

A Feasibility Study on the Development of Inbound Tourism Based on Confucian Culture and Its Effect on Environment Protection in the Downstream Areas of Yellow River

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Abstract:

The Yellow River flows through northern China and forms a fertile Huabei Plain in its downstream areas, where the psychological stability brought by farming, idyllic scenery and the stable social order makes people more gentle and polite, giving birth to the profound Confucian culture. Many foreign tourists admired Confucian culture, which leads to the will of sightseeing and experiencing Confucian culture at the birthplace of Confucian culture. If those foreign tourists can be guided to visit cultural cities and countryside scenery in the downstream areas of the Yellow River, and feel the charm of Confucian culture there, it will stimulate the inbound tourism boom and promote the economic development of that region. In addition, with more income of inbound tourism and the development of economy, the local government can provide more fund on environmental protection. Therefore, a survey has been carried out on the foreign tourists' cognition of Confucian culture and their willingness to visit China's Confucian cultural scenic spots, and a judgment based on this has been made: It is feasible to guide foreign tourists to visit downstream areas of the Yellow River full of Confucian cultural resources, and inbound tourism is beneficial to the environment protection.

Keywords: downstream areas of the Yellow River; Confucian Culture; inbound tourism; feasibility; environmental protection.

INTRODUCTION

The ancient civilizations of the world often originate in great river basins, such as the Mesopotamia, the Nile Valley, and the Yellow River basin and the Yangtze River basin in China. In these fertile alluvial plains, people live a relatively prosperous and stable life, hence the birth of ancient great civilizations. In the downstream areas of the Yellow River in China, is located Huabei plain, where Confucian culture originated. Chinese people and some foreign people admire Confucius very much, and even many foreign tourists come to experience the charm of Confucian culture in China. "Culture is the soul of tourism and one of the core factors of tourism competitiveness, and is also a source for the sustainable development of regional tourism" [1], so if it is possible to guide foreign tourists being interested in Confucian culture to visit the downstream areas of the Yellow River which is the headstream of Confucian culture, not only the foreign tourists can realize their aim of feeling Confucian culture, but also it can promote the economic development of the region.

Qufu, a small town in the downstream areas of the Yellow River, is the birthplace of Confucius, the founder of Confucianism. It is speculated that foreign tourists visiting Qufu may have some knowledge of Confucian culture and be attracted by it, and these tourists are much likely willing to visit the downstream areas of the Yellow River to experience the folk features of Confucian culture there. For this reason, a questionnaire survey was conducted on the cognition of Confucian culture and willingness to experience Confucian culture among foreign tourists in Qufu.

The questionnaire consists of two parts: (1) the status of foreign tourists; (2) a survey on foreign tourists' cognition of Confucian culture. The questionnaire is presented in English because it is the most common language in the world. The survey was conducted in "Sankong Scenic Spot" of Qufu in early 2019 and it lasted for about two months. The questionnaire was randomly handed out for individuals or group tourists to complete. During that period, the privacy and freedom of tourists were respected and the arrangement of tour guides was respected. The foreign tourists were suggested to complete all the questions of the questionnaire but not forced to do that. As a result, some tourists did not answer all the survey questions, and omissions were quite common.

In order to ensure practical effect, questionnaires on which more than two-thirds of the questions were answered are judged to be valid, so 280 valid questionnaires have been obtained.

It is worth noting that the questionnaire did not cover the issue of environmental protection, but studies have shown that the biggest obstacle in environmental protection lies in the lack of funds. If funds are more abundant, the government is willing to invest more in environmental protection. As a matter of fact, inbound tourism can solve the funding problem to a certain extent.

Inbound tourism can increase tourism income and attract domestic and foreign investment, thus promoting local economic development. In this case, the local government can have more money to invest in environmental protection which is not only beneficial to the life of local residents, but also further promotes the development of inbound tourism. This is a virtuous cycle, and whether that cycle can be established depends on how much Confucian culture attracts inbound tourists, and the answer to that is embedded in this questionnaire.

STATUS OF FOREIGN TOURISTS

Before completing the questionnaire, foreign tourists should first show their identities, including the gender, age, record of formal schooling and nationality.

Out of 280 questionnaires, 259 people indicated their gender, among which 63% are male and 37% are female. There are far more men than women, so to some extent, men prefer cultural tourism than women.

A total of 236 foreign tourists reported their education background. 97 of them have bachelor's degree, occupying 41 percent of the total. Highly educated tourists with master's or doctor's degrees account for 39%, far higher than 20% of ones with middle school graduates, indicating that highly educated tourists are more interested in Confucian culture (see table 1).

Table 1. Education background of foreign tourists

Education background	Number	Percentage
Ph.D.	26	11%
M.A.(M.S.)	65	28%
B.A.(B.S.)	97	41%
High school degree	47	20%

Table 2. Age of foreign tourists

Age (years old)	Number	Percentage
11-30	150	55%
31-50	56	21%
51-70	54	20%
≥70	8	3%

270 people told us their ages, almost covering all the ages except young children. It shows the unique charm of "Sankong Scenic Spot" in Qufu city. 56 percent of the tourists are young people between 11 and 30 years old, maybe because there are more and more young tourists participating in "Study Tours" in china (see Table 2).

There are 155 tourists who revealed their nationalities (two of them had dual nationalities), which cover 26 European and American countries, two Asian countries and two African countries. Only 55.3 percent of the tourists have shown their nationalities, indicating some of them have a strong sense of nationality protection. The top eight nationalities are the United States, Australia, Germany, Canada, France, The United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Spain. These countries are led by the United States, and most of them are European and American countries with great international influence, indicating that their international exchange willingness is generally in direct proportion to their international status (see Table 3).

Table 3. Nationality distribution of foreign tourists

Country	Num.	Percentage	Country	Num.	Percentage	Country	Num.	Percentage
U.S.A	32	22%	Korea	3	2%	Croatia	1	0.6%
Australia	21	14.5%	Sweden	3	2%	Russia	1	0.6%
Germany	19	13.1%	Switzerland	3	2%	Turkey	1	0.6%
Canada	14	9.7%	New Zealand	2	1%	Belgium	1	0.6%
France	13	8.9%	Iceland	2	1%	Mexico	1	0.6%
England	6	4.1%	Poland	2	1%	Slovakia	1	0.6%
Holland	6	4.1%	Finland	2	1%	LTU	1	0.6%
Spain	4	2.8%	Norway	1	0.6%	Turkey/U.S.A	1	0.6%
Ethiopia	3	2%	CZ	1	0.6%	Poland/Iceland	1	0.6%
Italia	3	2%	Algeria	1	0.6%	Sudan	1	0.6%
Japan	3	2%	Israel	1				

Num. = Number of tourists

SURVEY OF FOREIGN TOURISTS' COGNITION OF CONFUCIAN CULTURE

A questionnaire was designed for the survey of foreign tourists' cognition of Confucian culture, in which all the questions were multiple choice ones. The survey mainly involves eight aspects: cognition of Confucius' identity; understanding of Confucian culture; cognition of Confucian classics; understanding and participating in activities related to Confucian culture; understanding of the origin of Confucian culture; the relationship between Confucian culture and world peace; the relationship between Confucian culture and western culture; tourists' willingness to continue to learn Confucian culture.

Cognition of Confucius' Identity

As for "Confucius' identity", there are five options provided: a philosopher, an educator, a great thinker, a perfect man, and a keeper of ancient works and deeds. Single or multiple choices are allowed to make.

280 foreign tourists answered this question. Among them, 75 tourists chose "philosopher", "educator" and "great thinker" at the same time, accounting for 27.2 percent of the tourists. It is not surprising to regard Confucius as a "philosopher" and a "great thinker", but to think of him as an "educator" shows that quite a few foreign tourists are familiar with his educational achievements. After all, unlike most western philosophers, Confucius not only had seminal philosophical ideas, but also devoted himself to teaching them to students and the public.

It is worth noting that the number of tourists' choosing "a perfect man" and "a keeper of ancient works and deeds" are relatively small, which indicates that foreign tourists have rational and comprehensive cognition of Confucius' identity (see Table 4).

Table 4. Tourists' cognition of Confucius' identity

The identity of Confucius	Num.	Percentage
Philosopher/Educator/Great thinker	75	27%
Philosopher	58	21%
Philosopher /Educator	26	10%
Philosopher / Great thinker	26	10%
Great thinker	23	8%
Educator	15	6%
Perfect man	4	1%
Keeper of ancient works and achievements	1	0.4%
Other identity	4	

Num. = Number of tourists

(Note: Tourists' choices vary much, so some less important statistics are not listed in the table above)

Understanding of Confucian Culture

Two questions are set up here.

A total of 264 foreign tourists answered the question "whether you had been exposed to Confucian culture before". Among them, 203 (77 percent) wrote "Yes" and 61 (23 percent) wrote "no". It can be concluded that most tourists decided to visit Qufu city after they had been exposed to Confucian culture, or they knew something about Confucian culture before they started a trip to Qufu city. This suggests it is important to find a way to expose western populations to Confucian culture "for the first time".

However, when it comes to "understanding of Confucian culture", 213 people chose "not very well", accounting for up to 79%; 21 people chose "no", accounting for 8 percent; only 10 percent of foreign tourists chose "quite well" and 3 percent "very well", which shows that the majority of the foreign tourists do not understand Confucian culture. These data indicate that although most foreign tourists have been exposed to Confucian culture, their understanding of it is limited and has not yet reached a relatively deep level.

Cognition of Confucian Classics

Two questions are set up for this item.

When asked whether they had heard of some Confucian classics, 129 people wrote yes (47 percent) and 144 wrote no (53 percent). More than half of them have never heard of Confucian classics, confirming the judgment above that those foreign tourists did not know much about Confucian culture.

As for the question of “which Confucian classics have you read”, there are five options: *The Great Learning*, *The Doctrine of Moderation*, *The Analects of Confucius*, *The Book of Mencius* and *The Book of Songs*.

156 foreign tourists made choices, accounting for 56 percent of the total surveyed. It shows that about 44 percent of foreign tourists have not been exposed to Confucian classics. Among the foreign tourists having made choices, 49 people chose *Analects of Confucius* which seemed more popular than other classics. The reason is that *The Analects of Confucius* has been translated into English, French, German, Japanese, Russian and many other languages, and even there are multiple editions of translation in some languages. It is inevitable to be well known in the world.

Curiously, only 129 tourists heard of the Confucian classics, while 156 tourists thought they had been exposed to them, indicating that some foreign tourists did not have a clear understanding of the concept and scope of the Confucian classics.

According to the data above, foreign tourists who have not heard of or have not read Confucian classics account for almost half of the respondents. Even in U.S, the average Americans have less knowledge of Confucian classics. A random survey conducted on American campuses and on the streets finds that there are 131 average Americans who have no knowledge of *The Four Books*, accounting for 81.88 percent of the respondents; and there are 135 average Americans admitting that they know nothing of *The Five Classics*, accounting for 84.38% [2]. For this, Li also pointed out, “various studies show that the western world represented by the UK and the US do not know as much about Confucianism as we imagine, and the number of audience is also very limited. This shows that our tasks of Confucian culture translation and communication in the future still have a long way to go” [3]. In fact, there are some difficulties in every link of external transmission of Confucianism. Just considering the source of Confucianism transmission, senior foreign language talents currently engaged in the translation of Confucian culture is still very insufficient, and in a short period of time it seems to be difficult to solve. As Wang said, “from the national implementation of “going out” strategy of Chinese culture, English talents on a high level are scarce, and excellent translation talents are precious, and the talents who can translate Chinese literature works into foreign languages and publish them in target language countries are even rare” [4].

Understanding and Participating in Activities Related to Confucian Culture

Two problems are set up here.

264 foreign tourists answered the question about whether they had heard of some activities related to Confucian culture. Among them, 111 tourists wrote “yes” (42%), less than half of the respondents, while 153 wrote “no” (58%).

A total of 226 tourists answered the question as to whether they had participated in activities related to Confucian culture. Only 52 people wrote “yes”, accounting for 23 percent, less than one fourth of the total, indicating that there were few Confucian cultural activities aimed at foreigners or they were limited in participating scope. Among the existing activities, foreign tourists mainly participated in the “fine calligraphy exhibition”, but this activity was not a typical Confucian cultural activity, which suggests that we should hold more activities closely related to Confucian culture, and strengthen the publicity of the activity.

Understanding of the Birthplace of Confucian Culture

There is no doubt that the authentic birthplace of Confucian culture is Qufu city, named “holy land” in the mainland of China. But this survey finds that several foreign tourists lack such knowledge or have the wrong ideas about it. On the question of “authentic birthplace of Confucian culture”, there are five choices: “Mainland of China”, “Taiwan”, “Korea”, “Japan” and “other places”. Among 236 respondents, 214 foreign tourists, accounting for 90.6 percent, chose “Mainland of China”, indicating that the vast majority of foreign tourists have a correct view of the birthplace of Confucian culture.

Relationship between Confucian Culture and World Peace

A total of 252 foreign tourists made choices on whether they should practice Confucian culture in order to maintain world peace, of which 150 tourists chose “yes”, accounting for 60%. The core idea of Confucianism is “benevolence”, and if one really understands it, he will understand that Confucian culture will be beneficial to world peace. Most foreign tourists chose “yes”, indicating that they had understood the core of Confucian culture to some extent.

Social stability is a difficult problem that the whole world has to face, and many western scholars expect to find a solution from traditional Chinese culture and wisdom. They have found that as early as more than two thousand years ago, some benevolence ideas as “ke-ji-fu-li”, or “whatever you don’t want, don’t apply to others” were mentioned in the Confucian culture, which are so intelligent that can be reference for western civilization. As Xu pointed out, “Only by combining the Eastern concepts of

harmony and stability with Western culture to create a new culture that belongs to neither East nor West, but belongs to both East and West, can the world be saved” [5].

Relationship between Confucian Culture and Western Culture

Two questions are set up here.

As for the question “whether western Christianity is conducive to the spread of Confucian culture”, a total of 248 foreign tourists gave their answers, and 74.6 percent of them chose “yes” and “no influence”, indicating that most foreign tourists believe that Christianity will not hinder the spread of Confucian culture.

Christian missionaries translated Confucian classics and delivered them back to their countries, which started the spread of early Confucian culture in western countries. It implies that there is no fundamental conflict between Christianity and Confucian culture. “Western European missionaries, thinkers and scholars examined Confucianism from the perspective of western civilization and interpreted Confucianism. They believed that ‘Jesus’ was connected to ‘Confucianism’, and Confucius was similar to Plato and Socrates” [6].

In addition, for the question “whether western Christianity is conducive to the spread of Confucian culture”, one tourist chose “yes” and “no” at the same time, which seems contradictory but is actually not, because for one question there may be more than one answer. Perhaps that visitor was trying to make it clear that some features of Christianity might be good for the spread of Confucian culture, while others might be bad.

For the question “whether western family education is conducive to the spread of Confucian culture”, a total of 243 people made choices, and 75.3 percent of them chose “yes” or “no influence”, suggesting that most people believe that western family education is not in conflict with Confucian culture.

Tourists’ Willingness to Continue to Learn Confucian Culture

There are 216 tourists, accounting for 85 percent, who are willing to continue to learn Confucian culture, and 36 tourists, accounting for 15 percent, who are unwilling to do that. Obviously, most foreign tourists are interested in Confucian culture.

According to the survey data above, it can be seen that most foreign tourists have a good understanding of Confucian culture and are willing to continue to learn Confucian culture.

FEASIBILITY AND SERVING MEASURES

The Feasibility of Developing Inbound Tourism Based on Confucian Culture in the Downstream Areas of Yellow River

According to the questionnaire survey above, it can be concluded that it is feasible to carry out inbound tourism based on Confucian culture in the downstream areas of Yellow River.

The reasons are as follows:

First, foreign tourists have had some knowledge of Confucian culture, such as about the Confucius’ identity, Confucian classics, Confucian cultural activities, the birthplace of Confucian culture, etc., though not too deeply. On this basis, it would be easier to guide them on a tour of the downstream areas of the Yellow River, where Confucian culture has been prevailing for more than two thousand years.

Second, Confucian culture is not in conflict with western culture, and is conducive to world peace, so it might be easily accepted or recognized by foreign tourists. They may be interested in visiting the urban and rural features of Confucian culture in the downstream areas of Yellow River.

Third, 85 percent of foreign tourists would like to continue to learn Confucian culture, and experience the urban and rural features of Confucian culture in the downstream areas of Yellow River which is also a form of learning. For foreign tourists, being able to get in touch with the true embodiment of Confucian culture in the folks is more likely to arouse their interest. They are interested in Confucian culture and are willing to continue to learn and understand it, which is a psychological need as well as a market demand. Guiding the foreign tourists to experience the urban and rural features of Confucian culture of the downstream areas of Yellow River is a reasonable way to meet their demands, which is easy to be recognized by them, so it is feasible.

Serving Measures for Tourists in the Downstream Areas of Yellow River

Feasibility does not equal action. More efforts should be made to display the connotation of Confucian culture and to spread it, so foreign tourists can truly experience the charm and harmonious atmosphere of Confucian culture in the downstream areas of the Yellow River and can be attracted to visit these places.

Therefore, something should be done in the downstream areas of the Yellow River:

First, much importance should be attached to the display of Confucian culture. Local governments in the downstream areas of Yellow River should make full use of the original basis, and display Confucian culture in comprehensive and creative way. It should improve the spread efficiency of Confucian culture by internet, movies, TV, and books, to enhance foreign visitors' understanding of Confucian culture.

Second, local governments should set up some simple experience facilities of Confucian culture for foreign tourists to enjoy and experience the fun of it. Researches show that tourists' experience has a positive influence on their purpose of behavior [7], and tourist experience has a crucial role in the development of the tourism industry [8].

Third, the role of English tour guides should be emphasized. Language is the biggest barrier to cultural exchange. If foreign tourists really want to understand the Confucian culture, English tour guides is indispensable. It is necessary to carry out special training on Confucian culture for English tour guides to deepen their understanding of it, so they can embody the Confucian cultural concepts and become the spokesmen of Confucian culture.

Fourth, the service quality for inbound tourists should be improved in the downstream areas of Yellow River. Good tourism experience is closely related to service quality, and to keep high service quality, effective evaluation means should be introduced. Li tried to build and raise inbound tourism service quality model with manufacturing theory [9], and Zhang et al. studied the correlation between characteristics of inbound tourists and tourism service quality evaluation system in our country [10], whose studies could be helpful in measuring and ensuring the quality of inbound tourism service in the downstream areas of the Yellow River.

If some foreign tourists can feel the charm of Confucian culture in the downstream areas of the Yellow River, more foreign tourists will be attracted, so that it can promote the region's economic and social development, because "inbound tourism, as the forerunner and the window to broaden the opening to the outside, can also promote the development of export-oriented economy and be helpful in building regional overall image to attract more investment opportunities" [11]. Wang et al. also proved that "inbound tourism has a significant positive impact on regional economic growth" [12]. So, if the downstream areas of the Yellow River benefit from Confucian culture, they will cherish the spirit of Confucian culture much more, which will attract more foreign tourists, thus a virtuous circle is formed.

THE KEY ROLE OF CONFUCIAN CULTURE IN THE VIRTUOUS CYCLE OF TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

According to Guo & Yan, "Rural tourism can effectively promote the upgrading of rural industries, which is conducive to rural ecological environmental protection, cultural heritage, and the promotion of common wealth" [13], because environmental enhancement promotes tourism development by which local farmers can get more income, which makes them aware of the importance of environmental protection. Lutz believes that the further development of tourism will cause unavoidable negative impacts on the natural ecological environment [14], but there is no need to worry prematurely as the lower Yellow River region is facing a shortage of funds and underdeveloped tourism. If the situation of too many tourists bringing pressure on environmental protection occurs at a later stage, the number of tourists that can be carried by the tourist attractions can be controlled for a certain period of time in order to effectively protect the ecological environment of the tourist sites.

In addition, "Tourism development and ecological environment protection are mutually reinforcing; a quality ecological environment is the foundation of tourism development, and the green and sustainable development of tourism can encourage people to consciously protect the ecological environment" [15]. It can be seen that tourism and environmental protection are interdependent and a virtuous circle can be formed between them. This virtuous circle needs to be started by Confucian culture, that is, to attract foreign tourists to the downstream areas of Yellow River through Confucian culture. Confucian culture advocates "benevolence" and one of the meanings of benevolence is "harmony", which includes harmony among people and harmony between people and nature. Therefore, beautiful environment is the embodiment of Confucian culture, and the two are united. The combination of Confucian culture and a beautiful environment can better attract foreign tourists and make the cycle of tourism and the environmental protection come true.

CONCLUSION

The result of the questionnaire survey combining with some measures to improve service quality in the downstream areas of the Yellow River, can confirm that the development of inbound tourism in the downstream areas of the Yellow River relying on Confucian culture is completely feasible. This study is mainly based on the survey result of foreign tourists in Confucian culture Scenic Spot, “Sankong Scenic Spot”, in Qufu city. Although it cannot fully reflect the story of foreign tourists in china, it will provide some important clue for it. With the great international influence of Confucian culture, the development of Confucian cultural tourism in the downstream areas of Yellow River can not only meet the cultural tourism needs of foreign tourists, but also promote the economic development of the downstream areas of Yellow River, which is a new idea to improve the local people’s economic income and living standards. Of course, the local governments or companies know well the relationship between tourism and environmental protection, just as Li said, “driven by the good economic benefits of the scenic area, the relevant departments can have enough funds and resources to develop and protect the scenic environment, and repair or update the scenic area infrastructure equipment in time, so as to achieve the purpose of protecting the environment” [16]. When the local governments, companies and the farmers get benefits from inbound tourism, they are more likely to provide more funds for environmental protection, which is beneficial to inbound tourism. And the development of inbound tourism in turn will be helpful to environmental protection. A virtuous circle, started by Confucian culture, will be formed between inbound tourism and environmental protection.

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