

Original Paper

The Impact of Tourism Policies on the Competitiveness of Tourist Destinations

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Abstract

The tourism sector, as an integral component of the global economy, not only directly propels the economic growth of numerous countries and regions but also fosters cultural exchange and environmental preservation indirectly. On a global scale, the formulation and implementation of tourism policies have become pivotal factors in enhancing the competitiveness of tourist destinations. These policies not only effectively promote infrastructure development and the refinement of tourism products and services but also exert profound influences on environmental conservation, industry guidance, and talent cultivation. Increasingly, countries and regions recognize that scientifically formulated and balanced tourism policies represent an effective means to achieve sustainable economic growth and safeguard cultural heritage. The diversification and innovative implementation of tourism policies directly or indirectly impact the attractiveness and competitiveness of a destination, thus necessitating a comprehensive consideration of multiple factors in policy-making to achieve harmony and equilibrium.

Keywords

Tourism policy, economic growth, cultural heritage protection, sustainable development, policy balance

1. Introduction

The competitiveness of a tourist destination denotes its capacity to captivate tourists, provide travel services, meet their demands, and stand out in the market. It encompasses not only the unique allure of natural landscapes and cultural heritage but also various factors such as the completeness of tourism infrastructure, service quality, and marketing strategies. Tourism policies play an indispensable role in this process. Through diverse policy measures, governments and relevant entities can effectively enhance the comprehensive competitiveness of a tourist destination. Among these, policies regarding

investment in and construction of tourism infrastructure lay the cornerstone. By improving transportation accessibility, enhancing tourist reception capacity, and fostering a secure tourism environment, they directly elevate the overall quality of the tourism experience. Furthermore, policy innovations in tourism products and services, including the introduction of distinctive activities, elevation of service standards, and reinforcement of tourist engagement, further enrich the tourism experience, encouraging repeat visits and sustained consumption. By implementing stringent environmental regulations and protective measures, natural landscapes, and cultural heritage are safeguarded from excessive development and degradation. Concurrently, policy guidance and support for the direction of tourism industry development, through means such as optimizing the industry chain and applying innovative technologies, enhance the overall competitiveness of the tourism sector. Lastly, policies concerning the cultivation and management of tourism talents can enhance the professionalism and comprehensive abilities of practitioners, thus providing tourists with a superior service experience. In conclusion, through an analysis of tourism policies, a comprehensive understanding of their multifaceted impacts on the competitiveness of tourist destinations can be attained, thereby offering theoretical foundations and practical references for formulating more scientific and feasible tourism policies.

2. Theoretical Analysis of Tourism Destination Competitiveness

2.1 Components of Tourism Destination Competitiveness

The core constituents shaping the competitive edge of tourist destinations encompass a myriad of factors, including resource endowment, infrastructure, service excellence, innovation prowess, and brand image. Resource endowment, as the bedrock, encompasses natural landscapes and cultural heritage, endowing destinations with an unparalleled allure. Natural landscapes such as beaches, mountains, or lakes, as well as cultural heritage like historical edifices and traditional festivities, significantly enhance the quality of tourist experiences. The completeness of infrastructure influences the convenience of travel, encompassing the extent of transportation networks, the quality of accommodation and dining facilities, and the adequacy of public services, all directly impacting tourist experiences. The quality of service stands as a pivotal factor in sustaining and enhancing tourism experiences. The standardization, personalization, and professionalism of services directly affect visitor satisfaction and revisit intentions. The friendliness of service personnel, proficient tour guidance, and adept crisis management are pivotal indicators of service quality. Innovation prowess pertains to a destination's ability to continually attract tourists, with novel tourism products, technological applications, and emerging interactive experiences serving as effective means to augment allure and competitiveness. Innovation not only caters to the increasingly diversified demands of tourists but also spawns new market trends, enhancing the destination's market vitality. Brand image serves as the linchpin and outward manifestation connecting these elements (Ongan & Gozgor, 2018, pp. 308-316). A successful tourist destination brand effectively communicates unique cultural and natural charms,

crafting a positive and captivating image. Brand cultivation involves positioning, promotion, and marketing. Successful brand management not only heightens visibility but also fosters psychological identification and loyalty, prompting visitors to share their experiences and thereby generating favorable word-of-mouth effects. The organic composition and complementary interactions of these elements collectively determine the competitive edge of a tourist destination; any deficiency or weakness in any aspect may constrain overall competitiveness. Hence, in the endeavor to enhance the competitive edge of tourist destinations, it is imperative to comprehensively consider the synergistic interplay of various elements, striving to forge a destination with robust allure and enduring vitality in the market.

2.2 Factors Affecting the Competitiveness of Tourism Destinations

The competitiveness of tourist destinations can be simply construed as the ability of a locale to allure, offer unique travel experiences, and retain visitors. The factors influencing the competitiveness of tourist destinations are manifold, encompassing both tangible and intangible aspects. Primarily, the completeness of infrastructure in a tourist destination, including transportation, accommodation, attractions, and dining facilities, significantly impacts the visitor experience. Without convenient transportation, visitors struggle to reach their destination smoothly; lacking high-quality accommodation and dining services, their travel experience will fall short of expectations. Beyond infrastructure, cultural and natural resources constitute a vital part of a tourist destination's allure. A place imbued with historical charm and natural splendor undoubtedly exerts immense appeal on visitors. The primary motive for visitors' arrival is often to experience unique cultures and natural environments distinct from their daily lives, which cannot be replaced by artificial landscapes or commercial facilities. Therefore, tourist destinations need to unearth and preserve their unique resources to enable visitors to genuinely experience their distinctiveness. On the other hand, to enhance a destination's competitiveness, policies formulated by local governments and tourism management authorities are crucial. Policy support and regulation can provide a favorable environment for the development of the tourism industry. For instance, increasing investment in tourism infrastructure construction, offering diversified tourism products, implementing reasonable ticket pricing strategies, and providing training for tourism practitioners. These measures can effectively enhance visitor satisfaction and further strengthen the destination's competitiveness (Thema, Suerkemper, Grace et al., 2013, pp. 60656-60666). Equally important is the formulation and implementation of environmental protection policies, as only by adhering to the principles of sustainable development can the sustainable utilization of tourism resources be ensured, thereby achieving long-term tourism allure. Many successful tourist destinations also recognize the importance of marketing and promotion. In a modern interconnected society, promoting the unique resources and tourism products of tourist destinations through social media and the internet has become more convenient, attracting more potential tourists. However, excessive marketing can lead to the overconsumption of resources, thus requiring a balance between promotion and protection to be struck. In conclusion, good infrastructure, superior natural and

cultural resources, reasonable policy support, and effective marketing strategies collectively constitute important factors influencing the competitiveness of tourist destinations. Only by comprehensively considering these aspects can truly enduring and competitively strong tourist destinations be developed.

3. The Direct Impact of Tourism Policies on Competitiveness

3.1 Policy Investment and Construction of Tourism Infrastructure

The impact of tourism policies on the competitiveness of tourist destinations should not be underestimated, especially in terms of investment and construction of infrastructure. Clear policy guidance can significantly enhance the attractiveness and service capabilities of a destination. Specific measures include but are not limited to, the construction of more convenient transportation facilities, upgrading hardware equipment at tourist attractions, and improving daily services for tourists. These measures not only directly enhance the tourism experience but also indirectly promote local economic development. The construction of tourism transportation facilities directly improves the travel experience for tourists. Government policies encourage the construction of highways, airports, and ports, making it faster and more convenient for tourists to reach their destinations. These convenient transportation facilities not only serve tourists but also greatly improve the daily lives of local residents, thereby increasing the overall attractiveness of the tourist destination (Cunha & Cunha, 2005, p. 47). Upgrading hardware equipment at tourist attractions is also a focus of policy investment. Advanced communication equipment, comprehensive information guidance systems, and efficient emergency rescue facilities can provide tourists with a more secure and comfortable tourism experience. Imagine a natural scenic area with modern facilities that can respond quickly to weather conditions or emergencies; tourists naturally develop trust and longing for such a place. Such policy measures not only reflect the government's attention to the tourism industry but also demonstrate the management level and service capabilities of a locality. Improving daily services for tourists is also an important aspect of enhancing the competitiveness of tourist destinations. From the establishment of tourist information service centers to the hiring of multilingual service personnel and the addition of convenient facilities such as public toilets and drinking water points, all reflect the government's profound understanding of tourist needs. Continuous investment in policies often also stimulates follow-up investment from social capital, forming a virtuous cycle of infrastructure construction. Especially for some developing tourist destinations, the government's early investment often sparks greater enthusiasm for social investment. Developers and operators, seeing the government's strong infrastructure construction efforts, are more willing to invest funds in scenic area development and supporting facilities construction. Eventually, a complete tourism industry chain is formed, leading to the flourishing development of the entire region's tourism industry.

3.2 Policy Support for the Development and Improvement of Tourism Products and Services

The formulation and implementation of tourism policies exert a direct and far-reaching influence on the development and enhancement of tourism products and services. Sound policies can attract capital investment, create more cultural and natural landscapes for tourism destinations, ensure the improvement of service quality, and thus enhance their competitiveness. On one hand, governments can encourage and support the development of new tourism products through policies, including funding assistance, tax incentives, and providing preferential loans to assist scenic spots or enterprises in product innovation. For instance, Hainan Province has attracted numerous investors to develop high-end resorts and international tourism projects through preferential policies, enriching the variety of tourism products and enhancing the overall tourism experience. Transitioning from past singular beach tours to diversified activities such as water sports and health tourism has attracted more domestic and foreign tourists. On the other hand, the impact of tourism policies also manifests in the enhancement of service quality. Policymakers can regulate the standards of the tourism service industry through legislation or administrative orders. For example, the implementation of the “Tourism Law” in China in 2016 clearly defines the standards and regulatory measures for tourism services, detailing the training and qualification certification of tourism practitioners, significantly improving the overall service level and tourist satisfaction. Similarly, the Spanish government introduced the “Tourism Excellence Plan” to improve the quality of tourism services, formulating a series of measures to ensure professionalism and high quality of service. The investment in infrastructure construction greatly improves the tourism experience, with well-developed road systems, convenient public transportation, and high-standard hotel and catering facilities being important factors attracting tourists. Japan, in its development process, vigorously promoted infrastructure construction such as the Shinkansen and airports through national policies, significantly reducing travel time between major cities, improving international service standards, and enabling tourists to explore its rich cultural and natural attractions more conveniently. In summary, tourism policies play a facilitating role in the development and improvement of tourism products and services, providing development impetus, improving product and service quality, and enhancing overall competitiveness for tourism destinations. Reasonable and effective policies not only directly drive the prosperity of the tourism economy but also promote comprehensive socio-economic development, laying a solid foundation for the long-term development of tourism destinations (Cheng, n.d.).

3.3 Policy Support for Tourism Marketing and Promotion

The endorsement of tourism policies in marketing and promotion stands as a pivotal facet in elevating the competitive edge of tourist destinations. Governmental measures, often orchestrated through fiscal support, tax incentives, and promotional subsidies, serve to invigorate the tourism market. Financial grants from the government amplify the promotional efforts of tourist attractions and service facilities. For instance, sponsoring large-scale tourism expos, participating in international tourism fairs, and orchestrating local-themed promotional events all contribute to acquiring a broader audience and

enticing them to select a destination for their travels. Policy support effectively propels destination branding and optimizes market positioning. Governmental promotional strategies are frequently tailored to incorporate the locality's unique historical, cultural, and natural landscapes into meticulously crafted promotional campaigns. For example, Thailand's "Amazing Thailand" global campaign, propelled by governmental initiatives, disseminates the country's scenic beauty, culinary delights, and cultural uniqueness worldwide through mediums such as films, TV dramas, and advertisements. Such policy-driven promotional endeavors significantly enhance Thailand's recognition and reputation as a tourist destination in the international arena. Within marketing strategies, policy-guided collaborations between local enterprises and international tourism marketing platforms facilitate the effective dissemination of local tourism resources into the global market. Tax incentives and marketing subsidies lower the costs for tourism companies and platforms when promoting local tourism products, thereby fostering a greater willingness to invest resources in marketing endeavors. For instance, Italy's implementation of the "Tourism Recovery Plan" during the pandemic easing period entailed substantial tax relief for tourism businesses and issuance of tourism vouchers for international visitors, which attracted a substantial influx of international tourists to reselect Italy as their destination of choice. Policy support for marketing also manifests in driving digital marketing initiatives. Governments, through technological guidance and financial assistance, promote the digitization of scenic spots and tourism services, constructing intelligent tourism platforms. These platforms integrate big data technology to analyze visitor preferences, optimize promotional strategies, and target advertisements accurately. Such technological dissemination enhances tourists' travel experiences while bolstering the competitiveness of tourist destinations in the market. In formulating tourism policies, governments, through robust support for marketing and promotion, foster the shaping of destination images and the elevation of brands, thereby positioning destinations favorably in global competition. Optimized and rationalized tourism policies serve not only as short-term means to attract tourists but also as crucial drivers for the long-term enhancement of destination competitiveness (Costantini & Mazzanti, 2011, pp. 132-153).

4. Indirect Impacts of Tourism Policies on Competitiveness

4.1 Policy Protection and Improvement of the Tourism Environment

The tourism policy plays a crucial role in enhancing the competitiveness of tourist destinations by safeguarding and enhancing the tourism environment. Policymakers strive to create a more appealing and sustainable tourism environment by implementing various environmental regulations and measures. This not only helps to preserve the beauty and purity of natural landscapes but also enhances tourists' experiences and satisfaction, indirectly boosting the market competitiveness of tourist destinations. Taking ecotourism as an example, governments have enacted a series of policies to strictly control tourist numbers, limit development projects, and protect natural resources. For instance, in China's Yellow Mountain scenic area, strict visitor management regulations have been implemented, specific

hiking routes established, and complimentary eco-friendly bags provided to reduce environmental pollution from waste. These measures effectively preserve the natural scenery of Yellow Mountain, making it a sought-after tourist destination for domestic and international travelers, significantly enhancing its position and competitiveness in the global tourism market. Furthermore, by strictly regulating the discharge of pollutants such as wastewater and exhaust gases through policies, various tourist destinations can maintain the ecological balance of residents and tourists. In the Maldives, the government has enacted stringent regulations for water conservation, prohibiting hotels and resorts from discharging wastewater into the sea while mandating all tourist facilities to treat wastewater. This not only protects the fragile marine ecosystem of the Maldives but also allows tourists to appreciate the local commitment to environmental protection while enjoying the beautiful scenery, thereby enhancing their satisfaction. With policy support, many tourist destinations also actively promote ecological engineering and tourism infrastructure construction to enhance their attractiveness by improving the local ecological environment. These specific environmental policies and measures not only protect and improve the tourism environment in the short term but also provide guarantees for the long-term sustainable development of tourist destinations. By protecting and improving the tourism environment through policies, tourist destinations can enhance their uniqueness and appeal, establish a good brand image, and stand out in the fierce market competition (Hontou, Diakoulaki & Papagiannakis, 2007, pp. 28-41). Such policy implementation is not only a respect for the environment but also a strategic consideration for the long-term development of the tourism industry, contributing to a win-win situation for economic benefits and ecological protection.

4.2 Policy Guidance and Support for Tourism Industry Development

Tourism policies can significantly guide and bolster the development of the tourism industry, thereby indirectly enhancing the overall competitiveness of tourist destinations. Government formulation and implementation of a series of tourism policies involve concrete actions beyond mere rhetoric, encompassing funding, resource allocation, and various public services. This is particularly crucial for destinations aspiring to stand out in the international tourism market. Tax incentives, as a policy tool, can greatly reduce the operating costs of enterprises in the tourism sector. For instance, some countries and regions provide tax exemptions for newly built hotels and tourist attractions, thereby attracting more investors to engage in the tourism industry and improving the quality of local tourism facilities and services. Furthermore, providing low-interest loans or direct financial subsidies helps small and medium-sized tourism enterprises overcome the initial difficulties and achieve sustainable development. Infrastructure development is also a crucial area of policy support. Government investment in improving transportation networks, renovating historical sites, and constructing modern tourism service centers directly enhances the convenience of travel and tourism experiences for visitors. For example, China's Belt and Road Initiative not only significantly strengthens the infrastructure connectivity of countries along the route but also promotes cultural exchange and tourism cooperation, expanding the depth and breadth of the tourism market. Policies in public safety and health management can greatly

enhance tourist confidence and attract more visitors. Governments can create a safe and comfortable tourism environment through strict health standards, security measures, and emergency rescue mechanisms. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, many countries implemented stricter health control policies, such as pre-travel nucleic acid testing and post-arrival isolation measures, ensuring tourist safety and enhancing the competitiveness of tourist destinations during the pandemic. Brand promotion policies are also indispensable. For example, many countries and regions regularly showcase their local tourism resources at international tourism exhibitions to promote themselves. Government departments continuously enhance their global visibility and reputation in the tourism market through various cultural exchange activities, international tourism promotional videos, and invitations to foreign media and travel influencers to experience the destinations. For example, Japan has successfully attracted a large number of international tourists by implementing the “Cool Japan” strategy, where cultural export and tourism promotion go hand in hand. Talent training policies can provide support for the sustainable development of the tourism industry. Through the establishment of tourism colleges and professional training courses, the government has provided the industry with a large number of specialized and skilled personnel, which has improved service standards and management efficiency. In addition, the formulation of relevant talent admission policies has attracted top international tourism management talents and innovators, who bring with them new ideas and technologies that also promote the modernization and transformation of the destination tourism industry (Jin & Song, 2009, pp. 75-93).

4.3 Impact of Policies on the Cultivation and Management of Tourism Talents

Policies exert significant indirect influence on the cultivation and management of tourism talents, constituting a pivotal factor in enhancing the competitiveness of tourist destinations. The provision of high-quality tourism services relies heavily on proficient talents, with policies assuming a guiding and supportive role therein. For instance, certain national and regional governments enact preferential policies, subsidizing universities and vocational schools to establish courses in tourism-related disciplines, thereby elevating the overall caliber of tourism practitioners. Such policies not only afford students greater learning and practical opportunities but also directly propel the standardization and systematization of tourism education, thereby enhancing industry benchmarks. Specifically, some regions attract outstanding students aspiring to join the tourism industry through government scholarships, student loans, and tuition waivers. The implementation of these policy measures enables students to receive better vocational education and skills training, ultimately nurturing high-caliber tourism talents. Furthermore, governments actively promote collaboration between academia and industry, encouraging tourism enterprises to co-establish internship bases with universities to provide students with more practical opportunities, thereby amalgamating theory with practice and enhancing students' practical skills. Beyond the realm of education, governments have also invested considerable effort in nurturing managerial talents in tourism. By regularly hosting training sessions, seminars, and exchange activities, they ensure that managers stay abreast of new industry demands by continually

updating their knowledge and skills. Additionally, local governments often incentivize enterprises to recruit high-caliber managerial talents through the formulation and implementation of relevant policies, thereby enhancing the management standards of tourist destinations. For instance, Singapore has instituted a Tourism Manpower Development Strategy aimed at training and enhancing talents at all levels of the tourism industry, ensuring its sustained competitive advantage in the international market. Regarding the management of tourism talent, the impact of policies is equally pronounced. Standardized management systems enable industry practitioners to work in a fair and equitable professional environment. Governments also impose stricter standards and requirements on tourism enterprises, encouraging them to enhance service quality and safeguard the rights of practitioners. These measures not only contribute to boosting employee motivation and satisfaction but also enhance overall service quality, thereby bolstering the attractiveness and competitiveness of tourist destinations.

5. Conclusion

Tourism policies play a multifaceted and crucial role in enhancing the competitiveness of tourist destinations. From investments and developments in infrastructure to innovation in products and services and precise targeting in marketing efforts, their direct impact is evident. However, more profound are the indirect effects of these policies, such as environmental protection, industry guidance, and talent development, which collectively shape a sustainable ecosystem for the tourism industry. Balancing economic growth with cultural heritage preservation and short-term gains with long-term development is a central challenge in formulating tourism policies. Effective tourism policies should not only focus on current tourism demands and market trends but also anticipate future development trends and potential challenges. Through systematic analysis and evaluation of the multidimensional impact of tourism policies on competitiveness, policymakers can find the optimal balance in practice. Taking environmental protection as an example, a destination that can consistently attract tourists must possess a favorable natural and cultural environment. Therefore, while tourism policies incentivize economic growth, they must strictly enforce environmental protection measures to ensure the sustainable utilization of tourism resources. In terms of industry guidance, policies need to stimulate tourism enterprises to innovate and optimize through reasonable incentive mechanisms and policy adjustments, enhancing the overall industry's competitiveness. Regarding talent development, strengthening educational training and improving professional skills can enhance the quality of tourism services, thereby gaining the trust and favor of more tourists. In conclusion, a scientific, comprehensive, and innovative tourism policy is key to enhancing the competitiveness of tourist destinations. In the future formulation of tourism policies, greater emphasis should be placed on comprehensive considerations from multiple levels and perspectives to achieve a win-win situation for economic, cultural, and environmental benefits, ultimately creating tourist destinations that are more attractive, competitive, and sustainable.

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