

The Impact of Tourism Across the Taiwan Strait on the Taiwanese Identity

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Abstract: Nowadays, the search for identity in Taiwan has been more significant today compared to the past because political parties have been attempting to use Taiwanese identity to impact the political loyalty, the democratization as well as language. Based on current situation of tourism cross-straits, this paper respectively analyzes its economic value, political value as well as cultural value on Taiwanese identity. This paper finds that due to a series of strategies adopted by Tsai' government, tourism does not make a big difference in Taiwan's economy, hence, the interdependence of tourism does not remarkably diminish Taiwanese identity from the perspective of economic value. Furthermore, according to the current perceptions of Taiwanese to Mainland tourists, tourism across Taiwan Strait makes slight influence on Taiwanese identity. Consequently, the current effect of using tourism as an economic lever to encourage political unification is extremely rough and tenuous. Besides, to some extent, currently tourism is likely to produce greater social and cultural alienation among Taiwanese, which makes a contribution to boost Taiwanese identity. However, the result can be reverse with the current improvement of education and the quality of Chinese and admiration of China's remarkable development.

Key Words: Ttourism, Taiwan Strait, Taiwanese identity

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1. Introduction

Tourism plays a profound role in international relations and world peace.^[1] Yu & Chung states that it has been universally acknowledged as a lens of people-to-people diplomacy for fostering a better understanding and friendship among individuals from different political and cultural background.^[2] Furthermore, many researches also have found the importance of tourism in reducing conflicts, tension, barriers to cooperation and political mistrust, which idealistically leads to peace-building.^[3] Nowadays, the benefits of using tourism as a political tool for reconciliation and peace building between partitioned countries have been increasingly recognized.^[4] However, most of these studies examine the perspective of political economy while few of them pay attention to

the viewpoints of people. There are a few studies such as Lanfant, Tomaselli, Cronin and Frew focusing on the general association between international tourism and identity.^[5-8] Whereas, little attention has been paid to the role of tourism in identity among divided countries. The search for identity in Taiwan has been more significant today compared to the past because political parties have been attempting to use Taiwanese identity to impact the political loyalty, the democratization as well as language.^[9] Therefore, this paper aims to examine the current situation of tourism and then explores its impact on Taiwanese identity. More specifically, the paper is anticipated to analyze the impact through three perspectives which are the economic, political and cultural values of tourism. Apart from that, this paper will also explore how Taiwanese perceive Chinese, whether their viewpoints have been

changed due to the activities linked to tourism and to what extent their perceptions have been altered.

2. The History of Tourism Across the Taiwan Strait

There is no standard definition for the tourism. A abroad definition of tourism by Goeldner and Ritchie is that "tourism is the sum of the process, activities and outcomes arising from the relationships and the interactions among tourists, tourism suppliers, host government, host communities and surrounding environments that are involved in the attracting, transporting, hosting and management of tourists and other visitors."^[10] This concept puts tourism in a detailed stakeholder context. It is notable that the tourism is different from residence, migration and business collaborations while the reasons for traveling can be various factors such as pleasure, health, conferences, meetings, diplomacy, business purposes and religious purposes, which more focuses on the pleasure and people-to-people interactions.^[10] Owing to the fact of political division between Mainland China and Taiwan, tourism across the Taiwan Strait also experienced a tough and changeable time. The figure 1 describes the number and the growth rate of tourist arrivals between Mainland China and Taiwan from 1988 to 2004.

Prior to 1978, travel between Taiwan and the Mainland was highly restricted. Even from 1978 to 1987, there was very slight increase in the cross-straits tourism. In 1987 and later, the ban on travel to Mainland China was lifted by Taiwan, which resulted in a flood of travel to PR

China. However, at that time only selected Mainland or Taiwanese residents were permitted to visit relatives and friends whom they had not seen for over 35 years.^[11] Leisure and recreation travel was still banned. In 1992, there was a remarkable growth (39%) of the number of Taiwanese tourists to Mainland. Since 1992, the Kuomintang government gradually relaxed its policy and the policy for PR China also experienced a gradual door opening. Therefore, visitors have increased obviously in both directions while it experienced a temporary plunge due to the "Qian-dao Lake incident" in 1994.^[11] In 2005, Mr. Lien Chan, president of Kuoming Party in Taiwan, and Mr. Chuyu Song, president of the People First Party) in Taiwan, visited Mainland China, which greatly promoted close contact, mutual understanding and tourism. From 1988 to 2004, although the number of Mainlanders visiting Taiwan was much lower compared to that of Taiwanese visiting Mainland China, it is noted that the majority of Mainlanders to Taiwan were outstanding individuals such as professors, scientists, journalists, actors and athletes.^[3] Since 2016 May, tourists from Mainlanders to Taiwan as a whole have dwindled significantly since President Tsai Ing-wen took power and declined to endorse the notion that Taiwan is a part of one united China.^[12] However, in 2015 Mainland tourists to Taiwan reached a record high, making up approximately 40% of tourists to Taiwan.^[12]

To sum up, since the early 1990s, travel across the Taiwan Strait was essentially irresistible.^[11] There are three main features of the tourism across the Taiwan Strait. First of all, the initial purpose of visitors has altered from pay-

Number of tourist arrivals between Mainland China and Taiwan

Year	Tourists from Taiwan to Mainland China (in thousands)	Growth rate (%)	Tourists from Mainland China to Taiwan (in thousands)	Growth rate (%)
1988	473.7	N/A	0.381	N/A
1989	541.0	23.60	4.838	1169.82
1990	947.6	75.16	7.520	55.44
1991	946.6	-00.11	11.074	47.26
1992	1317.8	39.21	13.134	18.60
1993	1527.0	15.87	18.343	39.66
1994	1390.2	-8.96	23.562	28.45
1995	1532.3	10.23	47.176	100.22
1996	1734.0	13.16	58.510	24.02
1997	2118.0	22.15	72.346	23.65
1998	2174.6	2.67	90.626	25.27
1999	2584.6	18.85	106.699	17.74
2000	3108.6	20.27	117.125	9.77
2001	3442.0	10.73	133.655	14.11
2002	3660.6	6.35	153.923	15.16
2003	3670.5	0.27	150.683	-2.10
2004	3686.0	0.42	145.000	-3.77
Total	34,819.1	15.62	858.912	98.96

Figure 1. Source: Yearbook of China Tourists Statistics (1989-2004)

Visitor Arrivals by Purpose of Visit, 2016

Unit: Person

Residence	Total	Business	pleasure	Visit Relatives	Conference	Study	Exhibition	Medical Treatment	Others
Hongkong, Macao	1,614,803	87,032	1,397,233	44,083	8,071	5,913	180	2,439	69,852
Mainland China	3,511,734	14,982	2,845,547	67,584	704	25,191	89	30,713	526,924
Japan	1,895,702	253,159	1,379,233	21,403	10,572	5,707	1,245	124	224,259
Korea, Republic of	884,397	59,578	693,224	17,791	5,727	6,112	3,125	81	98,759
India	33,550	12,053	3,260	903	2,132	544	498	38	14,322

Figure 2. Source: Tourism Bureau, M.O.T.C. Republic of China (Taiwan), 2016

ing a visit to families and relatives to aiming at business, pleasure, sightseeing, conferences, exhibitions and so forth in more recent years (Figure 2). Second, Mao states that tourism is a non-basic-need activity so its demand is closely associated to income level.^[13] Due to the different levels of economics, standards of living and restricted policies, the tourism market presents an obvious uni-directional flow from Taiwanese visitors to Mainland at an early period.^[3] The number of Mainlanders traveling to Taiwan is relatively smaller. Furthermore, tourism is easily influenced by the tenuous political relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan.

3. The Impact of Tourism Cross-Straits on Taiwanese Identity

In defining identity, scholars usually distinguish between national identity and social identity. For nation identity, Dittmer and Kim states that it is a feeling and evaluation normally circumscribed by its territory and it tends to coincide with objective criteria as common language, ethnic or racial origin as well as political culture.^[14] Horowitz, Heo & Tan argues that national identity is the imaginary community that the state is supposed to protect and serve and is related to political, economic, national cultural as well as geopolitical goals that the state is supposed to promote.^[15] Jenkins, however, declares that social identity is a part of self-concept which derives from the group membership that is meaningful to individuals and permits self-evaluation.^[16] Furthermore, it is a shared representation and the appropriate behaviour of who one is. In this paper, Taiwanese identity covers not only national identity

but also self-concept.

Despite the surveys completed by Wu reported that the rising Taiwanese identity was not impeded by the close economic relationship with Mainland since the early 1990s, it is understandable that, with Mainland's unquenchable political ambition of annexing Taiwan, the increasing Taiwanese identity alone will not be able to maintain the general consensus on Taiwan's independence and autonomy.^[17] Without political sovereignty, it might be much more easily for Taiwanese social identity to be transformed into Cantonese or Hunanese.^[18] In fact, the people of Hong Kong under the "one country, two system" have a rising identity as Hong Kongese. Nonetheless, these issues are too complicated and risky to be analyzed within the scope of this paper and merely from economic perspectives.

According to Tourism Bureau, M.O.T.C. Republic of China (Taiwan) (2017), a total of Mainlanders traveling to Taiwan in February 2017 decreased by 14.42% compared to that in February of 2016.^[19] The constant drop of Mainlanders to Taiwan to some extent challenges Taiwanese tourism industry and arouses the concern about the economic safety net, which are supposed to form the political pressure from the perspective of PR China. For example, on Sept. 12, up to 10,000 tourism industry workers protested, holding signs saying "No Jobs, No Life!" and "We Need to Survive".^[20] They demand the Tsai government take a more China-friendly path. This discord revealed the challenge that Taiwan heavily depends on Mainland's economy against greater autonomy. Nevertheless, this time Beijing did not imagine that the attempt of throttling

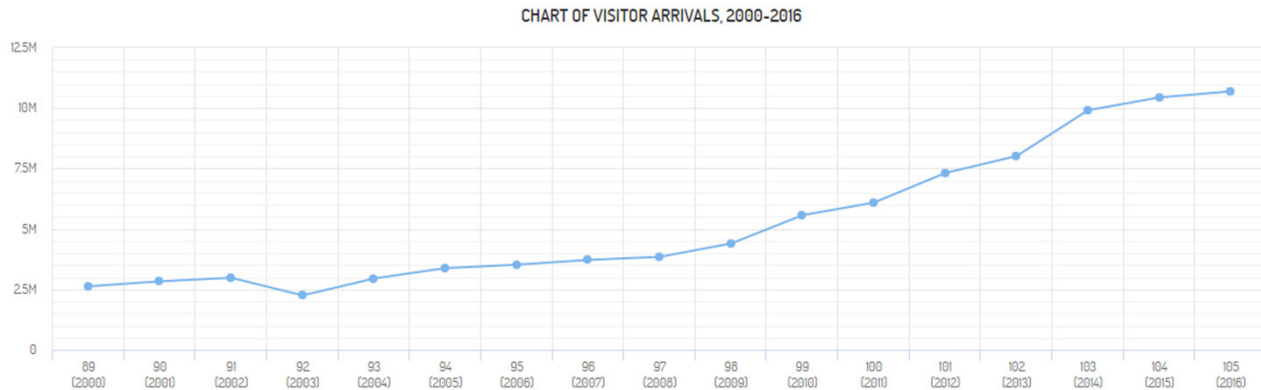


Figure 3. Source: Tourism Bureau, M.O.T.C. Republic of China (Taiwan), 2000-2016

tourism from PRC has not made much influence. The tourism as a whole still successfully grew by courting visitors from the rest of Asia such as Japan and South Korea (Figure, 3).

Furthermore, the decreased Mainland tourists correspond with Tsai's official measure to diminish Taiwan's economic reliance on Mainland and to intensify relations with Southeast Asian nations.^[21] Apart from that, Tsai administration announced a \$9.5 million emergency fund to boost the tourism sector and other measures have been adopted such as easing visa processes and creating slick marketing campaigns.^[20] Therefore, based on such various strategies, even though some companies catering to mainland tourists complaint about a drop of profit, the overall economic effect on Taiwan is limited.^[20] That is to say, the economic and political value of tourism cross-straits on changing Taiwanese identity is not profound, at least during this period.

Kin & Crompton deem that even though the unsettled political climate is surrounded by many of these political anomalies, the cultural and social linkage between the partitioned section have often been maintained in certain forms, in particular by kinship or general ethnic, religious, and language linkage.^[13,22] However, Brown argues that identity is supposed to be based on social experience, not cultural ideas or ancestry.^[23] Tourism is considered as a not threaten sensitive contact between tourists and local people in the host country. Because it provides visitors an opportunity to meet people in the host country and the contact, though superficial most of the time, it can enable travelers and hosts to better understand each other, which can further facilitate the visitors' appreciation of the host way of life. The mutual understanding can thus lead to improved relationships between two people in partitioned areas. Through this indirect vehicle, it is more easily to

boost the relations, which eventually make a difference on identity.^[2] However, the current experience of interaction between Mainlanders and Taiwanese, to a certain degree, is unpleasant. For one thing, some Taiwanese complain about Mainland group tourists' poor behavior including loud talking, smoking in inappropriate areas, public urination, poor hygiene and spitting as well as jumping the queue.^[24] For another, some Chinese also consider Taiwanese locals disrespectful, unwelcome and prideful to them.

Consequently, based on Rowen's Taiwanese perceptions above, this reveals a fundamental risk of the contact of the tourism: the more that Taiwanese engaged with Mainlanders, the more alienated they felt China's people and culture, undermining the unificationist program and enhancing their national identity.^[24] The outcome suggests that the impact of tourism may not diminish Taiwanese identity, in reverse, it is likely that to some extent it will strengthen Taiwanese identity.

4. Conclusion

Tourism is usually empirically viewed as contributing positively to cultural understanding and economic development. Nonetheless, tourism between partitioned states has its own distinct patterns. This paper looked back the history of tourism across the Taiwan Strait. It found that the purpose of visitors has altered significantly over these years and at the beginning the flow from Taiwanese visitors to Mainland presented an obvious uni-direction. Additionally, tourism is easily impacted by uncertain political relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan.

Based on current situation of tourism cross-straits, this paper respectively analyzes its economic value, political value as well as cultural value on Taiwanese identity. Due

to a series of strategies adopted by Tsai' government, tourism does not make a big difference in Taiwan's economy, hence, the interdependence of tourism does not remarkably diminish Taiwanese identity from the perspective of economic value. As Brown points out that identities of individuals as members of groups, especially national identity are portrayed by political leaders as fixed, with borders that are not based on individual experiences.^[23] Furthermore, according to the current perceptions of Taiwanese to Mainland tourists, it is not surprising that tourism across Taiwan Strait makes slight influence on Taiwanese identity. However, the result can be reverse with the current improvement of education and the quality of Chinese. Consequently, we can see that the current effect of using tourism as an economic lever to encourage political unification is extremely rough and tenuous. Besides, to some extent, currently tourism is likely to produce greater social and cultural alienation among Taiwanese, which makes a contribution to boost Taiwanese identity.

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