

A Review of Influencing Factors on Regional Tourism Economic Development - Taking Shandong Province as an Example

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Abstract:

Tourism has become a strategic pillar industry of China's national economy. The level and balanced development of regional tourism economy directly affect regional economic growth and the high-quality development of cultural tourism industries. Taking "influencing factors of regional tourism economy" as the core topic, this paper comprehensively sorts out relevant research achievements at home and abroad, and summarizes the research evolution of core influencing factors including tourism resources, transportation development, urban reception capacity, government policies and institutions, local publicity and marketing, and service quality of tourist destinations. Taking Shandong Province as a case study, this paper concludes the current situation of tourism economic development and the problem of regional imbalance in Shandong Province, and points out deficiencies in existing studies, such as insufficient targeted measures, shallow research on emerging factors, and weak implementability of proposed suggestions. On this basis, it puts forward that future research should further strengthen and deepen regional special analysis, pay attention to emerging factors such as sincerity in local tourism services, and focus on the path of regional coordinated development, so as to provide theoretical support and research directions for the tourism economic development of Shandong Province and similar provinces.

Keywords: regional tourism economy; influencing factors; regional imbalance; Shandong Province; sustainable development of tourism economy

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of the mass tourism era,

the development level of tourism economy has become an important criterion to measure regional economic vitality and development quality. As a typical

major province of cultural tourism, Shandong is endowed with profound Confucian culture, coastal scenery, mountain tourism resources and distinctive folk customs. Data show that the total number of tourists received in 2024 exceeded 900 million, and the total annual tourism revenue exceeded one trillion yuan for the first time[2]. The output value of cultural tourism industry accounted for 6.7% of the province's total GDP, making tourism economy an important pillar of economic development[1]. However, there are still challenges in the rapid development, especially the prominent problem of unbalanced regional development. The gaps in tourism economic development among regions with different development levels, such as Jiaodong, central Shandong and southwestern Shandong, are significant, restricting the quality improvement and innovation of cultural tourism industry across Shandong Province[5].

Scholarly research on influencing factors of regional tourism economy has yielded fruitful results. Foreign studies focus on the internal correlations between spatial distribution, industrial integration and market mechanisms, while domestic research is more closely integrated with local practices, focusing on regional differences, development drivers and sustainable development. Most existing studies take large-scale national tourism economic development zones or typical developed regions as research objects. For example, Li Peng, Wang Fu, Zheng Jing and Huang Zhi (2020) conducted in-depth research on urban communities with distinctive characteristics formed by unique cultural and historical development, and made detailed studies on the "alley" culture in Shanghai, "lane" culture in Chengdu and "hutong" culture in Beijing[3]. However, there is a lack of systematic and practical research specifically targeting Shandong Province, and insufficient attention is paid to non-traditional emerging factors such as "sincerity". Therefore, this paper conducts a comprehensive review and systematic summary of relevant literature on influencing factors of regional tourism economic development, combines with the current reality of tourism economic development in Shandong Province, identifies research gaps and future directions, and lays a solid theoretical foundation for further research.

2. Research Progress of Influencing Factors on Regional Tourism Economy Abroad

Foreign research on tourism economy started earlier than domestic research, with more mature theoretical systems and research methods, forming a comprehensive and diversified research pattern.

Regarding the core influencing factors of tourism economic development, most foreign scholars agree that

tourism resource endowment, transportation convenience and reception facility quality are fundamental conditions. Meanwhile, much attention is paid to the driving effects of market demand, policy environment, globalization trend and deepening cultural integration on tourism economic development[4]. Some studies take the characteristics of local spatial distribution as the starting point to reveal the formation logic of regional tourism economic differences. In terms of research perspectives, foreign studies emphasize industrial integration and sustainable development, explore the collaborative mechanisms between tourism economy and regional economy, ecological environment and social culture, and focus on long-term benefits and dynamic evolution. Quantitative analysis is the main research method, and spatial econometric models are widely used to improve the scientificity and rigor of research[4]. Overall, foreign studies provide a theoretical framework and methodological reference for analyzing influencing factors of regional tourism economy, but there is a lack of targeted research based on the reality of China's provincial development, taking into account traditional culture and livelihood services.

3. Research Progress of Influencing Factors on Regional Tourism Economy in China

Domestic research is based on national conditions and local practices, forming a research paradigm of "problem orientation – factor identification – countermeasure optimization", with research content more in line with the actual needs of regional development[6].

3.1 Research on Basic Influencing Factors

Domestic scholars unanimously agree that tourism resources, transportation conditions and reception capacity are the three core elements supporting tourism economic development[6]. High-quality and differentiated tourism resources are the foundation for attracting tourists; transportation networks such as high-speed railways and expressways determine the accessibility of tourist markets[8]; and the carrying capacity of hotels, catering and scenic spots affects tourist experience and consumption scale. Most such studies are supported by statistical data to verify the positive relationship between traditional hardware factors and tourism economy[7].

3.2 Research on Emerging Influencing Factors

With the development of digital media and consumption upgrading, domestic research has gradually focused on soft factors such as publicity and marketing, service quality, policy support and brand image. New media communication, internet-famous check-in spots and urban IP

building have played a significant role in boosting tourism popularity[9]. For instance, a Xiaohongshu user “Only Justice Gets Beaten” objectively and sincerely expressed his views on Zibo and defended the city from over-expectation in his posts[9]. Policy support, market supervision and benefit-for-people measures of local governments directly affect tourism reputation and sustainability. Some studies on residents’ attitudes toward tourism focus on residents’ perceptions of tourism, the evaluation process of their attitudes and the changes of such attitudes over time. It can be seen that traditional hardware factors are gradually becoming homogeneous, and soft services are becoming the key to regional tourism competition[10].

3.3 Research on Regional Differences and Coordinated Development

Domestic research pays close attention to the unbalanced development of regional tourism economy, and has conducted extensive analysis on differences between eastern, central and western regions and within provinces. Ao Rongjun and Wei Yansheng (2006) pointed out that tourism resources are only one of the factors affecting regional tourism development differences in China, and infrastructure, service facilities and economic development level are also important reasons[6]. Li Ruyou and Huang Changzhou (2015) also studied the impact of transportation infrastructure on regional tourism development based on a threshold regression model[8]. Therefore, it cannot be ignored that resource endowment, economic level, transportation layout and policy inclination are the main causes of differences. Optimization paths such as resource integration, transportation interconnection, policy coordination and dislocation development have been proposed. However, most studies are based on macro analysis, with more research on developed regions and less in-depth analysis and implementable countermeasures for specific provinces[7].

4. Current Situation and Deficiencies of Tourism Economic Research in Shandong Province

4.1 Characteristics of Tourism Economic Development in Shandong Province

Shandong Province boasts a large-scale and fast-growing tourism economy with a solid pillar status of cultural tourism industry, but the problem of unbalanced regional development is very prominent. Cities such as Qingdao, Jinan and Weihai, as provincial capitals or relatively developed cities, have concentrated tourism resources, advanced and diverse transportation facilities, high urban visibility and strong brand effect, leading the province in

tourism economic development. This regional difference was intensively discussed by Ding Lei, Wu Xiaogen and Ding Jie (2006)[10]. In addition, although some areas in southwestern and northwestern Shandong are not short of tourism resources, their tourism development faces problems such as insufficient exploration of effective resources, weak publicity, lagging supporting services and aging public facilities, resulting in low development levels. Shandong’s tourism economic development also has prominent problems such as “strong resources but shallow exploration”, “excellent brands but weak publicity”, “large traffic but low stickiness” and “few characteristics but much commonality”. The long-term reputation and soft power of urban services still need to be improved.

4.2 Research Achievements Related to Shandong Province

Most existing tourism studies on Shandong focus on single cities, single scenic spots or traditional factor analysis. Some studies explore tourism resource development, transportation optimization, industrial integration and other topics, providing certain references for development. The phenomenal tourism case represented by Zibo Barbecue has attracted academic attention to urban publicity, service sincerity and government governance, providing practical materials for the research of non-traditional factors[9].

4.3 Deficiencies in Existing Studies

4.3.1 Insufficient targeted measures

There are few systematic studies on influencing factors focusing on Shandong Province, and the in-depth analysis of the underlying causes of regional imbalance is superficial.

4.3.2 Incomplete coverage of factors

Attention is paid to hardware conditions such as tourism resources and urban transportation, but soft conditions such as service sincerity, people’s livelihood needs and public participation lack clear definition and practical verification.

4.3.3 Weak implementability of countermeasures

Most suggestions are too general and not closely integrated with the actual situations and specific resource characteristics of various regions in Shandong, making it difficult to directly and accurately guide local strategy adjustment and assist policy formulation.

4.3.4 Insufficient innovation in cases

Traditional tourist city cases are repeatedly used, and the experience summary and theoretical sublimation of typical phenomenal internet-famous cities are insufficient.

4.3.5 Lack of distinctive content:

The quality of tourism resources is uneven, tourist experience is unstable; the aesthetic education level of scenic spots is low with average aesthetic experience, and stereotyped ugly experiences like the typical “colorful karst caves” are hard to retain tourists.

5. Research Review and Future Prospects

5.1 Research Review

Domestic and foreign research on influencing factors of regional tourism economy has formed a relatively complete theoretical system, with traditional and emerging factors constituting a systematic analysis framework. Foreign studies focus more on methodology, while domestic research emphasizes real practice and problems, complementing each other. However, there are gaps in targeted special research on Shandong Province, and the research thinking on regional differences and soft non-traditional factors lags behind the actual current development, requiring more targeted and implementable research.

5.2 Future Prospects

5.2.1 Deepen provincial special research

Take Shandong Province as a typical research object, ensure no omission of core factors, conduct data-based analysis of regional differences, and form localized and personalized research results.

5.2.2 Expand the vision of factor research

Integrate non-traditional factors such as service sincerity, real people’s needs and urban characteristics into the research to enrich the content of the analysis system of relevant influencing factors.

5.2.3 Innovate case studies

Take Zibo, Jinan, Qingdao, Weihai and other cities as typical cases to compare and analyze the driving mechanisms and experience enlightenment of different development models.

5.2.4 Improve the practicality of countermeasures

Combined with the resource endowments and specific conditions of various regions in Shandong, put forward differentiated and implementable sustainable development strategies according to local conditions, and provide empirical support for government decision-making.

5.2.5 Combine multi-method research

Integrate literature research, data statistics and case analysis to achieve comprehensive multi-dimensional and

multi-method analysis and enhance the scientificity and operability of research.

6. Conclusion

The development of regional tourism economy is affected by multiple factors such as resources, transportation, reception, policies, publicity and services, showing significant regional differences. Foreign studies focus on theories and mechanisms, while domestic research focuses on problems and countermeasures, laying a solid foundation for this paper. Shandong Province has a large-scale and high-potential tourism economy, but the problem of regional imbalance is prominent. Existing studies have deficiencies such as weak pertinence, incomplete factor coverage and vague countermeasures.

Future research should focus on the reality of tourism economic development in Shandong Province, combine traditional hardware factors with soft factors such as service sincerity, deeply analyze the causes of regional imbalance, construct a more locally applicable influencing factor model, and put forward clearer and practically feasible coordinated development paths. This review can provide theoretical reference for subsequent empirical research, help the high-quality, balanced and sustainable development of cultural tourism industry in Shandong Province, and also offer reference for similar provinces.

Although existing research has achieved certain theoretical progress, it still has several obvious limitations: insufficient pertinence, incomplete coverage of elements, and vague and unclear countermeasures. The research has not been closely integrated with the actual situation of Shandong Province for practical exploration, and is deficient in the organic integration of traditional and innovative factors. It has not constructed a more practical and targeted influencing factor model, resulting in immature research and design of future development routes.

Overall, while relevant research has made some theoretical progress, it still has shortcomings in practical application and needs to be further explored and continuously improved in the future.

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