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THEORETICAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS AND ANALYSIS OF YOUTH TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA IN THE POST- PANDEMIC PERIOD

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Abstract

The modern global economy and international relations system are operating under conditions of complex post-pandemic transformation, where the global crisis caused by COVID-19 has acted not only as a destructive factor but also as a powerful catalyst for structural changes. As the practice of developing various segments, including the business meetings industry (MICE tourism), shows, it is precisely flexibility and high mobility that allow economic agents to successfully adapt to political and economic shocks and restore business activity. In this macroeconomic context, youth tourism in the People's Republic of China stands out as a key driver of post-pandemic recovery and qualitative modernization of the entire national tourism industry.

Official macroeconomic statistics confirm the unprecedented scale of this recovery: by the end of 2023, the volume of domestic tourism in China reached 4.891 billion trips, which provided the tourism sector with a total revenue of 4.91 trillion yuan. Meanwhile, average spending per tourist trip rose to 1,000 yuan, confidently surpassing pre-pandemic values in 2019 and recording the highest consumption level in the last five years. Such steady growth in tourism demand is directly linked to the activation of the younger generation (millennials and generation Z), whose increased solvency and desire to integrate into the global cultural space are forming an updated structure of tourism consumption.



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Theoretical and economic analysis shows that modern young tourists in China are fundamentally transforming traditional value chains in the industry. In the post-pandemic period, the Chinese market is finally moving away from the model of mass standardized group tours in favor of independent planning, which today accounts for the vast majority of trips by Chinese youth. The emergence of specific consumer patterns such as "intensive tourism" (special forces-style tourism) indicates the rational desire of young consumers to maximize the economic utility of visiting destinations under conditions of strict time and budget constraints.

The process of making economic decisions in this demographic cohort has become completely decentralized and relies entirely on digital infrastructure. The influence of social media and recommendation algorithms (particularly Xiaolangshu and Douyin platforms) on conversion and destination selection manifests at the earliest stages of planning, requiring tourism service providers to implement innovative marketing and technological solutions.

Despite persistent logistical barriers and price instability in the air transportation market, which traditionally act as constraints on tourism development, the youth segment demonstrates the highest degree of institutional adaptability. Young travelers respond quickly to changes in visa regimes and optimize their logistical routes, shifting the focus of competition in global and domestic markets from quantitative reach to providing authentic cultural and emotional experiences.

Thus, theoretical understanding and deep economic analysis of youth tourism development in China require the application of new analytical approaches that account for total digitalization, increased mobility, and fundamental changes in the structure of consumer values. This makes this research direction critical for forecasting future trends in the global tourism economy and developing effective strategies for managing tourist flows.



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The development of youth tourism in the People's Republic of China (PRC) is occurring under conditions of large-scale structural transformation, where the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst for profound changes in the entire global economic system [1]. As economic analysis shows, the tourism industry, including its business (MICE) and youth segments, was able to withstand the crisis solely due to its high mobility, flexibility, and transition to new formats of interaction [1].

Modern Chinese youth tourism relies on a generation of highly qualified personnel (millennials and Zumers), whose activities are an integral part of the country's innovative economy [3]. Improving the level of education in the PRC serves as a key factor for innovative development and reducing unemployment, which directly forms new, more complex, and intellectual demands from tourism service consumers [2].

The process of economic decision-making in the youth environment of the PRC today is completely decentralized and inextricably linked to global digitalization processes [6]. At the same time, the economic behavior of young Chinese tourists is characterized by clear segmentation and budget optimization, which confirms the importance of applying strict methods for determining population differentiation threshold values to correctly analyze tourism demand [5].

In the post-pandemic period, the Chinese tourism market has seen a conceptual shift in focus toward regional characteristics of recreational needs, which have become a central element in the system of individual human needs [4]. Recreation and tourism are viewed by modern Chinese youth not merely as leisure activities, but as a fundamental foundation for the spiritual and cultural revival of the nation and the sustainable socio-economic development of the country [9]. Furthermore, the macroeconomic significance of health protection factors has significantly



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increased, becoming the basis for the stability of social institutions, including the family institution, in the post-crisis period [13].

Of particular analytical interest is the new phenomenon of ultra-intensive youth tourism in China (the so-called "special forces-style tourism"), which conceptually intersects with the evolution of theoretical approaches to military-recreational activities [8]. The application of military-recreational elements, such as rigorous route planning and high physical endurance, increases the motivation of young people for research activities and self-education during travel [7, 10]. Such trends require the state to accelerate the development of specialized recreational-tourist and military-recreational zones [11], and also actualize the socio-economic consequences of developing militaristic tourism as a promising market direction [12].

On a macroeconomic scale, the reorientation of Chinese youth toward the domestic tourism market amid global instability and the sharp rise in international air travel prices serves as a crucial tool for retaining capital within the country. The development of domestic youth tourism directly contributes to ensuring the economic security of the state and strengthening its strategic potential [14].

In conclusion, I would like to note that the development of youth tourism in China in the post-pandemic period is not only an indicator of the tourism industry's recovery but also a crucial factor in the socio-economic development of the country's regions, the service sector, other economic sectors, and the improvement of public welfare [1].

Based on the theoretical and economic analysis conducted, the following key conclusions can be formulated:

Firstly, total global digitalization has become a fundamental environment for transforming the consumer behavior of youth in the tourism market [6]. To meet new demands, the industry is forced to rely on highly qualified personnel, which



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are an integral part of the functioning of a modern innovative economy, and to implement advanced technological solutions.

Secondly, youth tourism today serves as an effective tool for developing human capital. Practice shows that integrating non-standard formats, including elements of military-recreational activities, not only contributes to protecting health and strengthening the resilience of the family institution in a post-crisis society [13], but also significantly increases the motivation of young people for education and research activities during travel [7, 10].

Thirdly, to meet the growing and differentiated demand [5], the accelerated development and modernization of specialized recreational-tourism and military-recreational zones are required [11]. Taking into account the regional characteristics of youth recreational needs [4] and creating diversified infrastructure allows for the neutralization of external economic and logistical shocks (for example, the sharp increase in air transportation costs [1]), stimulating sustainable domestic demand.

Finally, the strategic reorientation of Chinese youth toward the domestic tourism market and the development of promising niche areas (specifically military tourism [12]) play a critical role in macroeconomic stability. Maintaining capital within the country and stimulating regional economies through youth tourism is becoming one of the determining factors in the system of ensuring the comprehensive economic security of the state [14].

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