



Development Strategies for Recreational Tourism Management to Enhance Tourist Attractions in Taiyuan

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Abstract

Background and Aim: With China's economic growth, rising national income, and upgrading tourism demands, recreation tourism has become the mainstream consumption trend. Tourism destinations aim to provide tourists with a holistic experience—a synthesis of travel products and services that offer integrated experiential offerings. (Tongqian, 2006) Despite possessing over a hundred renowned, pristine attractions, Taiyuan has failed to effectively integrate its fragmented resources across "eating, lodging, transportation, sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment," resulting in significantly lagging development and utilization. Therefore, through the rational development and full exploitation of Taiyuan's abundant tourism resources, transforming resource advantages into economic strengths will not only meet the recreation travel needs of urban residents but also drive the structural upgrade of Taiyuan's recreation tourism industry, thereby boosting local economic growth.

Methodology: This study adopts the R&D research method, and the author used both quantitative and qualitative data that were collected through questionnaires and interviews, and SWOT and TOWS analyses were applied to formulate strategic recommendations.

Results: The study identified Taiyuan's strengths in cultural and natural resources, weaknesses in infrastructure and service quality, and opportunities through digital innovation and policy support.

Conclusion: In general, Taiyuan City has abundant tourism resources and significant potential for recreational tourism development. However, these resources have not yet been fully developed or utilized effectively. If the development strategies proposed in this study are implemented, the tourist attractions in Taiyuan City are expected to become more attractive, and the regional tourism industry is expected to become more sustainable.

Keywords: Recreational Tourism Management; Tourism Strategy; SWOT Analysis; TOWS Matrix; Taiyuan City; Sustainable Destination Development





Introduction

With China's sustained rapid economic growth, steady increases in national income, and growing leisure time, demand for tourism continues to rise as more people join the ranks of travelers. Reforms to China's vacation system have fueled explosive growth in the tourism industry, with suburban tourism rapidly emerging. Large-scale suburban recreational activities began to appear in China in the late 1980s. From the implementation of the two-day weekend system in 1995 to the subsequent introduction of the Golden Week holiday system, these measures significantly propelled the development of the suburban recreation industry. As the vacation system continued to improve, people's attitudes and perceptions toward travel also transformed. Recent trends in tourist flows indicate that Chinese tourists increasingly favor short trips (typically lasting one or two days) to destinations near cities or in neighboring regions. People are re-evaluating and rediscovering rural resources close to their homes, engaging in recreation around cities to enjoy life. (Liming, 2006)

Current tourism planning and management practices in Taiyuan fail to align with the core principle of "integrating the needs and resources of multiple stakeholders" in destination planning. Instead, they excessively prioritize the economic demands of out-of-town tourists while neglecting the recreation needs of residents. This has led to severe homogenization in suburban recreation tourism, hindering the healthy development of the city's recreation system. The core challenge for the sustainable development of suburban recreation industries now lies in integrating the concept of "emphasizing deep tourist experiences" from Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experience economy. This involves transforming tourist attractions from "single-purpose tourist services" to "shared spaces for tourists and residents," creating open public spaces to enhance the quality of human habitation.





As the capital of Shanxi Province and a regional tourism hub, Taiyuan serves as a core node in Shanxi's comprehensive tourism routes. With over 2,500 years of urban history and more than 220 cultural and tourism resources—including rare sites like the Jinci Temple and Tianlongshan Grottoes—it possesses inherent advantages for developing recreation tourism. However, against the backdrop of destination management theory's emphasis on "resource integration and multi-stakeholder collaboration," (Tongqian, 2006) Taiyuan's recreation tourism remains in its infancy: 40% of its pristine attractions remain undeveloped, coordination among the "eating, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment" elements is inadequate, suburban resource development lags, and due to the absence of a recreation management framework and sustainable tourism theory guidance, some areas face resource degradation and cultural erosion. This contradiction—abundant resource endowment coupled with inefficient development and management—makes Taiyuan an ideal case study for researching the transformation of recreation tourism in resource-based cities. Its developmental challenges and pathways to breakthrough hold significant reference value for similar cities.

In summary, this study not only fills the gap in systematic strategies for recreation tourism management in Taiyuan, providing practical support for tourism strategy theory, but also offers valuable insights for local governments to formulate sustainable recreation tourism policies and transform resource advantages into economic strengths.

Objectives

- (1) To study and analyze the current situation of recreational tourism in Taiyuan.
- (2) To develop the strategy of recreational tourism management for promoting tourist attractions in Taiyuan.
- (3) To validate the feasibility of the strategy of recreational tourism management for promoting tourist attractions in Taiyuan.

Literature review

To develop strategies for tourist attractions in Taiyuan City, the author mainly researched the following related theories;

1. Theory of recreational tourism

In foreign studies, recreational tourism and tourism are often not distinguished. Numerous scholars have studied recreational tourism and tourism as one phenomenon. However, with the gradual increase in the influence of the recreational industry and the continued prosperity of the tourism industry, which is closely related to the recreational industry, scholars have become





aware that recreational tourism related tourism continues to flourish, which has aroused scholars' awareness of recreational tourism. Although at present, the study of recreational tourism can only be a glimpse of the recreational and tourism disciplines, recreational tourism, as a combination of the world's two booming industries, is bound to develop rapidly, and the study of recreational tourism will be further deepened.

Recreational tourism with modern significance originated in Europe in the middle of the 19th century. Williams (2003) recorded in 'Tourism and recreation'. In the early 1970s, tourism and recreation research theories were still in their infancy. In North America, an organization called the Outdoor Recreation Resource Rating Council (ORRRC) had already done some important preliminary research. Later developments favored the idea that tourism and recreation shared the same concepts, but there was little cross-examination of the nature of tourism and recreation. Even though tourism and recreation are widely recognized as related, this traditional research model has long existed in many areas, such as education, research, and the organization of conferences.

In the relevant research abroad, the research on recreational tourism is mostly integrated research combined with vacation tourism, tourist attraction, urban planning, rural construction, and resource development, and many of them are aimed at the protection and development of a certain region, a certain type, or a class of tourism resources.

Reeder and Brown (2005) used regression analysis to assess the impact of recreation and tourism development on socio-economic conditions in rural recreation counties. The findings suggest that recreation and tourism development contribute to rural well-being, increase local employment, wage levels, and incomes, reduce poverty, and improve education and health. However, recreation and tourism development is not without drawbacks, including higher housing costs. The local impacts vary greatly depending on the type of recreation area.

Bell SimonTyrväinen (2007) focuses on the situation in Europe but does not ignore some major trends and issues arising elsewhere, while much of the research can be traced back to ideas and methods developed elsewhere, such as the U.S.A. To set the scene, the main social and environmental trends are presented that show how the changing nature of society feeds through in expectations and demands for recreation and nature tourism.

Chinese scholars started researching leisure tourism relatively late. However, the direction of research is more diverse. In contrast to sightseeing tourism, specialized tourism, and special tourism in the general sense, recreational tourism entails higher standards for the overall environment of tourist destinations. The initial requirement pertains to the natural ecological environment. Recreation is an essential means of maintaining health, and thus the natural environment must meet higher standards. In his book, Chen (2005) pointed out that, from the





perspective of life science, leisure is an indispensable form of material movement in the life cycle. To produce and reproduce, to develop physical and intellectual strength, human beings are bound to rest, recuperate, and recuperate. As human civilization has developed to the present day, and as future developments are anticipated, human beings will inevitably require higher quality, higher grade, and more effective leisure. This is not only necessary for recuperating and acquiring abundant energy and higher intelligence and energy quotient, but also necessary for the development and progress of human beings and the creation of a better future.

Qunhong (2000) points out that recreational tourism refers to the excursion, entertainment, sightseeing, and rest that leave the settled place and stay in a foreign place for a certain period of time, with tourism resources as the basis, leisure as the main purpose, tourism facilities as the conditions, and specific cultural landscapes and service projects as the content. This definition illustrates the process and purposeful nature of leisure tourism, both from the perspective of tourism services and from the perspective of people's own development.

Huidi (2002) pays more attention to the tourist's, spiritual enjoyment, more emphasis on people in a certain period of time in the cultural creation, cultural appreciation, cultural construction of the existence of the state; it through the common human behavior, thoughts, feelings, to create a cultural atmosphere, transfer cultural information, construct a cultural mood, to achieve the individual body and mind and will of the comprehensive and complete development. Leisure tourism also places special emphasis on the harmony between man and nature, and enhances the awareness of caring for and protecting nature.

In summary, recreational tourism, with its rich cultural connotation, remarkable leisure, and profound experience, has gradually become popular and represents the new trend of tourism development in the era of the experience economy. The emphasis on "ecological environment standards" in recreational tourism theory provides a direct basis for Taiyuan to balance the protection and development of its historical and natural resources (such as Jinci and Tianlongshan Grottoes) in formulating recreational tourism strategies.

2. Theory of recreational tourism management

Jenkins (2005) viewed the role of open space management as integrating resource management, which considers the reciprocal relationship between open space resources and visitors; visitor management, which strengthens the social environment and enhances the satisfaction of the recreational experience; and service management, which integrates needed and quality services into the natural and social resource environments of the open space for the enjoyment of visitors.

Torkildsen (2012) defined it with managers as the main body, and he believes that recreation management is the process of managers' rational use of resources, especially the use of human



resources, to achieve the organizational goals of sustainable development of open spaces, in which the interaction between the recreation management organization and the users of recreation services, and the participation of recreation managers in recreation environmental protection and use of recreation The interaction between recreation management organizations and recreation service users, and the participation of recreation managers in the conservation and use of recreation areas are two core elements.

Jia Qian (2017) mentioned the significance of open space management is to coordinate the dynamic balance between natural resource protection and public recreational demand, to maintain the originality and biodiversity of the open space environment, and to meet the national recreational demand without hindering the protection of the open space ecosystem, minimizing the impacts of recreation and maximizing the satisfaction of tourists are the two major goals of open space management.

Plummer (2009) pointed out that recreational management mainly includes demand analysis, behavioral monitoring, and feedback on visitors' problems, etc. Recreation service management involves the two subjects of visitors and the recreation environment itself, and recreation service management involves the management of facilities and services, activities, and explanatory education for visitors, as well as the management and operation of the recreation environment in relation to its own development.

In this study, recreation management refers to how to minimize the ecological impact of recreational activities under the premise of protecting the ecological environment and natural resources of the recreation area, and rationally utilize the recreation resources to better exert the recreation function of the recreation area and satisfy the recreation experience of the recreation users.

3. Theory of strategy

The use of strategy has existed for many centuries, although its use in management has a more recent history, dating back about sixty years. Strategy was born out of military conflicts, and the use of a superior strategy enabled one warring party to defeat another. One had written in the nineteenth century, states that the decision to wage war ought to be rational---that is, based on estimates of what can be gained and the costs incurred by the war. War should also be an instrument-that is, waged to achieve some specific goal, never for its own sake-and strategy should be directed to achieve one end: victory. While policy makers may be unsure about what they expect from modern military engagements, military personnel from commanders down to foot soldiers have only one question: what is our objective in committing to a particular course of action? If the objective is unclear, they can expect the formulation of the strategy to be confused and its implementation to be unsuccessful.

Davies' (2000) opinion, strategy is driven by its purpose, and its purpose is to achieve policy. Strategy must include a plurality of inputs, a multiplicity of options, and an ability to accommodate more than one possible outcome. But where policy is ignored or where there is no end-means linkage between policy and strategy, strategy has no means-end object. In these situations, strategy suffers from being a means without an end, an end in itself, or a means of achieving an operational end, rather than being a design or plan for achieving the company's policy goals and objectives.

Henry (2021) defined strategy in his book as the taking of decisions that allow an organization to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage over the long term. The 'taking of decisions' implies an intent, a desire to undertake some purposeful action to achieve a stated objective. In this case, we can see that the objective is to meet customer needs better than our competitors—that is, achieve a competitive advantage. And, unlike managerial or operational decisions, which focus on short-term horizons, strategy is concerned with the long term. Of course, 'long term' is relative to the industry we're competing in: for the fashion industry, it may be three to six months, while for the oil industry, it may be more than ten years. Finally, we might also add that if a strategy is to have any value to the company, we would expect the customer benefits to exist over time and not be easily imitated by our competitors, hence 'sustainable'.

Freedman (2015) also mentioned that there is no agreed-upon definition of strategy that describes the field and limits its boundaries. One common contemporary definition describes it as being about maintaining a balance between ends, ways, and means; about identifying objectives, and about the resources and methods available for meeting such objectives. This balance requires not only finding out how to achieve desired ends but also adjusting ends so that realistic ways can be found to meet them by available means. This process can describe the simplest tasks, but when the ends are easily reached, when inanimate objects rather than other people are involved, and when very little is at stake, this barely counts as strategy. By and large, strategy comes into play where there is actual or potential conflict, when interests collide, and forms of resolution are required. This is why a strategy is much more than a plan.

Neugebauer et al. (2015) discuss the debate between planned and emergent strategy formulation and suggest that the nature of the problems addressed can be considered as a new variable in explaining strategy formulation for sustainable development. Strategy formulation is understood as a continuum between planned and emergent approaches, and most strategies contain elements of both approaches. The nature of the problem to be solved (salience, intractability, or otherwise) helps to explain whether a sustainable development strategy is more likely to use a plan approach or a contingency approach.



In summary, this thesis defined strategy as the long-term direction of an organization. A strategy allows an organization to configure its resources and capabilities to meet the needs of the environment in order to achieve a competitive advantage. The process of implementing a strategy is called strategic management, and all organizations set goals or objectives that they want to achieve.

4. Previous studies

Pınar et al. (2019) used SWOT analysis on Ural's alternative tourism is derived and included in the final part, where appropriate strategies and suggestions that are likely to optimize the strengths and opportunities, to eliminate or strengthen the weaknesses, and to handle the threats are developed. Thus, the suggestions are provided according to the results of the analysis and include grouping the alternative tourism types for synergy and selection of one or two groups according to the SWOT analysis results.

Kuznetsova et al. (2021) analyzed the recreational areas of Nizhnevartovsk and described the leisure activities of the local population. Their paper used Geographic Information System (GIS) techniques to monitor the arrangement of the infrastructure of the recreational area of Nizhnevartovsk is considered satisfactory, but there are some shortcomings in the quality of the road network and street lighting. In addition, the organization of leisure activities and services does not fully meet the needs of the city's population. Due to the underdevelopment of recreational areas, several measures are needed to increase the number of recreational areas, diversify the types of recreation, improve the infrastructure of recreational areas, improve hydrological resources and clean water bodies, as well as increase the number of historical and natural monuments, memorials, cultural and historical attractions, and sports and recreational centers.

Horal et al. (2021) explored the determinants of the concept of forest recreation management. Based on a critical analysis of scientific works, they developed and formed a system of quantitative and qualitative indicators and used categorical analysis methods and fuzzy set theory to determine the level of utilization of the potential for recreational use of forests by comparing the value of the composite indicator with its normative (critical) value.

Through current status surveys and comparative research, recent studies have indicated that Taiyuan benefits from strong policy support, abundant resource foundations, and favorable transportation conditions for developing nighttime tourism. Surveys show that both residents and visitors from surrounding areas display a high willingness to participate in nighttime activities. However, some nighttime tourism clusters continue to face challenges such as limited accessibility, narrow business offerings, and inadequate infrastructure. To address these issues, policies should be utilized to establish nighttime consumption hubs characterized by diverse





experiences and rich commercial formats. Moreover, integrating local cultural identity, enhancing supporting facilities, and encouraging resident participation can further strengthen the attractiveness and sustainability of Taiyuan's nighttime tourism. (Li & Li, 2025).

Based on POI data, Jian et al (2024) conducted a study on tourist attractions in Xuzhou City. The study shows that the spatial distribution pattern of tourist attractions in Xuzhou City shows an overall agglomeration pattern, with a high distribution density in the central urban area; parks and squares have the highest degree of spatial agglomeration, and monument attractions have a random distribution pattern. The spatial distribution characteristics of tourist attractions in Xuzhou city center show a double-core multi-ring pattern, and the rest of the county shows a single-core multi-scattered distribution pattern. The spatial correlation and convenient accessibility of the three types of service facilities, namely transportation, accommodation, and catering, and various tourist attractions, have optimized space and prospects.

Wang Ying(2024) conducted a SWOT analysis of the development of Jielingkou cultural tourism. This clarified its positioning and formulated strategies for product development, pricing, distribution channels, advertising campaigns, and public relations. Inspired by the development model of Jielingkou Village, she proposed the scientific planning of multiple historic villages to breathe new life into cultural tourism.

Shen Yue(2025) examines Jiaozuo City in Henan Province as a case study to explore pathways and practices for resource-based cities transitioning into national-level tourism and recreation hubs. Through empirical analysis, the study summarizes its development achievements, systematically identifies existing challenges, and proposes targeted optimization strategies: First, establish a comprehensive tourism industry chain by integrating diverse models such as "tourism + 5G/industry/wellness. "Second, leverage distinctive cultural IPs like 'Tai Chi culture' and 'coal industrial heritage' to create differentiated cultural-tourism fusion products. Third, it enhances a multi-dimensional service matrix integrating "smart tourism platforms + standardized services + transportation networks."

In summary, many scholars in China have proposed research on tourism strategy optimization from different disciplines and fields, such as tourism strategy, tourist attraction development, and tourism attraction. The research methods are also mainly carried out through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Foreign scholars' research on tourism routes developed earlier, and the construction of research models is more perfect, such as the model constructed according to tourist attractions, the tourism space model, the tourism strategy system, and so on. After analyzing the previous studies, the construction of the research questionnaire and the selection of indicators of leisure tourism in Taiyuan will be more purposeful in this paper.



Conceptual Framework

This study collected quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires and interviews. It employed SWOT and TOWS analysis methods to formulate preliminary strategic recommendations, which were then further validated and optimized through connoisseurship.

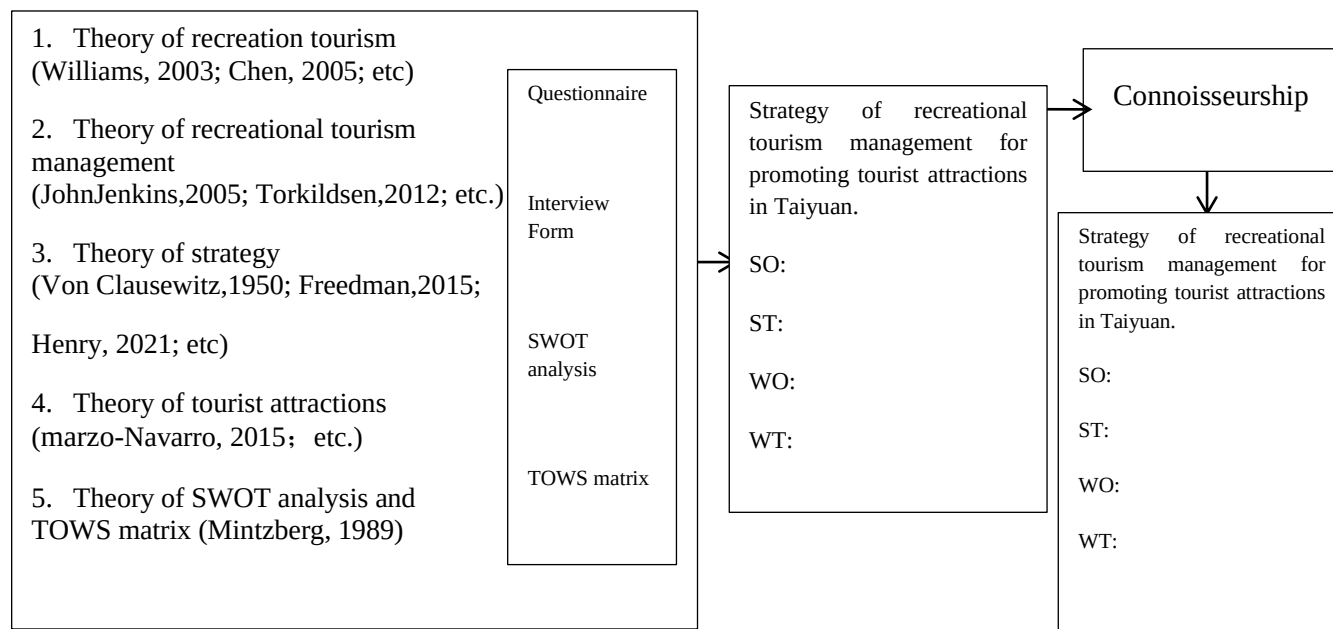


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Methodology

1. Research methods

This study uses the research methodology of R&D, in which qualitative data are mainly collected through the documentary analysis method and interview method, and quantitative data are mainly collected through the inquiry method.

(1) Documentary analysis method

It is mainly used to study tourism development-related policies and the current situation and problems of recreational tourism development in Taiyuan City. All the macroscopic data in this thesis are from officially published data. For example, the China Statistical Yearbook, the China Statistical Yearbook of Cultural Relics and Tourism. Annual Report on Information Disclosure of the Department of Culture and Tourism of Shanxi Province, etc. For the qualitative data that cannot be reflected in the form of the data, which are collected from tourists, the staff of the Cultural and Tourism Bureau, the managers of the major attractions in Taiyuan City, and Professional scholars in related fields in Taiyuan City, through questionnaires and interviews.

(2) Inquiry method

It is mainly used to study the basic information and satisfaction of tourists traveling to Taiyuan City and to find out the actual needs of tourists.

(3) Interview method

An interview was conducted mainly with the relevant staff of the Taiyuan City Tourism Bureau, the managers and staff of the ten major attractions in Taiyuan City, and the residents around the attractions to further understand the direction of the development of recreational tourism and the current situation of the development of recreational tourism in Taiyuan City.

2. Population and sample

2.1 Population

The population of this thesis is residents and visitors in Taiyuan. According to the bulletin of the Seventh National Population Census of Shanxi Province, the resident population of Taiyuan was 5,444,700 people. Taiyuan City Bureau of Culture and Tourism statistics show that Taiyuan City's 2023 annual tourism statistics were 8,766,300 people. In 2024, only the National Day holiday, Taiyuan's major tourist attractions, parks, museums, tourism and recreational neighborhood, night culture and tourism consumption agglomeration area received a total of 10,112,000 people.

2.2 Sample

(1) For tourists in Taiyuan City, according to Krejcie and Morgan's Table (1970), the author will use the convenience sampling method to select 400 people as questionnaire samples for this study.

(2) For Key Informants, the author will select 15 key informants as interview samples for this study, including the staff of the Taiyuan City Tourism Bureau (2 people), residents (3 people), managers and staff of tourist attractions (6 people), and managers of travel companies (3 people) to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the recreational tourism situation in Taiyuan City.

3. Data analysis

(1) Data collected using the interview form were analyzed primarily through content analysis. The first step was to review and analyze documents, concepts, theories, and research related to recreational tourism, and to construct an interview form about the current situation of recreational tourism in Taiyuan City. Three experts examined the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) of the questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaire was tested, with an IOC greater than 0.66. The interview form was revised based on the experts' suggestions and administered to fifteen members of staff at the Cultural and Tourism Bureau, managers of major attractions in Taiyuan City, and professional scholars in related fields.



(2) Data collected using questionnaires were analyzed mainly using statistical methods. According to the documents, the questionnaire about the current situation of recreational tourism in Taiyuan City was constructed based on concepts and theories related to recreational tourism. Three experts examined the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) of the questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaire was tested, and the IOC was found to be greater than 0.66. The questionnaire was revised based on the experts' suggestions and distributed to 40 tourists in Taiyuan City for trial purposes, ensuring that the reliability of the returned questionnaires was within the 95% confidence interval. The final version of the questionnaire was then applied to 400 tourists at the ten main tourist attractions in Taiyuan City in June 2025. The author distributed 426 valid questionnaires, achieving a response rate of 93.8%. The results will be analyzed in three parts: basic tourist information, the recreational tourism situation in Taiyuan City, and tourist satisfaction.

(3) Following a preliminary analysis of the data collected from questionnaires and interviews, the author will conduct a SWOT analysis of the results to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the current situation of tourist attractions in Taiyuan City, providing a foundation for developing strategies. Then, based on SWOT analysis, the author employs a TOWS matrix to develop preliminary strategies. These strategies are subsequently validated and optimized through expert roundtable discussions to form the final strategy of recreational tourism management for promoting tourist attractions in Taiyuan.

Results

1. Results of the current situation of recreational tourism in Taiyuan City

In general, Taiyuan City has rich tourism resources and great potential for recreational tourism development. However, these resources are not currently being fully utilized, and the tourist attractions in Taiyuan City need to be made more attractive. The following aspects primarily demonstrate this issue:

(1) The situation of recreational tourism tourists

The proportion of males and females was almost equal; the age distribution was balanced; most tourists came from outside Shanxi Province; the three core occupational groups were students, freelancers/retirees, and government/public institution employees; and the proportion of highly educated individuals (those with a master's degree or above) was significant. Middle-income groups with an income between 2,001 and 8,000 yuan still occupy the majority position.

**Table 1** Basic tourist information

Content	Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	202	50.50%
	Female	198	49.50%
Age	Under 18 years old	103	25.75%
	19-40 years old	98	24.50%
	41-60 years old	103	25.75%
	61 years old or over	96	24.00%
Tourist Origin	Taiyuan City	49	12%
	Shanxi Province (except Taiyuan City)	59	14.7%
	Outside Shanxi Province	292	73.6%
Occupation	Student	109	27.25%
	Government/business employee	104	26.00%
	Freelance/Retired person	108	27.00%
	Others	79	19.75%
Education Level	High school and below	112	28.00%
	Specialized education	104	26.00%
	Bachelor's degree	74	18.50%
	Master's degree or higher	110	27.50%
Monthly Income	Less than 2000 RMB	111	27.75%
	2001-5000 RMB	95	23.75%
	5001-8000 RMB	90	22.50%
	More than 8000 RMB	104	26.00%

Nearly half of the tourists have visited Taiyuan two to three times, and most tourists choose to travel for one to two days to spend time with family and friends. The medium budget (1,001–5,000 RMB) accounted for the majority, and most tourists visit for leisure and vacation. Most tourists came to Taiyuan after learning about it on social media, and tourists spent the most on



accommodation. Among the top ten tourist attractions in Taiyuan, Zhonglou Pedestrian Street was the most popular.

Table 2 Recreational tourism situation in Taiyuan City

Content	Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Times You Visited Taiyuan	One time	94	23.50%
	2-3 times	161	40.25%
	More than 3 times	97	24.25%
	Others	48	12.00%
Length of Stay	Within 1 day	101	25.25%
	1-2 Days	96	24.00%
	3-5 Days	99	24.75%
	More than 5 Days	104	26.00%
Tourist Form	Travel alone	88	22.00%
	Travel with family	174	43.50%
	Travel with a colleague or friends	92	23.00%
	Others	46	11.5%
Tourist Budget	Less than 1000 RMB	82	20.50%
	1001-3000 RMB	131	32.75%
	3001-5000 RMB	100	25.00%
	More than 5000 RMB	87	21.75%
Purpose of Tourism	Sightseeing	99	24.75%
	Recreation	180	45.00%
	Cultural experience	77	19.25%
	Others	44	11.00%
Tourism Information	Television and radio	75	18.75%
	Social media	181	45.25%
	Introduced by family and friends	132	33.00%
	Others	12	3.00%
Tourist Cost	Accommodation	279	69.75%
	Food	235	58.75%



Content	Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Tourist Attractions	Shopping	214	53.50%
	Others	53	13.25%
	Jinci Park	87	21.75%
	Taiyuan Ancient County Town	111	27.75%
	Zhonglou Walking Street	176	44.00%
	Others	26	6.50%

(2) SWOT of recreational tourism in Taiyuan

The author compiled data from questionnaires, interviews, and relevant government department policy documents. The analysis of the results based on the 4M theory(1932), and the author divided them into four different aspects. These aspects include the man of recreational tourism in Taiyuan, the management of recreational tourism in Taiyuan, the material of recreational tourism in Taiyuan, and the Money of recreational tourism in Taiyuan. Ultimately, there was developed three strengths, four weaknesses, three opportunities, and three threats were developed for recreational tourism in Taiyuan City.

Table 3 SWOT analysis of recreational tourism in Taiyuan City

Strengths	Weaknesses
S1: The service personnel are highly professional and have a good attitude, and the tour guide team has in-depth knowledge of the area's history and culture, which can significantly enhance tourists' cultural experience. The tourism service center and consultants provide efficient and convenient services.	W1: Serious loss of professional talent, particularly among tour guides; high staff turnover and insufficient professional ability among temporary staff; and a lack of foreign language service staff at attractions.
S2: The major attractions have established perfect safety monitoring systems and emergency response mechanisms, and are equipped with professional medical teams that can handle emergencies promptly.	W2: tourist attraction fees are unreasonable; ticket, catering, and shopping prices are high; prices are not transparent; prices do not match goods; cost-effectiveness is low; and the tourist attraction marketing system is unclear. There is insufficient publicity of activities in attractions and a low level of awareness, as



S3: Taiyuan is a popular destination for the 'New Year Gourmet Tour' thanks to its rich intangible cultural heritage and diverse folk activities. It has comprehensive 5G and Wi-Fi coverage, as well as perfect basic services and infrastructure. The leisure facilities around the tourist attractions can meet a variety of leisure needs, and the specialty businesses and IPs are appealing. The recreational facilities around the tourist attractions can satisfy all kinds of recreational needs, and the specialty businesses and characteristic IPs are attractive.

well as insufficient collaboration between attractions and a lack of unified planning.

W3: Serious homogenization of tourism products, with few types of cultural and creative products and a limited design level. Shortcomings in infrastructure include lagging in the construction of facilities in some remote attractions, a shortage of nighttime facilities in newly built attractions, and insufficient maintenance of safety facilities.

W4: Large investment in tourism infrastructure with a long return cycle and insufficient allocation of funds to remote tourist attractions. County funds have weak undertaking capacity and insufficient precision in the allocation of publicity funds.

Opportunities	Threats
O1: With an improvement in the living standards of residents and a change in consumption concepts, there is an expanding domestic market demand for recreation and tourism, providing ample opportunity for the development of leisure tourism in Taiyuan. O2: The state has introduced a series of preferential policies and support measures to encourage the development of recreational tourism and create a favorable policy environment. According to the policy planning of Shanxi Province, Taiyuan will develop low-altitude and water tourism, adding new highlights to recreation tourism. O3: Improved transport links have reduced the time and distance between	T1: Tourists' demands are becoming increasingly diverse and personalized. The tourism market is changing rapidly, and Taiyuan's tourism products need to be updated more quickly to adapt to these changes. T2: Neighboring provinces and cities, as well as southern tourist destinations, are highly competitive in terms of service quality, innovation, and the overall experience they offer, which puts pressure on Taiyuan. Some of Taiyuan's tourist attractions are becoming increasingly similar and lack distinctive competitive strategies, making it difficult to establish unique brands and attractions. The production of low-quality imitation products

Taiyuan and other cities, making the area more accessible for tourists. Meanwhile, the government has strengthened transport links between attractions and introduced special tourist buses to facilitate the efficient movement of tourists. The rise of online tourism platforms and the gradual application of big data and artificial intelligence in the tourism sector are providing new means for Taiyuan's tourism marketing and service innovation. The traffic economy creates opportunities, and Taiyuan has already become a popular tourist destination thanks to its concerts, marathons, and rich cultural resources.

may damage the overall image and reputation of Taiyuan's tourism products.

T3: Conflicts between resource protection and development. Cultural heritage is sensitive to the environment, and overdevelopment or improper management may exacerbate damage and affect the sustainability of core resources. Tourism is seasonal: affected by climate and other factors, off-peak seasons vary greatly, putting pressure on tourist reception facilities during peak seasons and leaving resources idle during off-peak seasons.

2. Results of Strategies to Improve the Attractiveness of Tourist Attractions in Taiyuan City

Based on the SWOT analysis of recreational tourism in Taiyuan City, the researcher will use the TOWS matrix to propose strategies. The researcher will use the TOWS matrix to propose strategies to improve the attractiveness of the tourist attractions in Taiyuan.

Table 4: TOWS Matrix of recreational tourism in Taiyuan City

	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Opportunities (O)	SO1: Relying on the tour guides' ability to give cultural presentations and unique historical sites, and seizing the opportunities of growing domestic demand for tourism and the traffic economy (concerts, marathons), to improve the efficiency of traffic conversion through brand integration and upgrade of ancillary services. Linking with traffic events to create "cultural tourism+traffic"integrated products and	WO1: In response to shortcomings in foreign language services (W1), take advantage of the expansion of the domestic tourism market (O1) and online platform technology (O3) to improve the experience of international tourists by upgrading intelligent equipment and infrastructure. Build an 'online



	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
	build a closed loop of "themed routes ancillary services" to extend the length of stay of tourists. SO2: Utilizing the advantages of 5G infrastructure, leveraging low-altitude tourism policy and online platform technology, expanding the market coverage through the digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage, and full-time operation. Develop low-altitude tourism products combining "reality and reality", build a digital experience platform for intangible cultural heritage, realize "intelligent guide + +online reservation+ + personalized recommendation" through the platform, and push the information of folklore activities synchronously, and adopt the mode of "cultural narrative + + digital dissemination".The platform realizes "intelligentguide+onlinereservation+person alized recommendation", synchronously pushes the information of folklore activities, and adopts the mode of "culturalnarrative+digital communication". Forming a closed loop of "online dissemination and offline experience".	+ offline' foreign language service network and promote the standardization of multilingual infrastructure to bridge the talent gap. WO2: In response to price problems and shortcomings in publicity (W2), we leverage online platforms and traffic events (O3) and build a system of "omnidirectional marketing matrix + transparent pricing" to enhance exposure and cost-effectiveness. Launched the "Traffic Linkage Discount Package" to expand publicity through UGC activities, while strengthening the perception of cost-effectiveness through standardized pricing.
Threats(T)	ST1: Relying on tour guides' ability to explain history and culture, and the richness of non-heritage and folklore resources, to cope with the threat of individualization and diversification of tourists' demand, while balancing the	WT1: In response to the homogenization of tourism products (W3) and competition from neighboring cities (T2), differentiated products are created through



Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
contradiction between resource protection and development. Delineate cultural heritage core protection zones and adopt "limited reservation + digital display" (e.g., 3D scanning) to reduce human intervention and realize sustainable development. Develop a "Customized Cultural Exploration + Conservation Experience" service, which integrates the concept of resource conservation into a personalized experience and reduces the pressure of conservation through digital technology. ST2: Utilizing the ability of security guarantee and high-quality natural landscape to alleviate the difference between off-peak and on-peak seasons, and at the same time to deal with the threat of imitation products to the brand, to enhance the trust of the tourists through the double guarantee of safety and genuine products. ST3: Relying on professional services and scarce resources such as Jinzi Temple and Tianlongshan Mountain, it responds to the pressure of homogenized competition from neighboring cities and builds barriers of differentiated experience. Upgrade the entertainment facilities into a cultural experience carrier, while joining hands with neighboring	industry chain integration and cultural and creative experiential innovation. This involves tapping into the county's cold non-heritage resources, developing "theme packages cultural and creative DIY" products, and forming an "experience consumption" closed loop. WT2: In response to the lack of funds for certain attractions (W4) and the contradiction between resource protection and development (T3), the cost of tourist attractions will be reduced through community co-construction and a talent pool. The development of night-time programming will be synchronized to extend the consumption period and activate night-time and off-season consumption. Introduce the "community co-construction+ emergency talent pool" model to increase talent reserves.

**Strengths (S)****Weaknesses (W)**

provinces to form complementary resources and avoid direct competition.

3. Result of Evaluation of Strategies to Improve the Attractiveness of Tourist Attractions in Taiyuan City

To evaluate the feasibility of the strategy proposed by the researcher to organize recreational tourism routes to improve the attractiveness of tourist attractions in Taiyuan City, the researcher will use the technique of connoisseurship at this stage. The researcher invited three recreational tourism experts, a manager of Industry Research Department of Guotai Haitong Securities Co. Ltd., the director of the Taiyuan City Culture and Tourism Bureau, the director of the Shuangta Temple, the director of Wucheng community in Taiyuan, the executive director of Taiyuan Gangzhonglv International Tourism Co. Ltd., and a local tour guide of Taiyuan Zhida Tourism Co. Ltd., total of nine experts, to participate in this connoisseurship, to further adjust and refine the proposed strategy.

At the Connoisseurship, experts were invited to rate the overall feasibility and the feasibility of each strategy on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. The results are shown in the table above. Experts demonstrated a high level of confidence in the overall feasibility, assigning a score of 3.7. Among the nine strategies, SO1, ST3, and WO2 received higher scores, indicating relatively high feasibility for these three approaches. WT2 had the lowest feasibility score at 2.6. Specific expert opinions and improvement measures are as follows:

Table 5 The feasibility scores of strategies

Expert Number	SO1	SO2	ST1	ST2	ST3	WO1	WO2	WT1	WT2	Overall
1	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3
2	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3
3	5	3	3	3	4	3	5	3	3	4
4	4	2	3	3	4	3	4	3	2	4
5	5	3	4	3	4	4	5	3	3	4
6	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4
7	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	2	4
8	5	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	4



Expert Number	SO1	SO2	ST1	ST2	ST3	WO1	WO2	WT1	WT2	Overall
9	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	2	4
Mean	4.2	3.1	3.3	3.1	3.7	3.2	4.2	3.1	2.6	3.7

After adjusting and modifying according to the experts' opinions in Connoisseurship, the final strategies are 2 SO strategies, 3 ST strategies, 2 WO strategies, and 2 WT strategies, as follows:

SO1: Seizing the opportunities of growing domestic demand for tourism and the traffic economy (concerts, marathons), to improve the efficiency of traffic conversion through brand integration and upgrade of ancillary services.

SO2: Taking advantage of the 5G infrastructure, low-altitude tourism policy, and online platform technology to expand market coverage through the digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage and ensure full-time operation.

ST1: Delineate cultural heritage core protection zones and adopt "limited reservation + digital display "to reduce human intervention and realize sustainable development. Centered on "low-threshold interaction multi-scenario customization," to deepen the integration of conservation principles into the visitor experience.

ST2: Create the "night-time and off-season consumption + genuine product guarantee " system to strengthen brand trust while balancing off-peak season traffic.

ST3: Build competitive barriers through "deep cultural experiences + cross-regional resource complementarity. "Upgrade entertainment facilities into cultural experience platforms while collaborating with neighboring provinces to achieve resource complementarity, thereby avoiding direct competition.

WO1: Build an 'online + offline' foreign language service network and promote the standardization of multilingual infrastructure to bridge the talent gap.

WO2: Leverage online platforms and traffic events, and build a system of "omnidirectional marketing matrix transparent pricing quality assurance" to enhance exposure and cost-effectiveness.

WT1: Create differentiated products through industry chain integration and cultural and creative experiential innovation.

WT2: To reduce the cost of tourist attractions through community co-construction and a talent pool. Introduce the "community co-construction+ emergency talent pool" model to increase talent reserves.



Discussion

By comparing this study with previous studies, a high degree of consistency is achieved in most areas, particularly about the ecological environment, tourists' demands, and infrastructure optimization. However, there are also some conflicts with previous findings in certain areas, mainly due to Taiyuan City's specific resource advantages and policy context.

In terms of SO1 and SO2, strategies are closely with the findings of Wang Xin (2021). Wang Xin proposed "hosting large-scale festival events and building cultural tourism brands," noting that traffic-generating events like concerts and marathons can attract media attention and tourist participation. He further emphasized that "tourism imagery should keep pace with the times, leveraging digital technology to disseminate culture." This study's SO1 strategy integrates traffic events with Jinci Temple and intangible cultural heritage resources through "post-event cultural add-ons" packages and traffic-exclusive intangible cultural heritage gift boxes. The SO2 strategy achieves digital dissemination via the "Cloud View of Taiyuan" low-altitude project and the animated series "Stories of Jinyang." Both strategies affirm the value of resource integration, traffic synergy, and technological empowerment for cultural tourism development.

The SO2 strategy stands in stark contrast to the research by Guo et al. (2016) addressed the "lack of nighttime activities" in the Changfeng Business District by proposing "developing nighttime activities such as night tours and night cycling based on existing venues," focusing on leveraging existing facilities to fill the gap in nighttime experiences. In contrast, this study's SO2 strategy integrates low-altitude tourism policies with 5G technology to create a multi-dimensional, round-the-clock operation model combining "online VR tours + offline low-altitude experiences." This approach not only fills the nighttime void but also extends the "cloud-based discovery → offline consumption" chain. This divergence primarily stems from differing research scopes; Guo Kailu et al focused on the single Changfeng Business District, while this study covers the entire Taiyuan region. This broader scope enables integration of historical sites, intangible cultural heritage, and emerging policy resources to achieve more multidimensional experiential innovation.

WO1 and WO2 strategies align with Wang Fan's (2023) findings. Wang Fan proposed "enhancing infrastructure and advancing digital transformation to improve service quality," stressing "expanding brand reach through UGC content." This study's WO1 strategy employs "multilingual smart guide screens + cloud-based foreign language tours" to address foreign language talent shortages through technology, while the WO2 strategy leverages Douyin challenges and online pricing campaigns to optimize marketing and pricing. Both strategies acknowledge the critical role of digitalization and online marketing in tourism services and brand development. The "authentic intangible cultural heritage supply stations + blockchain traceability" measures in the ST2 strategy align with Wang Fan's research conclusions. Wang Fan (2023)





advocates "strengthening tourism product quality oversight to prevent low-quality counterfeits from damaging destination reputation." This study ensures product quality through "authenticity alliances, blockchain traceability, and official channel disclosures." Both recognize brand trust maintenance as vital for mitigating counterfeit threats, differing only in focus: Wang Fan emphasizes macro-level regulatory recommendations, while this study proposes concrete implementation plans tailored to Taiyuan's intangible cultural heritage and cultural creativity sectors.

WT1 and WT2 strategies align with Wang Ying (2024)'s research conclusions. Wang Ying proposed "tapping niche cultural resources and avoiding homogenization through an 'experience + consumption' closed loop," suggesting "engaging social forces in resource conservation to reduce costs." This study's WT1 strategy develops "intangible cultural heritage + homestays + cuisine" packages and establishes cultural and creative DIY workshops, while the WT2 strategy implements the "cultural guardians" community co-creation model. Both approaches acknowledge the significance of niche resource development and social participation in avoiding competition and alleviating the tension between resource conservation and funding constraints.

The WT2 strategy's "development of low-cost nighttime projects (e.g., Jin Temple Night Shadow Light Show)" aligns with Guo Kailu et al.(2016) findings in "Current Status and Optimization of Recreation Tourism Development in Taiyuan's Changfeng Business District." Guo Kailu et al identified "insufficient nighttime activities and post-closing visitor attrition" in Changfeng Business District, recommending the creation of Taiyuan's "city that never sleeps." This study integrates nighttime projects with cultural heritage preservation; both are aimed at stimulating nighttime consumption. The distinction lies in Guo Kailu et al. (2016) focusing on optimizing facilities within a single area, whereas this research incorporates cultural elements to achieve differentiation.

ST2 advocates balancing tourist flows through the nighttime economy and off-season consumption, which aligns closely with the research logic and practices of peak-shifting operations of Sánchez-Díaz (2016)internationally. International studies indicate that developing distinctive themed products for off-peak seasons can effectively stimulate market activity. Examples include Norway's Bergen Fjord "Aurora Night Cruise" and New Zealand's Queenstown "Winter Skiing + Hot Spring Night Experience," both of which enhance year-round revenue stability through "unique offerings + off-season themes." This aligns with domestic research on off-season tourism product innovation, which concludes that "developing experiential projects based on regional characteristics" is key. Concurrently, international tourism management research consistently emphasizes the role of "authenticity verification and assurance" in strengthening brand trust (e.g., the craftsmanship certification system in Swiss watchmaking towns), which aligns perfectly with ST2's core demand for "authenticity assurance." These studies and practices validate the scientific





basis of the ST2 strategy, providing clear direction for Taiyuan to design products like the "Winter Tai Chi Wellness Night Experience" and "Industrial Heritage Off-Season Study Tours."

The ST3 strategy differs from Wang Ying's(2024) research. Wang Ying focused on the single resource of the ancient Great Wall village in Jielingkou Village, proposing to "collaborate with surrounding areas to create a scenic corridor and define the positioning as 'Border Defense and Historical Reflection'; In contrast, this study's ST3 strategy integrates diverse resources such as Taiyuan's Jinci Temple and intangible cultural heritage to launch an "immersive theater showcasing Jin merchant tales." It collaborates with Shaanxi and Henan to establish the "Yellow River Cultural Tour Route" while defining the positioning as "deep immersion in Jin culture." This divergence primarily stems from differing resource endowments. Taiyuan possesses richer historical and intangible cultural heritage resources, enabling the construction of more diverse, differentiated experiences beyond reliance on a single ancient village resource.

Conclusion

This study constructs a strategic framework for recreation tourism development in Taiyuan, focusing on targeted approaches in traffic conversion, digital empowerment, resource conservation, and differentiated competition. These strategies emphasize leveraging Taiyuan's core strengths—its "cultural resources + infrastructure"—such as utilizing 5G and online technologies to digitize intangible cultural heritage and employing professional services to create immersive cultural experiences. Simultaneously, they address practical challenges including shifting market demands, regional competition, and talent shortages, achieving multiple objectives: strengthening advantages, compensating for weaknesses, seizing opportunities, and mitigating threats.

The implementation of these systematic strategies will not only effectively enhance the appeal of Taiyuan's recreation tourism products, tourist satisfaction, and market reach. Addressing pain points like product homogenization and seasonal imbalance, but will also positively impact regional economic upgrading, cultural revitalization, and urban-rural integration. This provides valuable reference and insights for similar historical and cultural cities nationwide, exploring "transforming resource advantages into development strengths," propelling Taiyuan's recreation tourism industry toward high-quality, sustainable development.

Recommendation

1. If future studies continue to focus on cultural and tourism integration in Taiyuan, the survey area and sample size should be expanded to include different types of tourist attractions, groups of tourists, and cultural venues. And future research could further refine the methodology



by tracking visitor satisfaction before and after implementing the strategy, or by conducting comparative studies between the Taiyuan model and other cities in North China. These methodological improvements would not only enhance the reliability of the research but also fully demonstrate the strategy's applicability across different regional contexts. At the same time, Future research could introduce theories and methods from cultural anthropology, environmental science, economics, communication, and other related disciplines in order to develop a multidimensional, cross-disciplinary analysis framework. For instance, cultural anthropology could help to excavate the revitalization path of Jin culture in tourism scenarios; environmental science could be used to assess the impact of tourism development on the ecosystem; and communication science could explore the formation mechanism of cultural and tourism IPs in the digital media era. This would enable a more comprehensive examination of the systematic challenges and countermeasures for the integrated development of culture and tourism.

2. This study primarily focuses on strategic design and theoretical development. The proposed strategic pathways can be validated through field pilot studies, tracking research, and comparative analysis. Future refinement of policy recommendations can be achieved by more directly integrating them with the recreation tourism management framework. This approach also demonstrates how local governments can align recreation tourism strategies with regional development policies and community engagement mechanisms. Dynamic evaluation of policy implementation outcomes enables timely identification of potential operational challenges, facilitating strategic refinements that enhance the practicality and sustainability of research outcomes.

3. Against the backdrop of the deep reconfiguration of the global tourism landscape, future research should focus on changing trends in the international tourism market. These include the evolution of tourism behaviors after the epidemic, the rise of green and low-carbon tourism, and the popularity of digital travel experiences. The research should also explore the impact of these trends on the tourism development model and market strategies in Taiyuan City. Interactive research between a global vision and local reality can provide Taiyuan with theoretical and practical support to build a new competitive advantage in culture and tourism for the future.

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