was 19.3%, which is at a high level. In this regard, Fu Linghui, spokesman of the National Bureau of Statistics and director of the Department of Comprehensive Statistics of the National Economy, said at the press conference held by the State Council Information Office on the 15th that affected by the pandemic, enterprises' ability to absorb employment has declined, resulting in the shoot-up [1]. Consequently, tourism has suffered from the sluggish economy: Foreign inbound tourism has almost stopped due to the pandemic, and now tourism revenue is all supported by domestic part particularly in the past two years.

This paper then employs a quantitative analytical approach to address the issue concerning the current situation and development of tourism with the COVID-19 pandemic as the background, in the hope of shedding some light on the sound future development of tourism.

## **2 Analysis of the current situations of tourism before and after the pandemic**

It should first take a closer look at the current situations of domestic tourism both before and after the pandemic.

### **2.1 Tourism development before the pandemic**

Throughout the development process of China's tourism economy, it has mainly experienced four development stages supported by the sightseeing tourism economy, leisure tourism economy, vacation tourism economy, and high-end leisure tourism economy [2]. China's tourism economy has long been in the stage of transition from a sightseeing tourism economy to a leisure tourism economy and vacation tourism economy. Since the Reform and Opening up, the development of China's tourism industry in the past 40 years, as a social industry exemplar, reflects the transformation of the main contradictions in China's social life. The development pattern of the domestic tourism economy generally improves once every 10 years. Over the past 40 years, it has gone through the following four stages.

The first 10 years are the initial stage. In 1978, the country proposed to "vigorously develop tourism" responding proactively to the Reform and Opening Up policy. China's tourism entered the development process, and the tourism economy began to emerge [3].

The second decade is the development stage of tourism industrialization, roughly from the period when economic construction was put forward as the very core of all affairs in 1986 to the end of the Eighth Five Year Plan [3].

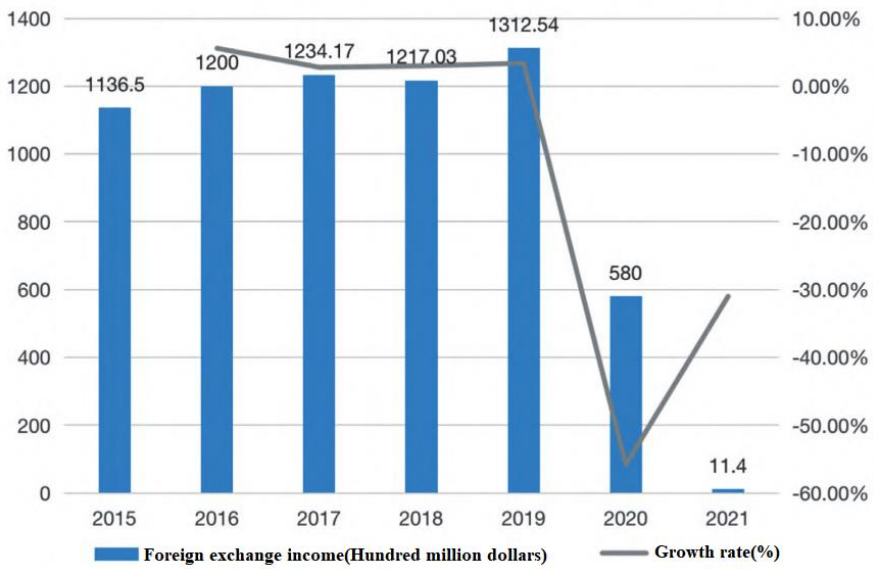
The third decade is from 1998 to 2009. With the rapid growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the introduction of the "holiday system", mass tourism activities thrived and flourished, along with the fast-growing tourism commodity market. The tourism industry was soon developing towards popularity and marketization [3].

The fourth decade is the stage of "fully integrating into the national development strategy". The tourism industry is regarded as an important support for national economic development. The tourism development system is constantly improved, and the road to international development is headed. The development of tourism economy has made important contributions to China's GDP growth and cultural communication [2]. According to the basic information of tourism market in 2019 released by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in June 2020, in 2019, apart from the skyrocketing number of foreign visitors and the pouring income generated, the number of domestic tourists reached 6.006 billion [4], an increase of 8.4% year on year. The total tourism revenue of the year was 6.63 trillion yuan [4], up 11% year on year. The comprehensive con-

tribution of tourism to GDP is 10.94 trillion yuan [4], accounting for 11.05% of the total GDP. The comparative analysis shows that in the fourth decade from 2010 to 2019, China's total tourism revenue has increased from 1.57 trillion to 6.63 trillion [4], an increase of 422.30%, more than quadrupling. The number of domestic tourists increased from 2.103 billion to 6.006 billion, indicating an increase of 285.60%, nearly three times that of 2010. Additionally, from 2015 to 2019, the scale of China's foreign currency earnings resulted from inbound tourist visits grew continuously. In 2019, China's international tourism foreign exchange income reached 131.254 billion US dollars, up 3.3% year on year [2]. This again eloquently proved the blossom of China's tourism.

**Table 1.** Main development indicators of tourism industry from 2011 to 2019 [4]

Year	Domestic Tourist Visits (Hundred Million Visits)	Domestic Tourism Income (Hundred Million Yuan)	Inbound Tourist Visits (Ten Thousand Visits)	Inbound Tourism Inome (Hundred Million Dollars)	Outbound Tourist Visits (Ten Thousand Visits)	Tourism Total Income (Trillion Yuan)
2011	26.41	19305	13542	484.64	7025	2.25
2012	29.57	22706	13241	500.28	8318	2.59
2013	32.62	26276	12908	516.64	9819	2.95
2014	36.11	30312	12850	1053.80	10728	3.73
2015	39.90	34195	13382	1136.50	11689	4.13
2016	44.35	39390	13844	1200.00	12203	4.69
2017	50.01	45661	13948	1234.17	13051	5.40
2018	55.39	51278	14120	1271.03	14972	5.97
2019	60.06	57251	14531	1313.00	15463	6.63



**Fig. 1.** Changes in China's foreign exchange income from international tourism from 2015 to 2021 [2]

## 2.2 Analysis of the current situation of tourism after the pandemic

According to the data released by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, in 2020, due to the impact of the pandemic, the number of domestic tourists was 2.88 billion [5], demonstrating a decrease of 52.1% compared with the same period last year. Among them, the number of urban resident tourists was 2.07 billion, which decreased by 53.8%; rural resident visitors reached 810 million and fell by 47.0%. Domestic tourism revenue was 2.2286 trillion yuan, reducing by 61.1%, among which, urban residents spent 1.7967 trillion yuan, decreasing by 62.2%, whereas rural residents spent 432 billion yuan on sightseeing, declining by 55.7%. In 2021, there were 3.25 billion domestic tourists, an increase of 12.8% over the previous year: 2.34 billion were urban resident tourists, displaying a surge of 13.4%; while 900 million rural residents went out to visit, showing an increase of 11.1%. As a result, domestic tourism revenue was 2.9191 trillion yuan, rising by 31.0% [2]. It can be seen from these statistics that China's tourism economy has been greatly traumatised by the pandemic, and is mainly supported by urban tourism economic income at present.

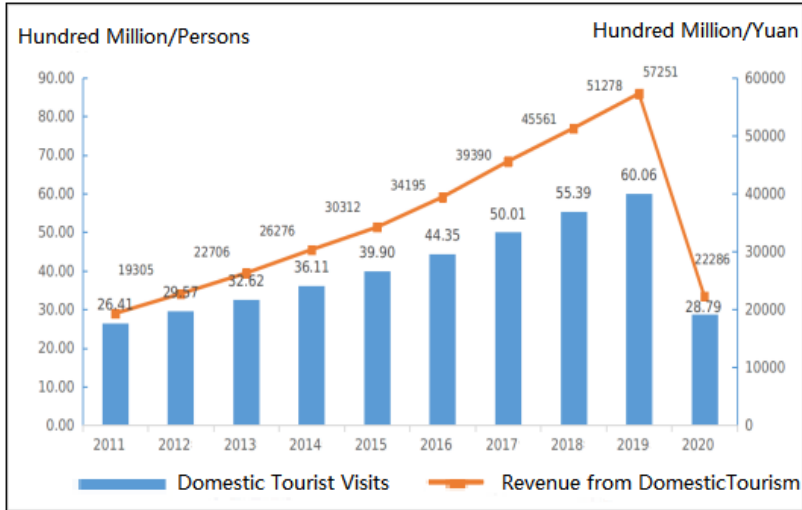


Fig. 2. Domestic tourist arrivals and income from 2011 to 2020 [5]

### 3 Current problems faced by tourism

#### 3.1 Monotonous ticket-dependent economic development pattern

Ticket economy refers to the economy formed by tourist attractions relying on ticket income [6]. At present, the main economic income of most domestic tourist attractions comes from tickets, the price of which would also directly affect the income of the scenic spots.

Take Ultima Thule located in Sanya, Hainan Province as an example. The tourist attraction received a total number of 4.8 million visitors in 2018, realizing an operating revenue of 362 million yuan. It is roughly estimated that the ticket revenue accounts for 60%-70% of the the whole receipts, which is a significant source of economic income for the scenic spot [7]. This vividly indicates that the operating mode of Sanya Ultima Thule is ticket economy, relying heavily on rigid income, also known as the “ceiling economy”. This phenomenon is by no means a rare occurrence. From the perspective of the market economy, this prevailing operating mode in China is apparently unsustainable.

#### 3.2 Shortage of medium and high-end tourism products

This scenic area in Sanya focuses primarily on natural landscapes, which are marvelous and pleasant, attracting countless tourists each year. Nevertheless, in terms of entertainment, it mainly involves diving and other common and insipid offshore projects. Because the entertainment facilities in Wuzhizhou Island, Dadonghai Bay and other scenic spots situated incredibly near to Ultima Thule are more complete and diverse, and there is a blaze of publicity surrounding, most tourists prefer to choose

Wuzhizhou Island, Dadonghai and other scenic spots rather than Ultima Thule to have a try in offshore entertainment projects [7]. Sanya Ultima Thule Scenic Area is not adequately and, what might be the most important, monotonously constructed in respect for tourism products. Visitors thus would have nothing but an awful sense of experience.

In effect, at present, the development of tourism products can rarely give a lucid market and product positioning. Most regions often carry out projects based on superficial, specious touristic market demand, ignoring product differentiation from surrounding regions, and lacking sufficient research on local characteristic resources and market demand [8]. Most tourist attraction exploration is nothing more than a duplication of simple tourism products and the same development model as similar precedents. Therefore, these products are crude and low-grade, lacking effective in-depth innovation. What's worse, repeated development and construction not only bring a criminal waste of resources, but also hinder the building of unique Chinese tourism brands, resulting in the difficulty of forming competitive tourism brands in the increasingly saturated low-grade product market, which is obviously less attractive to tourism consumers.

### **3.3 Incomplete tourism supporting infrastructures**

Apart from the humdrum development pattern and the missing medium and high-end tourism products, there is a must for us to incorporate ancillary facilities. We could have a third look at the case study of Ultima Thule. In terms of catering, it mainly includes Sam Bo Luong (also known as nourish cool), coconut juice, Hainan noodles, and other snacks that can fill the stomach or relieve summer heat [7]. In terms of accommodation, there are no hotels in the scenic area, only hostels and B&Bs around [7]. In terms of shopping, the goods provided are very much similar to those in other scenic spots, namely pearls, shell products, etc. Tourists then cannot enjoy relevant supporting services in the scenic area [7].

This, to our regret, is a pervasive failing. As a consequence, from the perspective of the whole scenic area, supporting facilities, service quality, and other aspects still own some tremendously improved space.

### **3.4 Imbalanced development of tourism**

When it comes to regional disparities in the development of tourism, we shall begin by referring to a common sense: The eastern coastal area and famous scenic spots are well developed, but the western regions, such as Xinjiang, Gansu, Ningxia, etc., have good tourist attractions too, but the tourism development there is not as good as that of coastal cities. We hereby usher in a new concept: spatial diffusion.

The development of tourism has a significant impact on the spatial diffusion of the regional economy. According to Guo Xiaoping, the development of tourism has brought about the spatial spillover effect of the regional economy, which is conducive to the stability of regional society and rapid economic growth [9]. On the one hand, with the improvement of transportation infrastructure and the rapid development of

Internet technology, the rapid development of tourism has become irrevocable. Therefore, the development of the regional economy requires promoting the rapid development of tourism to narrow the gap between supply and demand in time and space, accelerate the transfer of ownership and value of tourism products, meet the needs of tourism consumers, create value for tourism product suppliers, and create space spillover effects.

On the other hand, nonetheless, economic growth will be accompanied by commercialization and trade. That is, socialization of production and commercialization of sales [9]. Therefore, in order to reduce the unit cost and improve the marginal profitability, the owners of tourism products will narrow the distance with tourism consumers to achieve an efficient allocation of resources. In other words, the regional economy would in turn qualify the development of tourism, which coincides with what we mentioned in the beginning of this section. With the gap in the degrees of economic growth between the West and the East of China, we could notice the unbalanced development in tourism.

## **4 Countermeasures and suggestions for the development of tourism under the circumstances of pandemic**

After a detailed analyses of the current situations of tourism before and after the pandemic and a close look at the current problems tourism has encountered, we could eventually step into countermeasures and feasible suggestions to ameliorate the tourism. As far as I'm concerned, corresponding solutions can be proposed from the perspectives of the government and industry.

### **4.1 Suggestion for the government**

The government shall increase support to promote the recovery of the industry. In order to better play the role of the government in the development of global tourism, Zhang Ze believes that it includes optimizing the planning scheme, promoting regional balanced development, and strengthening the integration of tourism products [10].

At the same time, the government should also improve the implementation capacity of developing global tourism, including strengthening the protection of tourism resources, refining tourism marketing, improving infrastructure construction, creating a good human environment, and so on. We should take the government as the leading force, define the positioning of characteristic tourism products, build a system of characteristic tourism products, and improve the support of the tourism product industry chain and supply chain to the local tourism industry with the government's administrative power; actively carry out the supervision of the characteristic tourism market, strengthen the quality management of tourism products and services, control the types of tourism products that do not conform to local characteristics, and resolutely prohibit tourism products that have nothing to do with local characteristics from appearing in rural characteristic tourism areas [11].

## 4.2 Suggestions for the industry

In addition to the efforts that will be put forward by all levels of government, the tourism industry itself, along with its participating entities, should strive as a whole for the sound and sustainable development of domestic tourism in the near future.

### **Transformation in development pattern.**

The industry cannot rely solely on ticket economy, but need to make timely adjustments in accordance to consumer demand to develop high-end tourism and home stay. The managers of scenic spots should change their belief in “ticket economy”, adhere to the market orientation, adopt new ideas to create and develop new tourism products, promote the development of tourism consumption projects closely related to the scenic spots, provide tourists with a series of multi-level personalized tourism products with a sense of participation and experience, and form a comprehensive tourism product system afflicted with a full set of supporting facilities and an efficient revenue mechanism with the purpose of extending the industry chain, so as to get rid of the dependence on ticket income and promote the quality and efficiency of the scenic spot [7].

### **Emerging approach to stimulating tourism.**

Enterprises can also dig into new tourism modal, such as cloud tourism in combination with new media platforms such as TikTok and Bilibili [2]. In the meantime, there is one central discipline that is worth of our attention: Under the condition of the market economy, grasping the users’ mindset is one basic principle for the survival and development of all industries. Without considering the actual consumer needs, this kind of making-cars-behind-closed-doors practice can only result in getting half the result with twice the effort or even lead to some downright failure of previous efforts. Therefore, “cloud tourism” needs to be user-centered and provide diversified tourism services according to different needs of users. This then conduces to at least the two following major aspects.

For one, in terms of technology application, the industry should lay emphasis on accelerating the digital transformation, making full use of Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Artificial Intelligence (AI), big data and other advanced and sophisticated technologies to make the scene more vivid and heterogenous [12]. For another, with respect to content design, they shall also elaborately design the commentaries based on the in-depth exploration of the culture of the scenic spot, and at the same time, adduce historical allusions, anecdotal hearsay and other content to attract the public’s attention. For those tourists looking for stimulation other than sightseeing, “cloud tourism” needs to extend the industrial chain as well as enrich the service types, such as opening the “tourism+goods” mode to meet tourists’ shopping needs [2].

### **Exploration of less popular tourist attractions with celebrity charm.**

Consumers then can also be stimulated to pay a visit to those less popular scenic spots through the so-called “celebrity charm”. It is universally acknowledged that the



majority of people want to “keep up with the Jones” most of the time. Then celebrities with greater social influence can drive millions of people to devote themselves to the same things. This would remind me of successful cases such as Ding Zhen, an instant-hit with the Zang or Tibetan inheritance who somehow miraculously poured momentum into the local tourism in Litang County, Sichuan Province.

As a local cultural symbol in the era of intelligent media, Ding Zhen has complied with the needs of communication and the audience in the new media era, innovatively driven regional image and media communication, and promoted the transformation of online entertainment to practical functions to a certain extent. This is of great significance to the construction of local image, the development of cultural tourism and the innovation of symbols [13].

## 5 Conclusion

At present, China’s economic development has entered a new normal phase. That is, China’s economy has changed from high-speed growth to high-quality growth, i.e., optimizing the economic structure and increasing the proportion of tertiary industry. As the pillar component of the tertiary industry, the tourism economy has an enormous impact on China’s high-quality economic growth. The tourism economy has thus also entered a new normal stage in terms of promoting economic development, and the development mode will also usher in a change. The transformation of marketing mode and the systematization and improvement of tourism industry therefore is incontrovertible.

Tourism is also a comprehensive industry. That is to say, it not only brings profits by operating and developing some tourism products, but also generates linkage and radiation effects, which will thrust the development of other industries, including the above-mentioned catering and accommodation. Therefore, the improvement of supporting facilities will not only bring high-quality and sustainable economic benefits to the industry, but also be conducive to the development of tourism, leading to a win-win situation.

Last but not least, tourism must promote the cultural connotation of national characteristics through integration and innovation, so as to diversify the tourism products all participants concerned would provide with visitors.

At the same time, however, due to the length of this paper, it has yet to detect all prevailing troubles and challenges in domestic tourism imposed by the pandemic, not to mention all the plausible resolutions. Above all, I always hold a strong belief that so long as we adhere to innovative, sustainable and coordinated principles in terms of dealing with tourism matters, we could ensure sound and sustainable development of tourism and inject longlasting vivacity into the society even against the background of rampant pandemic.

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