

An Analytical Study on the Logic of Tourism Consumption Policies under the Perspective of Multi-Stream Theory in the Post-Epidemic Era---Taking Harbin City as an Example

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Abstract. In recent years, the tourism industry was one of the first sectors to be seriously affected by the New Crown epidemic. Therefore, in the post-epidemic era, China has introduced a series of policies to promote tourism consumption. Based on a multiple streams perspective, this paper explores the internal logic behind the formulation of tourism consumption policies by taking Harbin City as an example, which involves issues, policies, and political perspectives. The study finds that there are problems, policies, and politics behind the formulation of a policy and the setting of an agenda at the social level. Problem streams such as the single structure of tourism consumption and poor service quality are the main sources of policy change; the research results of experts and scholars are the policy stream of policy change; and social opinion and the direction of national sentiment are the political stream of policy change. The three streams converge at a certain point in time and open the window of policy. To further promote the development and improvement of the tourism consumption market, Harbin City should establish a sense of the problem and adhere to the problem orientation in the future; widely solicit suggestions and adhere to the policy formulation from multiple angles; and uphold the concept of service and create a good public opinion environment.

Keywords: Post-epidemic era, Multi-stream theory, tourism consumption policy.

1. Introduction

Consumption is an important driver of economic development and an important reflection of people's living standards. With digital transformation and the popularization of the concept of sustainable development, the tourism market is ushering in a new dynamic. In the post-pandemic era, the strong recovery momentum and large-scale growth of the tourism market have had a tremendous pulling effect on expanding consumption, boosting investment, and promoting the recovery and revitalization of the tourism industry and economic growth. The Fourteenth Five-Year Plan for Tourism Development issued by the State Council at the beginning of 2023 pointed out that under the normalization of epidemic prevention and control, the main line of the deepening of the supply-side structural reform of the tourism industry should be emphasized by "focusing on demand-side management". Focus on demand-side management [1]. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has issued a Notice on the organization of the Culture and Tourism Consumption Promotion Campaign 2023. Harbin, as a city of ice and snow tourism with "modern agriculture" and "opening up to the north", has a prominent consumer image, and the tourism industry makes a certain contribution to the overall consumption level of Heilongjiang Province. Based on the theory of multi-source flow, this paper takes Harbin City as an entry point, conducts an in-depth study on the tourism consumption policy of Harbin City in the post-epidemic era, and explores the internal logic of policy formulation.

2. Theoretical Connotation and Function

Kingdon put forward the theory of multi-stream theory based on the Garbage Can Model of Cohen, March, and Olsen [2]. Kingdon believes that the establishment of the agenda, the generation of alternatives, and the establishment of public policies are driven by the convergence of three streams: the stream of problem, the stream of policy, and the stream of politics. Generally, these three streams

operate relatively independently. However, at a critical moment, policy entrepreneurs push the three streams together to open a specific "policy window" and the three work together to achieve policy changes [3]. These "elements" can be categorized as Problem Stream, Policy Stream, and Political Stream, with the Problem Stream comprising problems to be solved by the government, the Policy Stream comprising a wide range of policy recommendations, policy ideas, and policy proposals by experts and scholars, and the Political Stream comprising factors such as national sentiment, public opinion, the distribution of power, and the power contrast of interest groups, which reflect the political situation and background. The Political Stream consists of factors such as national sentiment, public opinion, power distribution patterns, and the contrasting strengths of interest groups, which reflect the political situation and political background. Therefore, the convergence of the three streams implies an organic combination of specific issues, policy programs, and political situations. This organic combination in turn implies that issues, policy options, and political situations are co-inclusive rather than mutually exclusive, and Kingdon argues that among the many projects, the fact that a project makes it to the government's agenda is the result of a combination of factors in the issue stream, the policy stream and the political stream [4]. They are independent of each other and are not dependent on the other source streams for their occurrence, development, and operation, but all contribute to or constrain the establishment of the policy agenda. When they converge at a critical point in time, public issues will be put on the agenda, and this critical point in time is the so-called "policy window". Since the 1990s, it has been widely recognized by international academics that multi-source flow theory has strong explanatory power in explaining public management policy changes. Therefore, most of the developed countries in the West have adopted the multiple streams theory to explain the setting of relevant policy agendas. So far, foreign scholars have used the theory to analyze the policy formulation process of more than 300 cases and how to further improve the relevant policies [5].

As an emerging role in the country's economic development, the tourism market is receiving increasing attention, and the formulation of tourism consumption-related policies has changed from government-led in the past to multi-subject participation nowadays, showing a high degree of openness and participation. The issues, policies, and politics behind the formulation of consumption policies and agenda-setting at the societal level are a combination of issues, policies, and politics. Specifically, the government has realized that there are many real problems in the tourism consumption market, such as the irrationality of the single structure, which then triggers the discussion of other interested parties and professional scholars, and puts forward the policy agenda. In this way, it can be seen that the "convergence" of the problematic, policy and political streams in the multiple streams theory has led to the formulation of the policy agenda. Therefore, it is more appropriate to comprehensively examine the internal logic of policy formulation from the perspective of multi-flow theory.

3. Analysis

The tourist boom in the post-pandemic age has emerged as a new source of economic growth for modern nations. It not only provides a sizeable amount of direct cash to the world economy, but it also has a big impact on employment, innovation, and associated industries. Drawing on the problematic, policy, and political streams of multi-flow theory, as well as the three streams of convergence in the policy window, can provide a comprehensive picture of the causes of Harbin's consumer policymaking.

3.1. Problem Stream

The problem stream is the power source stream of the three streams and provides the basis for the dynamics of tourism consumption policy-making. According to the American scholar Thomas Dye defining which problems make it into policy is the most important thing in policy making [6]. Of course, this does not mean that the problem exists innately; it is generally a problem that contrasts

significantly with the conventional perceptions of stakeholders and is therefore identified and recognized by policymakers as requiring explanation [7].

In the post-epidemic era, the tourism consumption policy of Harbin City focuses on promoting the high-quality development of the industry, which to a certain extent meets the national demand for tourism consumption. The single structure of the tourism consumption market, the degree of standardization of the consumption environment is not high and other problems limit the development of the level of tourism consumption in Harbin City, and the source of this problem drives policymakers to think about the importance of the role of the market for economic development [8].

3.2. Policy Stream

The policy flow stems from the importance of local governments, representatives of the State Council and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the advice of experts and scholars to accelerate the establishment of the policy agenda. When the above issues start to be identified and recognized as problems to be solved, a policy community of scholars specializing in a particular policy starts a discussion around the issue and generates many policy recommendations to defuse the pressure and develop the same values [7]. These different policy recommendations make up the policy source stream, floating various expert scholars' ideas in the policy for the policymakers. The agreement reached by policymakers on solutions or policy advice based on the problem source streams advances it into the government's agenda.

3.2.1 State and government support

In the process of Harbin's tourism policy implementation and implementation, the tourism consumption policy of the national and provincial governments plays a leading role in the construction of the national economy and the enrichment of people's spiritual lives. The policy mainly focuses on increasing the supply of high-quality tourism products and services, vigorously developing the ice and snow economy, building an interconnected tourism transport network, stimulating tourism consumption demand, strengthening border tourism services, increasing the cultivation of tourism market players, enhancing the industry's comprehensive capacity, and strengthening the safeguard measures and other eight major aspects.

3.2.2 Focus on academic results

The tourism industry in Harbin city in product development, market marketing planning, operation and management and so on should continue to innovate to further improve the quality of service, and promote the ice and snow tourism sustainable and high-quality development. Zhang Dengyao and Xing Tiancai proposed that in the post-epidemic period, cities should accelerate the construction of the "intelligent +" consumption ecosystem; create a safe and secure consumption environment; regulate the development of the ground stall economy in Harbin City, so that the economy and civilization can coexist harmoniously [9]. The research reports and theoretical results formed by experts and scholars provide important academic support for the development of tourism consumption policy, greatly enriching the "policy soup". Tourism consumption stakeholders include "tourism consumers" and "tourism practitioners", whose demands and suggestions can contribute to the creation and improvement of tourism consumption policy programs. These stakeholders have a large base and many ideas, and they have more flexible ways to express their demands and suggestions on tourism consumption policies. Therefore, building a platform for the expression of interests and paying attention to the demands of stakeholders for tourism consumption policies will be more conducive to the formation and improvement of policy options, and will lead tourism consumption policies towards an overall and more systematic "policy stream".

3.2.3 Effective policies

Harbin tourism consumption policy to guide tourism consumption demand form the main features of the policy, largely driven by the level of consumption in Harbin, and the success of the 2025 Harbin

Asian Winter Games, prompted to usher in an unprecedented boom in consumption characterized by snow and ice tourism.

Table1. Tourism in Harbin, 2019-2023 [10]

Year (years)	Total income (¥bn)	Tourist amount (10,000)
2019	1575.70	9579.70
2020	1105.70	7833.70
2021	945.10	9188.60
2022	499.20	5511.20
2023	1692.45	13500.00

As shown in Table 1, from 2022 to 2023, Harbin's visitor reception accumulated 135 million, compared with 55.112 million in 2022, an increase of 145.78%; total tourism revenue of 169.245 billion yuan in 2023, compared with 49.92 billion yuan in 2022, an increase of 239.03% [10]. China Tourism Research Institute released on January 5, "2024 ice and snow tourism in the top ten cities", Harbin ranked first. According to the Harbin Municipal Culture and Tourism Bureau estimates, during New Year's Day, the city received a total of 3,047,900 tourists, an increase of 441.4%; to achieve a total tourism revenue of 5.914 billion yuan, an increase of 791.92% [10]. Visitor reception and total tourism revenue reached a historical peak. Among them, 163,200 people visited Ice World, up 435% year-on-year, with a tourism revenue of 46.18 million yuan; 35,800 people visited Ya Buli Resort, up 540% year-on-year, with a tourism revenue of 17.94 million yuan [10].

3.3. Political Stream

Political streams play a dominant role in the policy agenda and are a direct factor. Political source flow exists independently of issue source flow and policy source flow, and the factors involved in this process include changes in national sentiment and public opinion.

Under social change, the public mindset accelerates its evolution, showing complexity and diversity. In the policy agenda, national sentiment refers to the generalized interests and concerns of groups in a country and region, both positive and negative, and generates public opinion effects through the media and other means. In the context of personalized tourism gradually becoming mainstream, travelers are no longer satisfied with monotonous travel packages but want to obtain customized travel that meets their interests and needs and has high emotional value. China's famous tourism expert Wei Xiaolan that Harbin culture and tourism do the "friendly, scenario, the whole experience" in three aspects, and greatly promote the consumption of tourism in the city of Harbin. Harbin's success is the result of changes in the consumer psychology of the tourist community, the Internet's communication trend, and the government's proactive approach. From the perspective of tourists, in recent years, the emotional value of young people to become an important demand for tourism, Harbin opened the "full accompanied by relatives" mode, whether it is the enthusiasm of the public spontaneously organizing a free fleet of vehicles, catering to the southern tourists to eat tastes, or the Sofia Church Square, the rise of the "artificial moon" and so on all show the sincerity and warmth of the people of Northeast China, so that tourists feel at home. The nation's desire for emotional value will accelerate the implementation of the relevant policy agenda.

3.4. Convergence of the Three Streams and the Opening of the "Policy Window"

The three source streams are not completely independent, but influence and interact with each other. They are concerned about how agendas are opened by policy entrepreneurs attempting to open windows of opportunity by aggregating previously separate streams of problem, policy, and politics [11]. When the three streams converge and the policy window opens, advocates of policy proposals seize the opportunity in time, prompting Harbin City to formulate tourism consumption policies. Firstly, the source of problems such as tourism consumption price infringement of consumer rights and interests, single market structure, and low service quality prompted Harbin to pay attention to issues related to tourism consumption policy; secondly, the source of policies such as expert and scholarly writings provided agenda options for the above issues. Lastly, the political source of the

national desire for emotionally valued tourism consumption determined the direction of the policy agenda to a large extent.

4. Development Direction

The policy formulation should fully grasp the power mechanism of the problematic source stream, policy source stream, and political source stream in the process of setting up the policy agenda for tourism consumption, to realize the opening of a new round of the policy window, and to create a good decision-making atmosphere.

4.1. Build up an Awareness of Problems and Adhere to a Problem-Oriented Approach

As the basic premise for agenda-setting in tourism consumption development policies, issue streams play an important role in the development and improvement of policies. According to the theory of multiple streams, these problems are both the direct driving force behind a policy and the root cause of the formation of the relevant "policy community", but not all of them can become "real" problems and enter the policy agenda. However, not all problems can become "real" problems and enter the policy agenda, but they must satisfy the following three conditions: the situation is urgent enough, it has attracted the attention of policymakers, and it has at least one feasible solution [12]. At present, however, tourism consumption in Harbin is still facing many real problems that need urgent attention and clarification. Groups of organizations should focus on the focus of the problem, policymakers should analyze the real problems facing tourism consumption policy in Harbin City, focusing on the problems brought about by changes in policy evaluation indicators. Changes in evaluation indicators will naturally bring a series of new problems, in the process of studying new problems, maintaining innovation, keeping abreast of the times of the problem consciousness, improving the aptness and flexibility of decision-making, quickly and accurately give the source of the problem flow feasible solutions to maximize efficiency.

4.2. Widely Soliciting Suggestions and Insisting on Policy Formulation from Multiple Perspectives

Policy source flow is an indispensable part of the three major source flows, and the formulation of policies needs to involve the public in policy agenda setting, actively play the power and wisdom of the public, rely on the masses, mobilize the masses, improve the feedback mechanism for the adoption of opinion research, improve the reasonableness, legitimacy, effectiveness, and relevance of the policy outputs, and promote effective implementation of the policies [13]. Policy entrepreneurs have a high degree of enthusiasm on the one hand and professional academic ability on the other. Experts and scholars continue to find problems in tourism consumption in their daily research, and then form academic papers; policymakers regularly hold symposiums, hearings, and other ways to fully listen to public opinion, expand public participation, improve the transparency of decision-making, and select the optimal program based on scientific theoretical foundations, thus promoting the development of tourism consumption policy.

4.3. Adhering to the Concept of Service and Creating a Favorable Public Opinion Environment

Political streams are the determinants of the three main source streams that play a dominant role in policy agenda setting. National sentiment is the centralized expression of public opinion and the flashpoint of public opinion [12]. New forms of tourism market are emerging, industry transformation and upgrading are accelerating, and consumer demand is showing a new trend of high quality and diversification, which puts forward higher requirements for the level of service quality management. Therefore, the state should focus on key priorities, enrich the means of improvement, and continue to promote the improvement of tourism service quality to achieve new results. Firstly, improve tourism management and service level. Improve the working pattern of tourism service quality and the

mechanism of sectoral coordination, which is led by the government, the main responsibility of enterprises, the joint efforts of departments, the participation of the society, and multi-dimensional co-management. Secondly, improve the tourism consumption experience. It will establish and improve a tourist-centered tourism service quality evaluation system and a tourism service quality monitoring mechanism, and carry out an assessment of the effectiveness of the implementation of quality enhancement policies. Third, cultivate tourism service quality brands. Vigorously implement the brand development strategy based on service quality, and cultivate several service excellence products with high professionalism, wide coverage, great influence, and peace of mind and safety. Give full play to the leading and driving role of service brands in improving the quality of tourism services, and promoting the formation of the awareness of high-quality and high-priced tourism consumption. The state and the government actively guide national sentiment, publicize existing policy proposals and advocates with the help of the Internet and other media, and allow the public to exercise their subjective initiative and express their views, thus creating a favorable public opinion environment and promoting the formulation of policies.

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of multi-flow theory, the problems of single structure and low service quality in China's tourism consumption market constitute the problem flow, the research results of experts and scholars contribute to the policy flow, and the national sentiment and ruling philosophy in the context of social opinion constitute the political flow, which plays a dominant role in the multi-flow theory. The coupling of the three streams opens the policy window and accelerates the implementation of the relevant policy agenda. In the future, tourism consumption policy should pay close attention to the real problems that need to be solved in the field of tourism consumption, focus on collecting the suggestions of experts and scholars, adhere to the level of political source streams, and accelerate the high-quality development of the tourism consumption market.

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