

Current Status, Problems, and Countermeasures of Tourism Service Exports in Shanxi Province, China

Qi-Wen Wang, Jia-Xin Sun

School of Business, Shanghai Dianji University, Shanghai, 201306

**Corresponding author: firstlovewen@126.com*

Abstract: *The tourism service exports, by formal definition, is referring to various associated services provided to inbound tourists in exchange for foreign-currency income. Tourism service exports is gradually becoming one of the most crucial ingredients of Chinese tertiary industry, which significantly replace primary and secondary industry. Shanxi province was widely deemed as the place with prolonged history and cultural context. And hence, it has attracted many domestic tourists per year basis, and regularly being treated as one of the inland “hot-spots” during the Chinese vacation. However, to most inbound tourists, Shanxi province can hardly be regarded as a popular place to visit.*

This paper is aiming to investigate the major causes which impede the development of tourism service exports of Shanxi province. The comparative methodology was employed to contrast Shanxi province with other popular foreign tourists visiting provinces located in central area of China. The obtained result reveals that the inbound tourism of Shanxi province encountered with the following four major problems, namely, inappropriate consumption composition, unsatisfactory level of touristic facilities and infrastructure, deficient provincial touristic route management, as well as the outmoded online service platform and advertising channels. The related short-run and long-run countermeasures are presented at the end of this paper.

Keywords: *tourism service exports; Shanxi province; existing problems; countermeasures.*

I. Introduction

According to the report of World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the tourism service exports usually account for roughly 30% of the global service exports, particularly at the timing whereas the global economy experiencing a mild recession. It reveals that the tourism service exports have becoming a crucial indicator in evaluating the competitiveness of one region or even a country. As accounted by official data, in 2019, there were 145 million inbound tourists and 65.73 million foreign overnight visitors in China. The generated annual foreign exchange income was 131.3 billion US dollars. The tourism service exports play a crucial role specifically in stimulating the urban economy and create additional occupations for urban residents.

Shanxi province, in first place, was heavily relying on primary and secondary industry due to its geometric location and abundant coal resources. The over-dependence of coal-related industry damaged the regional ecosystem and the associated environmental side-effects suppressed the development of other industries, specifically tourism. At the beginning of the 21st century, in order to pursue sustainable economic growth, government enacted a series of policies and tourism revitalization themes, which aims to promote the tourism in Shanxi province. The result is obvious, Shanxi province has attracted many domestic tourists, and the place was regularly being treated as one of the inland “hot-spots” during the Chinese vacation. However, to most inbound tourists, Shanxi province can hardly be deemed as a popular tourist attraction.

On the other hand, the tourism service exports contribute significant shares to the touristic revenue, benefit other related business, and promote global awareness of Shanxi province. Therefore, this study is targeting to determine the key factors which may likely to influence the tourism service exports of Shanxi province, the existing problems which impede its development. Upon all these findings, the associated countermeasures are provided to improve and refine the existing tourism service exports.

This paper is organized as follows: part 2 reviews prior studies made on the discipline of tourism service exports. The contemporary situation of tourism service exports of Shanxi province, including its scale, related consumption composition of foreign tourists, geographical composition of foreign tourists, and the supporting facilities are briefly summarized in part 3. The key factors, which may influence its tourism service exports, and the existing problems are mentioned in part 4. The countermeasures and conclusion are summarized in part 5.

II. Literature review

The development scale of tourism service exports in Shanxi province became rapidly in recent years, typically the inbound tourism (Zhao 2019). The underlying reason is that after the long-term resource integration, Shanxi province has formed several tourism clusters in major cities like Taiyuan, Jinzhong, Datong, and Yancheng (He 2017). In addition to the resource integration, the increment of number of Class A tourist spots is another reason leading to the fast-growing tourism service exports in Shanxi province (Liu 2020). The overall number of Class A scenic spots has increased from 3 spots in 2003 to 175 spots in 2020. Moreover, the increased number of star-rated hotels and travel agencies in Shanxi province will also contribute to the increment of tourism service exports (Zhang et al. 2020). Furthermore, it is believed that inbound tourism characteristics, especially the nationality (culture similarity) and geographical proximation, will also impact the tourism service exports. And hence, a detailed analysis of the distribution of tourism service exports in Shanxi province had been conducted (Li 2019).

In contrasted to other provinces in central area of China, the tourism service exports in Shanxi province, however, still have several drawbacks. The tourism management level of Shanxi province is lower than that of other provinces, which is indicated as a result of the factor and cluster analysis (Qi 2020). Due to its underdeveloped tourism management level, the touristic enterprises in Shanxi province are generally in small scale and unorganized form. Therefore, they always produce duplicated products of relatively low quality, which are failed to fulfill the demands of foreign tourists. Moreover, the integrated development level of tourism is lower than that of other provinces (Sang 2020). Such a phenomenon can be revealed by its touristic products lack of sufficient level of creativity and innovation, that is, affluent tourism resources failed to be turned into high-quality touristic products. Moreover, there is spatial dislocation of inbound touristic revenue, and the development of tourism among major cities within Shanxi province is unbalanced. This is suggested by the obtained result from a two-dimensional combination matrix, which is employed to analyze the spatial distribution of tourists in Shanxi province (Liu 2020). In addition to that, sufficient evidence suggests the utilization of new media in advertising the tourism in Shanxi province is still far behind other provinces (Gao 2020).

In order to handle the difficulties encountered by Shanxi province, several Chinese scholars proposed some primary countermeasures. The cultural connotation of touristic resources should be excavated to be linked to the touristic products. By doing so, touristic products will be significantly enriched and diversified to fulfill different preferences of inbound foreign tourists. Moreover, adjusting the touristic consumption composition, like reducing the ticket price of the tourist attractions, and meanwhile, increasing the related entertainment facilities and shopping centers, will refine the contemporary touristic consumption composition (Fan 2018). As the development of tourism is highly relying on the degree of coordination, the associated public support, typically the investment in public facilities and corresponding supervision, is believed to be crucial in promoting inbound tourism in Shanxi province. In addition to the public support, government support is also an essential ingredient for the transformation and development of tourism in Shanxi province (Lou 2020). With the assistance of 5G connectivity, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence, the touristic resources, including the scenic spots, accommodations, food and beverage as well as the entertainment facilities, can be coordinated and utilized in full capacity. However, it demands responsible organization realizes the real-time information extraction and processing capability as well as a mobile service platform of reasonable quality (Lu and Wang 2020).

III. Current status of tourism service exports

This section starts by revealing the current status of tourism service exports in Shanxi province from two aspects, namely, the total number of inbound tourists and the corresponding foreign exchange earnings from the inbound tourists. Followed by the analysis of consumption composition of inbound tourists. In section 3.3, the inbound tourists' structure and the distribution of tourists in eleven cities of Shanxi province are illustrated. Section 3.4 summarizes the existence of tourist-related facilities of Shanxi province, involving the number of hotels, restaurants, and the official-approved travel agencies.

3.1 Scale of tourism service exports

As shown in Figure 1, the number of inbound overnight visitors in Shanxi province was increased from 594,000 in 2015 to 762,000 in 2019. Within this five-year horizon, the overall growth rate reached 28.28%. One conclusion can be made that the number of inbound overnight visitors in Shanxi province demonstrates a steady growing trend as suggested by Figure 1. Moreover, by referring to the line chart of Figure 1, which represents the growth rate of inbound overnight visitors, it is able to observe an obvious leap from the year 2015 to 2016 (from 5.1% to 6.1%). The underlying reason is closely associated with the sudden rise of indirect touristic employees, as advocated by the government's strategy of promoting the transformation from conventional primary and secondary industry to tourism at the beginning of 2016.

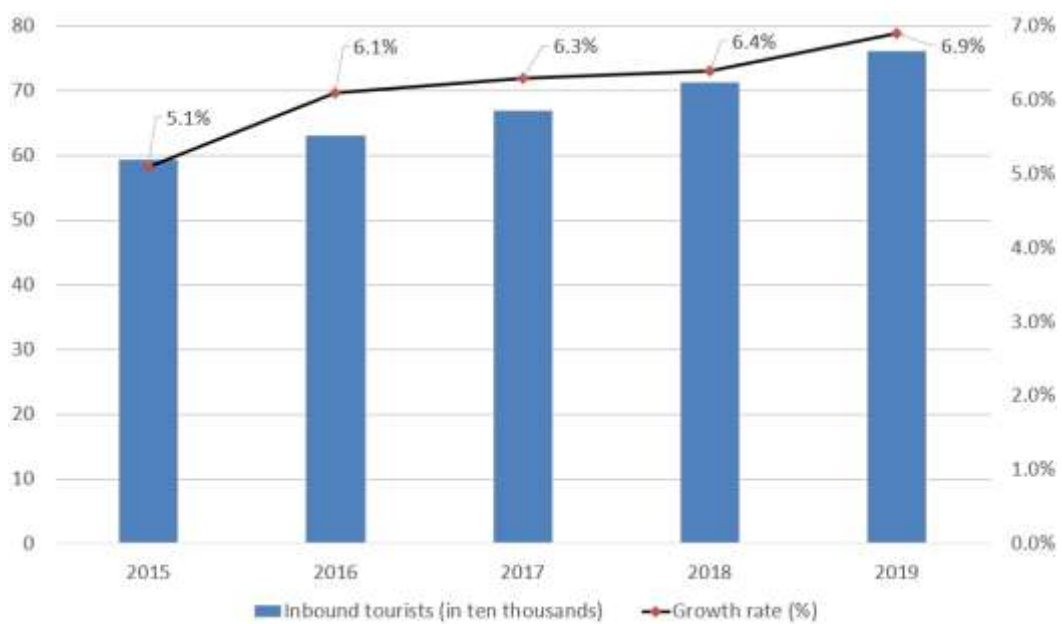


Figure 1: Number of inbound overnight foreign visitors and the growth rate in Shanxi province (2015 – 2019)
 Data source: Statistics Department of Shanxi Province, 2020

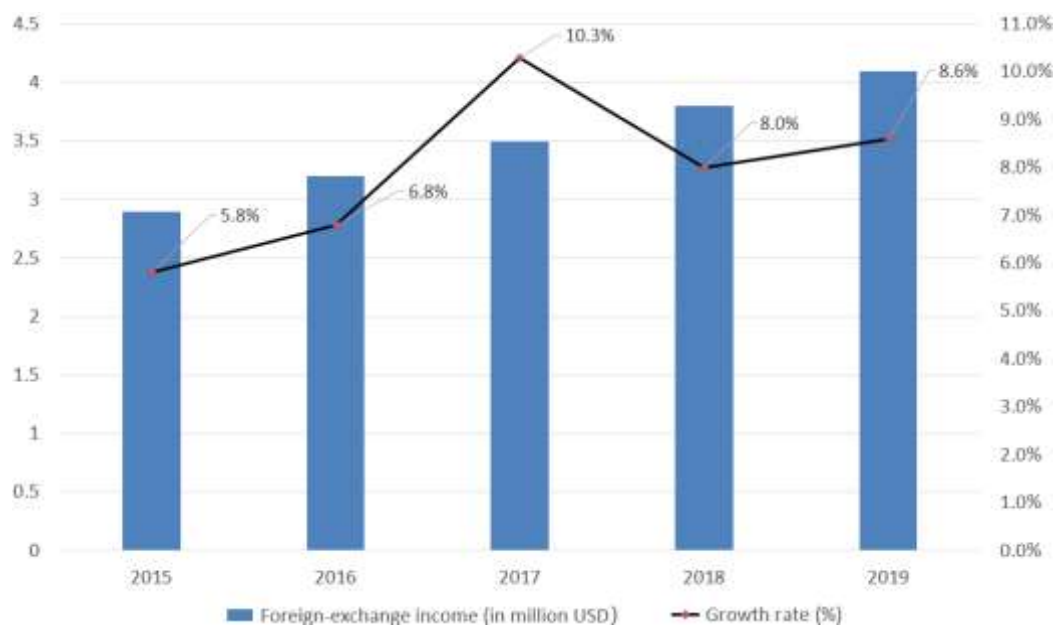


Figure 2: Foreign-exchange income and growth rate of inbound tourism in Shanxi province (2015 – 2019)
 Data source: Statistics Department of Shanxi Province, 2020

In addition to the growing trend of the number of inbound overnight foreign visitors in Shanxi province from 2015 to 2019. As illustrated by Figure 2, the same growing trend of foreign-currency income made by inbound tourism is presented. The foreign-currency income achieved by inbound tourism was increased from 290 million US dollars in 2015 to 410 million US dollars in 2019. Within the same five-year horizon, the overall growth rate of touristic foreign-currency income reached 38.1%, which is slightly higher than that of the number of inbound overnight foreign visitors (28.28%). It indicates travel expenses for each inbound tourist increased, this may be caused by the enhanced willingness of tourist on improving their comfortableness, fulfilling their pursuits for entertainment, however, the rate of inflation is also contributed to such increment. It will be further elaborated in subsequent sections.

3.2 Consumption composition

As illustrated in Table 1, the inbound tourists’ consumption composition in Shanxi province does not change significantly in the past five-year horizon. It is worth noting that the transportation is accounted as the highest proportion in the inbound tourists’ consumption composition. The transportation cost reached 30.4% (highest) in 2015, although it declined since 2016, it still maintains more than one-fifth of the overall cost from 2016 to 2019. The underlying reason is that majority of the scenic spots are decentralized and the distance between hotels and scenic spots is also considerable. Moreover, the main transportation method is still lying on the conventional tour bus, which is believed to be costly and very time-consuming. The scenic spots are the second largest portion of the consumption composition for inbound tourists, it almost doubled from 2015 to 2016, this is caused by the sudden increment of the number of Class A touristic spots in 2016. Accompanied by the increment of the number of Class A touristic spots, the portion of entertainment expenditure almost doubled during the same period, and maintained at 8% for the remaining four years.

The accommodation, on the other hand, dropped significantly from the year 2015 to 2016, and maintained at 15 – 16% for the rest four years. This is caused by the increment of the number of budget hotels in Shanxi province, which offers inbound tourists different selection options, and simultaneously reduces the budget allocated for accommodation. The expenses of food and beverage as well as shopping experience a mild declination during this period.

Table 1: *Consumption composition of inbound tourists in Shanxi province (2015 – 2019)*

Item	Year				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Transportation	30.4 %	27.7 %	27.7 %	27.7 %	27.8 %
Scenic spots	8.5 %	17.1 %	17.1 %	17.1 %	17.0 %
Accommodation	23.9 %	15.8 %	15.8 %	15.8 %	15.3 %
Food and beverage	15.4 %	15.3 %	15.3 %	15.3 %	15.2 %
Shopping	11.2 %	10.3 %	10.3 %	10.3 %	10.7 %
Entertainment	4.6 %	8.0 %	8.0 %	8.0 %	8.1 %
Others	6.2 %	5.8 %	5.8 %	5.8 %	5.8 %

3.3 Inbound tourists’ geographical composition

The inbound tourists’ geographical composition in Shanxi province from 2015 to 2019 is summarized in Table 2. The top three inbound tourists are coming from other Asian countries, European countries, and America. The proportion of Asian tourists covers roughly two-thirds of the tourists who visited Shanxi province in the past five years. The geographical proximity is the major reason as it requires the least amount of time spending on the main transportation. Meanwhile, the cultural and religious context can be deemed as another reason to explain why Shanxi province maintains its popularity among other Asian tourists.

The second-largest inbound tourists’ group are coming from European countries, fluctuating in the range of 18% - 21% for the past five years. Meanwhile, the number of American tourists shows a steady but very minor increment from 2015 to 2019. Generally speaking, the travel distance and global awareness of Shanxi province are still the dominant factors that impede its attractiveness to inbound tourists.

Table 2: *Inbound tourists’ geographical composition in Shanxi province (2015 – 2019)*

Region	Year				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Asia	61.95 %	63.86 %	63.72 %	62.53 %	62.60 %
Europe	20.92 %	18.92 %	19.33 %	20.17 %	19.79 %
America	10.47 %	10.64 %	10.57 %	10.64 %	10.92 %
Africa	2.26 %	2.23 %	2.08 %	2.15 %	2.21 %
Others	3.08 %	3.00 %	2.93 %	3.05 %	3.00 %

3.4 Distribution of high-quality scenic spots and inbound tourists among cities

Until 2019, the total number of national 4A-level and 5A-level scenic spots in Shanxi province reached ninety-nine and eight, respectively. As specified in Figure 3, the 4A-level and above scenic spots in Jinzhong is 39 (17%), which is the highest number among cities in Shanxi province. The second highest city is Taiyuan, which has a total number of 33 (15%) 4A-level and above scenic spots. And the third city is Jincheng, which has a total number of 25 (11%) 4A-level and above scenic spots.

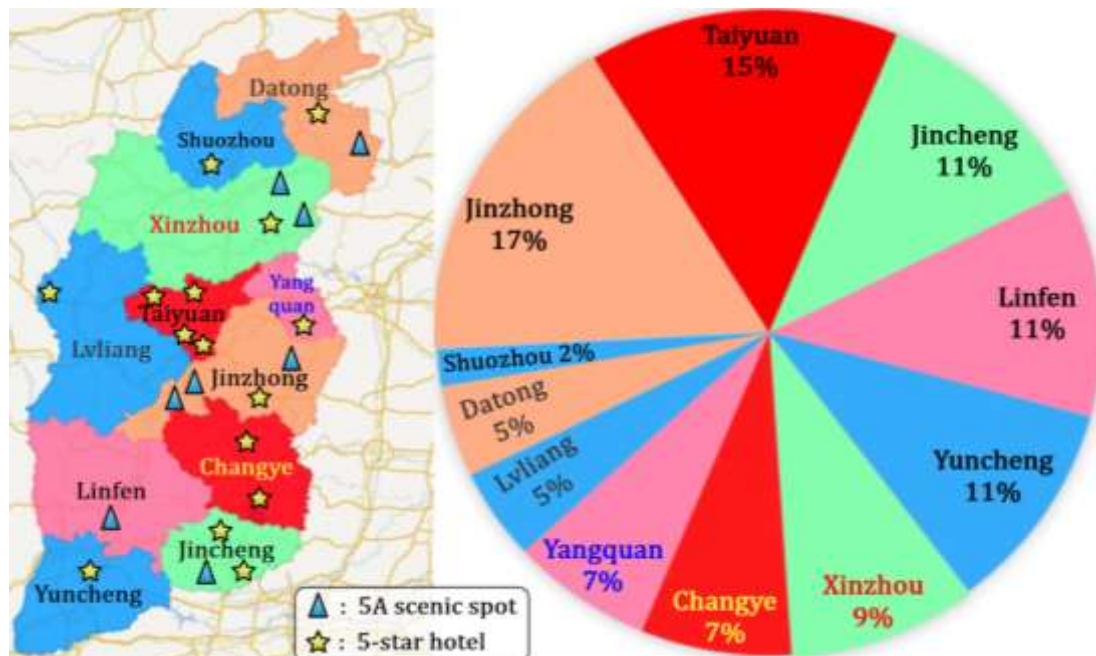


Figure 3: *Distribution of high-quality scenic spots among cities in Shanxi province (2015 – 2019)*
 Data source: Culture and Tourism Department of Shanxi Province

As observed from Table 3, majority of the inbound tourists are distributed in two cities, namely, Jinzhong and Taiyuan. The underlying reason is quite comprehensive, as shown in Figure 3, these two cities have the largest number of national 4A-level and above scenic spots. Moreover, most of the five-star hotels are located in Taiyuan. High degree of accommodation convenience and large number of high-quality scenic spots attract more than 60% of the inbound tourists. As shown in Table 3, the number of inbound tourists in Datong and Xinzhou has ranked third and fourth place, respectively. However, as illustrated in Figure 3, the number of national 4A-level and 5A-level scenic spots in these two places is relatively smaller in contrast to the cities like Linfen and Yuncheng. There are two potential explanations for such phenomenon. Geographically speaking, Datong is proximate to Peking, and Xinzhou is close to Taiyuan, both of which have international airports. Moreover, the accommodation facilities in these two places are well-established. Due to these concerns, the inbound tourists of these two places occupy almost one-fifth of the entire share. Conversely, even there are a large number of scenic spots in places like Linfen and Yuncheng, the inbound foreign tourists are very minor, which is disproportionate to their number of scenic spots.

Table 3: *Distribution of inbound tourists among cities in Shanxi province (2015 – 2019)*

Data source : Statistical Department of 11 cities in Shanxi Province, 2020

City	Year				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Jinzhong	33.38 %	33.87 %	34.37 %	34.53 %	34.26 %
Taiyuan	33.22 %	32.75 %	32.22 %	31.47 %	31.80 %
Datong	10.39 %	10.40 %	10.37 %	10.82 %	11.25 %
Xinzhou	8.18 %	8.16 %	8.15 %	8.17 %	8.13 %
Linfen	5.70 %	5.67 %	5.72 %	5.58 %	5.29 %
Yuncheng	4.75 %	4.74 %	4.72 %	4.68 %	4.62 %
Others	4.38 %	4.40 %	4.47 %	4.74 %	4.65 %

3.5 Touristic facilities and public infrastructure

To date, there are seven airports among cities of Shanxi province. However, there is only one international airport, which is located in Taiyuan. It contains 11 scheduled international flights connecting major cities in Europe, North America, Japan, and Australia. Meanwhile, Taiyuan is the only city which has the publicly serviced metro-network.

The main public transportation, which connects scenic spots, hotels, and across cities, is still relying on the dedicated tour buses. At present stage, there are 101 tour bus routes in Taiyuan, 28 in Datong, 22 in Jinzhong, 18 in Linfen, 16 in Yuncheng, 10 in Xinzhou, and 8 in other cities. Although there are many tour-bus routes available to inbound tourists, the cost and the passing time on public transportation are still considered as a problem which impedes the development of inbound tourism in Shanxi province. At present stage, there are only four high-speed railway stations across the cities in the province, and another nine stations are still under construction. It is believed that after the completion of these railway stations, the interconnection among cities in Shanxi Province will be significantly improved and the traffic duration will be reasonably reduced, and hence, increasing the feasibility of cross-city visits of inbound tourists.

It is worth noting that the tour bus routes are closely associated to the inbound tourist routes designated by travel agencies in Shanxi province. According to the data obtained from the Department of Culture and Tourism of Shanxi province there are 128 inbound tourism routes for the entire province, involving 72 one-day tours, 41 two-day tours, and 15 above five-day tours.

By the end of 2019, there are 14,733 registered hotels in Shanxi province. Among the 11 cities of Shanxi province, Taiyuan has the largest number of hotels and four five-star hotels as specified in Figure 3. Jinzhong, as the most visited city in Shanxi province, has the second largest number of hotels but only one five-star hotel.

IV. Problems of tourism service exports in Shanxi province

Based on the current status as revealed in section 3, it is possible to discover the problems associated with the contemporary tourism service exports in Shanxi province. Such problems can be broadly summarized in terms of four major aspects, namely, inappropriate consumption composition, unsatisfactory level of touristic facilities and infrastructure, insufficient overall planning scheme, and outmoded online service platform and advertising channel.

4.1 Inappropriate consumption composition

The consumption composition of inbound tourists, in a general sense, can be further classified in two categories – basic touristic expenditure and advanced touristic expenditure. Basic touristic expenditure is referring to the expenditures, which is believed to be compulsory expenses for inbound tourists to sustain their tour. It involves transportation, food and beverage, and accommodation. The advanced touristic expenditure involves the expenses for scenic spots, entertainment, shopping, and so on. Such expenditure is not compulsory for an inbound tourist but it can significantly improve its touristic experience. The underlying reason for the division is that the basic touristic expenditure is relatively stable and inelastic, in other words, it will not fluctuate from year-to-year and not very sensitive to the price changes. Conversely, the advanced touristic expenditure is elastic and volatile. Meanwhile, the foreign income generated by tourism service exports is highly dependent on the advanced touristic expenditure. Therefore, it is possible to assert that the proportion of advanced touristic expenditure in consumption composition can be deemed as a crucial indicator that measures the level of tourism service exports in Shanxi province.

By referring to Table 1, the basic touristic expenditure of Shanxi province was declined from 69.7% in 2015 to 58.3% in 2019 due to the reduction in expenses of transportation and accommodation. The proportion of basic touristic expenditure, however, still exceeds 50% of the overall consumption composition. In contrast with other provinces, the consumption composition is still believed to be inappropriate. By further exploring the composition of basic touristic expenditure, it is possible to observe that the transportation expense is unreasonably high, which takes more than one quarter of the overall expenditure. This is caused by long-distance among scenic spots, hotels, and across cities, and more specifically, lack of more efficient transportation, that is, the main touristic transportation in Shanxi province is still highly dependent on conventional tour buses. Therefore, replacing the tour buses by alternative cost-effective transportations, and hence, refining current consumption composition is believed to be one feasible countermeasure.

Reducing the basic touristic expenditure of Shanxi province is one approach, on the other hand, increasing the advanced touristic expenditure is another approach. It is able to observe from Table 1 that the shopping expenses from 2015 to 2019 experiences a mild decline. The major reason is that the touristic products, like the souvenirs, are failed to fulfill the preferences of inbound foreign tourists either because they lack the labels of foreign languages or detailed explanations of its cultural context, or they leave the impression of cheap or short of sufficient creativity and innovation to the inbound tourists.

4.2 Unsatisfactory level of touristic facilities and infrastructure

The undesirable level of touristic facilities and infrastructure encountered by inbound tourism of Shanxi province can be depicted from three aspects: public transportation, accommodation, and public touristic infrastructure. The problematic public touristic transportation in Shanxi province has been elaborated in section 3.5. Therefore, this section is focusing on the remaining two factors - touristic infrastructure and accommodation facilities.

As the level of touristic infrastructure and accommodation facilities cannot be quantified in absolute terms, the relevant data of other five provinces located in the central area of China, which is concluded in Table 4 and 5, has been deliberately selected in contrast with that of Shanxi province. It reveals the relative status of touristic infrastructure and accommodation facilities. By referring to the data as presented in Table 4, the percentage of touristic infrastructure in annual provincial government expenditure from 2015 to 2019, the corresponding investment level of Shanxi province is the lowest among the provinces in the central area of China. Although the provincial government of Shanxi slightly increases its expenditures from 2016 to 2019, in contrast to Henan province, the budget is still insufficient to fulfill the demands of inbound tourists.

Table 4: Percentage of touristic infrastructure investment in annual provincial government expenditure

City	Year				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Anhui	3.48 %	3.44 %	3.58%	3.49 %	3.65 %
Henan	4.52 %	4.65 %	4.74 %	4.90 %	4.97 %
Hubei	4.08 %	4.01 %	3.93 %	3.86 %	3.96 %
Hunan	3.81 %	3.95 %	3.97 %	4.00 %	4.03 %
Jiangxi	2.94 %	2.88 %	2.95 %	3.01 %	3.07 %
Shanxi	2.28 %	2.14 %	2.17 %	2.28 %	2.39 %

Moreover, although there are 14,733 registered hotels in Shanxi province by the end of 2019. These hotels are mainly belonging to budget hotels. The building facilities, service quality, and management level are far below the expectation of the inbound tourists. In contrast to other provinces in central area of China, the number of star-rated hotels in Shanxi provinces is the lowest, as indicated in Table 5. The combined number of 4-star and 5-star hotels is also the lowest among the provinces in central area of China.

Table 5: Number of high-quality hotels in central area of China (2019)

Province	No. of star-rated hotels	No. of 5-star hotels	No. of 4-star hotels
Anhui	268	23	112
Henan	361	21	81
Hubei	330	22	82
Hunan	302	19	65
Jiangxi	310	15	126
Shanxi	190	16	52

In summary, no matter the public transportation, the accommodation, and the public touristic infrastructure in Shanxi province are unable to fulfill the growing demands of the inbound tourists.

4.3 Deficient provincial touristic routes management

Well-managed touristic routes can enhance the level of satisfaction of inbound tourists, and hence, extending the total duration of inbound tourism and stimulating additional spending, resulting in the increment of inbound foreign exchange income.

As mentioned in section 3.4, the overall number of Class A scenic spots has reached 175 in 2020. However, as shown in Figure 3, the spatial distribution of scenic spots in cities of Shanxi province is very uneven. The number of scenic spots in cities like Shuozhou, Datong, and Lvliang is very small. Once such uneven distribution of scenic spots combined with the fact that the distance among scenic spots is long and lack of effective public transportation network, this explains the reason why the majority of the existing travel routes in Shanxi province are restricted in one-day tour (56.25%) or two-day tour (32.03%). As a consequence, even though there are 128 inbound tourism routes for the entire province, as stated in section 3.5, the inbound tourists

have to manage their travel routes on their own, which means they have to combine all these one-day tours in different cities of Shanxi province and across the cities by relying on the tour buses, resulting in a low willingness of extending the total duration in Shanxi province.

In other words, based upon the contemporary public transportation network, it lacks a complete and diversified provincial touristic routes management, which manages to cover all touristic attractions in the province, and hence, expending the total duration of the inbound tourism in the Shanxi province. As a result, such deficient provincial touristic route management can be regarded as a major cause of low room occupancy rate and operating income for the star-rated hotels in Shanxi province.

4.4 Outmoded online service platform and advertising channels

Nowadays, with the advance of information technology, the success of inbound tourism is also highly dependent on network-related services like the online service platform and new advertising channels. The well-established online service platform capable of providing essential information, like food and beverage as well as accommodation, to inbound tourists. It may also enrich the travel experience of foreign tourists by providing historical and cultural context. To date, only one official app, called "Travel to Shanxi", was officially launched at Google store in March 2019. Such android app only offers very limited cultural information to the end-user, service-wise speaking, the app is not fully collaborated with the hotel, restaurants, and even the souvenir shop. Therefore, within the one-year duration of introducing such an app, the inbound foreign exchange income is not increased notably.

Moreover, the advertisement of tourism in Shanxi province is still relying on the conventional channels like television or newspaper. The utilization of modern advertising channels is very limited. For instance, in contrast to the high daily reading volume of touristic topics on official Weibo account of Hunan, the official Weibo account of Shanxi hardly catch the attention of inbound tourists. Meanwhile, there is no evidence demonstrating Shanxi provincial government utilizing social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or even Tik-Tok, which is very familiar from the perspective of foreigners.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Nowadays, tourism has becoming one of the largest portions of the tertiary industry, and the inbound tourism service has entered the era of rapid development. During the period of economic transformation, Shanxi province demonstrated its ability of resource integration to the formation of touristic clusters in its major cities like Jinzhong, Taiyuan, and Datong. In addition to that, the number of Class A scenic spots has increased from 3 spots in 2003 to 175 spots by the end of 2020. Despite all these achievements, there are still some problems present, which may likely to impede the development of inbound tourism service exports of Shanxi province.

Through the extensive study made on the current status of its tourism service exports from five aspects – the scale of tourism service exports, consumption composition, inbound tourists' geographical composition, distribution of high-quality scenic spots & inbound tourists among cities, and the touristic facilities & public infrastructure – we conclude that the problems encountered by contemporary inbound tourism of Shanxi province can be broadly summarized in four major aspects, namely, inappropriate consumption composition, unsatisfactory level of touristic facilities and infrastructure, insufficient overall planning scheme, and outmoded online service platform and advertising channel. A series of countermeasures are therefore proposed in section 5.2 which aim to ease and eventually tackle these problems.

5.2 Recommendations

With respect to the problems encountered by contemporary inbound tourism of Shanxi province, these countermeasures are further classified in terms of short-run and long-run solutions. The short-run recommendations require least physical resources and may ease the problems in short-term. The long-run countermeasures demand abundant capital injections and coordination among provincial departments as well as touristic enterprises. Conversely, these solutions may successfully tackle the problem and beneficial to tourism service exports of Shanxi province in long-run.

The most urgent short-run countermeasure is to refine the provincial touristic routes and inbound touristic policies. The travel agencies need to work collaboratively by integrating the existing touristic resources with the famous scenic spots located in different cities of Shanxi province. Special 4-day or even 5-day value tours should be developed in order to fulfill the potential demands of inbound tourists, who target to cover major scenic spots in the province all at once. Such value tours are believed to be attractive from the perspective of the inbound tourists, due to the scale effect, the transportation expanses and the scenic spots tickets fee can be reduced. On the other hand, the current unreasonable consumption composition can be improved so that inbound tourists can allocate more financial allowance for entertainment and shopping purposes. Moreover, the

provincial government may also involve in such a program by providing revitalization policies like a short-term touristic visa-free policy for inbound visitors who decide to participate in any value tours or offer permission for a longer duration of staying within Shanxi province. In addition to that, the souvenir shop which offers specifically designed touristic products that may reflect the unique characteristics of Shanxi province, can be deliberately embedded in such value tours.

Meanwhile, launching brand new online service platforms and utilizing new advertising channels are believed to be another short-run countermeasure. All essential touristic services should be embedded in one user-friendly official app under continuous refinement and maintenance. Such official app should provide an integrated function such as tour-bus services, ticket booking, touristic route planning and customization, as well as the online customer services. In addition to that, the app must contain a multi-language user interface. Furthermore, Shanxi provincial government should make full employment of new social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tik-Tok in stimulating the willingness of the foreigners to pay a visit to Shanxi province. It is highly recommended that the regional enterprises can also collaborate with famous Youtubers in making short videos, which can be employed to introduce the unique features of traveling in Shanxi province.

The long-run countermeasures are mainly associated with the “hardware” of the inbound tourism of Shanxi province, including the improvement of the public transportation, refinement of the touristic facilities as well as the betterment of public infrastructure. More railway stations and metro stations should be built up to enhance the connectivity among scenic spots, accommodations, and international airports located in different cities of Shanxi province. By doing so, the travel time and cost across different cities will be significantly reduced, and hence, improving the overall level of satisfaction of the inbound tourists and stimulating their willingness of extending their trip in Shanxi province.

Moreover, the provincial government should provide certain financial support like interest-free loans to touristic enterprises on building up more high-quality hotels, developing more entertainment facilities, such as shopping centers, arts galleries, and other cultural centers surround the scenic spots, to satisfy the preference of inbound tourists.

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