

The Positive Effect of Tourism Development on Urban Liveability

Chaoyue Cai, Aoshu Li*, Rubin Yang, Jianxiong Tang

College of Tourism, University of Hunan Normal, Changsha, China

ABSTRACT

Rapid urbanization has brought a series of "urban diseases." Whether tourism, as a "smoke-free industry," can improve urban liveability is worth studying. Based on the article "Can Tourism Development Help Improve Urban Liveability? An Examination of the Chinese Case" written by Cai and his collaborators, this study provides a supplementary discussion on the positive effect of tourism development on urban liveability. It confirms that tourism development improves urban liveability by optimizing the ecological environment, elevating the economic level, and ameliorating the social environment. Finally, we propose some shortcomings of existing studies and the prospects for future research.

Keywords: Tourism development; Urban liveability; Positive effect

DESCRIPTION

Cities are the basic spatial units for human survival and development. In 2021, the world urbanization rate reached 56%. However, rapid urbanization has also led to a series of "urban diseases" such as traffic congestion, ecological damage, and resource shortage [1]. In addition, during COVID-19, the virus is more likely to spread in cities because of the high population density and confined environments. The above issues have drawn the attention of urban liveability and people strive to find ways to build better cities.

Many international organizations, such as UNWTO and IMF, have entertained hopes that tourism can improve urban liveability. Before the impact of COVID-19, total global tourism arrivals reached 12.310 billion, and total global tourism revenue was \$5.8 trillion, equivalent to 6.7% of global GDP in 2019 [2]. Moreover, tourism can bring significant economic benefits to cities and improve other aspects such as urban ecology and social environment. In the Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals Journey to 2030 report, UNWTO states that it can play a significant role in achieving the 17 SDGs [3]. However, how tourism development improves urban liveability requires rigorous academic research. Therefore, this study further discusses the issue by combining the recent research of Cai and his team. Cai and his team empirically examined tourism development as an

important reason for improving urban liveability using 284 cities in China as case study sites by constructing the benchmark model, the Spatial Durbin Model (SDM), and the Panel Threshold Model (PTM) [4]. Specifically, tourism development enhances urban livability mainly through three paths: improving the ecological environment, promoting economic growth, and optimizing the social environment.

First, tourism development can improve the urban ecological environment. On the one hand, tourism conflicts with energy-consuming and high-polluting industries. To ensure sustainable tourism development, the local government would adopt strict environmental regulations, which may lead to an increase in "compliance costs" and forced relocation of related businesses. In addition, as people pay more attention to health issues, health tourism has ushered in development opportunities. The government has adopted supportive policies in China, and many tourism companies have invested in health tourism. The development of health tourism contributes to improving the urban ecological environment. Second, tourism development can promote urban economic growth and provide financial support for liveability improvements. Many tourism scholars have confirmed the Tourism-Led Growth Hypothesis (TLGH). On the one hand, tourism can stimulate residents' consumption enthusiasm, driving the pan-tourism industries such as catering, transportation, and accommodation. On the other hand, under

Correspondence to: Aoshu Li, College of Tourism, University of Hunan Normal, Changsha, China, E-mail: 202120071332@hunnu.edu.cn

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the tourism multiplier effect, the initial tourism revenue brings much indirect revenue to affiliated enterprises after multiple flow rounds. Overall, tourism can not only increase the income level of local enterprises but also provides significant tax revenue for the government. Finally, tourism development can improve the urban social environment. First, as a labor-intensive industry, tourism can create many jobs for residents to improve their household income levels and life quality. In addition, to promote tourism development, the local government builds high-speed rail stations, highways, and other supporting infrastructure, which can provide convenience for residents' life.

Moreover, tourism development can stimulate the local government to pay attention to protecting local cultural relics and Intangible Cultural Heritage, which is conducive to creating an excellent urban social atmosphere. In general, urban liveability is a multi-dimensional evaluation system, but its evaluation cannot be separated from the three aspects of ecology, economy, and society. The positive effect of tourism development on them gives us reasons to believe it can play an essential role in improving urban liveability [5].

CONCLUSION

Tourism is a "sunrise industry" for achieving sustainable human development and improving urban liveability. This study analyzes the mechanism of tourism development in improving urban liveability, which can be achieved by improving the urban ecological environment, enhancing the level of urban economic development, and creating a better social environment. The

research of Cai and his team provides empirical evidence for the conclusion. Overall, this study makes some contributions to tourism sustainability research. However, the confirmation of the conclusion also requires other research evidence from other countries, especially comparative studies between developed and developing countries. In addition, we cannot ignore that "over-tourism" may bring problems to urban liveability. For example, in Macao, the rapid development of tourism has led to a significant increase in the cost of living for residents, which is not conducive to improving urban liveability. In some ecologically fragile areas, if tourism development exceeds the environmental carrying capacity, it will be detrimental to sustainable urban development. Therefore, the research on the effect of tourism development on urban liveability needs to pay attention to some exceptional cases in the future. In these areas, the positive effect of tourism on urban liveability can only be realized by adopting a site-specific tourism development model.

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