

Topic and Research Question

Tourism is innately connected to movement and to the merging of cultures and values. Yet, the industry has seen development in the People's Republic of China (PRC) as well as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), both of which are countries otherwise characterized by their isolationist and state socialist organization. International tourism in state socialism brings together two concepts that, seen from various angles, present contrasting ideas and values. How and under which rules, structures and processes the concepts yet manage to work provides an insight into the priorities of the system in question.

This thesis specifically sees an interest in analyzing the common and contrasting elements in the approach towards tourism in the PRC and the DPRK. This comparison is specifically relevant because of the two countries' geographical proximity and historical relationship, but also because the countries share many commonalities with regard to their political pasts, yet present striking differences in their economic developments. As their economic differences are well-known, the thesis aims at looking at whether any sort of pattern or model in tourism development can be extracted from their tourism developments.

RQ 1: *What are the similarities and/or differences between tourism development in Beijing (PRC) and Pyongyang (DPRK) post-1990?*

RQ 2: *Which development has tourism in Beijing (PRC) and Pyongyang (DPRK) undergone post-1990 in light of the inherent contradictions between state socialism and tourism?*

RQ 3: *Do the similarities and/or differences discovered show any patterns in how tourism has developed in state socialist countries post-1990?*

State of the Art

Descriptive case study research into the development of tourism has a fairly long history, considering that commercial tourism is an activity that only started to concern the wider population in the 20th century. One of the most established theoretical frameworks developed for tourism development research is the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) developed by Butler in 1980. The TALC is based on the concept of the product cycle in which sales of a product start out slowly before experiencing rapid growth, stabilization and, finally,

decline (Butler 1980, 6). The application of this development to tourism by Butler (1980) followed the concepts of other scholars who divided the development of tourism into similar phases (Christaller 1963; Gilbert 1939). Many tourism studies have applied the TALC. While doing so, some heavily focused on the stages of tourism development, such as, for example, Hovinen (1981). Others focused more on the units of analysis (Haywood, 1986). How tourism was and is operated in state socialist countries is often believed to be an under-researched topic. When the Soviet Bloc still existed, and a larger number of countries than today operated with state socialist systems, the topic is believed to have attracted little academic attention due to the difficult logistics of acquiring sufficient data, poor documentation as well as a lack of interest amongst academics.

Methodology and Approach

The thesis makes use of an analytical framework broadly based on Butler's TALC model. The indicators used as part of this framework are those also seen by Butler (1980) as worthy of consideration when characterizing the stages of development: number of tourists, access, facilities, and awareness. The thesis' framework allocates appropriate measurements to each of these indicators that are applicable to the case destinations in order to conduct the comparative analysis between Beijing (PRC) and Pyongyang (DPRK). The time span chosen is the period from 1990 to 2019.

Main Facts

The PRC opened to general international tourism in the late 1970s, the DPRK in the late 1980s.

Beijing saw its strongest rise in tourist numbers in the 1990s, followed by further increases, albeit on a much lower scale, in the 2000s and finally a decline of tourist numbers in the 2010s. The DPRK did not experience its initial increase until the 2000s, and, from then on, saw occasional peaks, with its highest peak yet taking place in the late 2010s. Between these peaks however, the DPRK was subject to several falls in tourism numbers.

Pyongyang has seen, albeit limited, development in air access. Beijing's international air routes more than doubled during every decade in question. International train connections have seen little developments in both destinations.

Beijing has throughout the decades signed several visa exemption agreements and introduced a visa-waiver

scheme for tourists visiting the city in transit. Pyongyang however only ever signed one visa exemption agreement. Pyongyang has additionally seen limited development in terms of its hotel landscape. The number of hotels in the city of Beijing meanwhile increased almost continuously from 1990 to 2019. Most of the tourist attractions in both destinations were established prior to 1990. The 2010s however saw a notable increase in pleasure and welfare facilities for tourism in Pyongyang while the focus of Beijing's attractions lies heavily on historical sites and monumental edifices established in the past and representing the city's long history. In terms of awareness, Beijing's tourism marketing efforts took place primarily in the 2000s, Pyongyang's in the 2010s.

Criteria	Timespan	Pyongyang	Beijing
Number of tourists	1990-1999	100,000 – 120,000	1,940,800
	2000-2009	30,000 – 295,700	3,359,140
	2010-2019	100,000 – 350,000	4,465,000
International flight connections	1990-1999	5 direct flights	99 intl. routes
	2000-2009	6 direct flights	231 intl. routes
	2010-2019	9 direct flights	531 intl. routes
International railway connections	1990-1999	2 intl. routes	4 intl. routes
	2000-2009	2 intl. routes	4 intl. routes
	2010-2019	3 intl. routes	5 intl. routes
Visa exemption agreements	1990-1999	0 new agreements	5 new agreements
	2000-2009	1 new agreement	4 new agreements
	2010-2019	0 new agreements	13 new agreements
Nationalities not accepted for visa	1990-1999	7 nationalities	0 nationalities
	2000-2009	2 nationalities	0 nationalities
	2010-2019	2 nationalities	0 nationalities
Hotels	1990-1999	11 hotels	341 hotels (avg.)
	2000-2009	11 hotels	708 hotels (avg.)
	2010-2019	12 hotels	1144 hotels (avg.)
Attractions	1990-1999	59 attractions	30 attractions
	2000-2009	5 new attractions	4 new attractions
	2010-2019	10 new attractions	1 new attraction
State-supported tourism-related prints	1990-1999	1 print published	2 prints published
	2000-2009	0 prints published	20 prints published
	2010-2019	4 prints published	4 prints published
State-supported tourism-related websites	1990-1999	0 sites launched	2 sites launched
	2000-2009	0 sites launched	6 sites launched
	2010-2019	2 sites launched	6 sites launched

Results

RQ 1: Similarities are observed in the low development of railway connections and certain types of attractions. Differences are observed most notably in the tourism numbers, air access, visa regulations and hotel landscape. Beijing shows significant upward developments in these while Pyongyang shows relative stability. The indicator of attractions shows noteworthy developments in the case of Pyongyang, primarily so towards the 2000s, and little development for Beijing. It must be considered that for the indicators of awareness and attractions, the analysis relied on single-source content. Beijing's geographical location and Pyongyang's political circumstances seem to have played into the development of their indicators. Access and hotel facilities, in which Beijing surpassed Pyongyang, require substantial investment and stability.

RQ 2: Beijing's striking provision of increased access could point towards a desire for a larger base of inbound tourists which seemingly has outweighed the desire for ideological purity. Pyongyang's tourism levels have remained restrictive and controllable, providing less space for experiencing the contradictions between state socialism and international tourism.

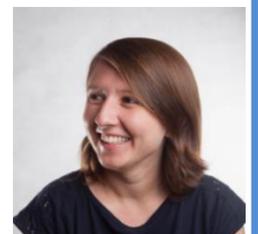
RQ 3: The developments show individual patterns for each destination. Given the significant impact that differing political, financial and geographical circumstances have had on each of the cases, one single pattern could not be discerned for tourism development in state socialist countries post-1990 based on the cases of Beijing and Pyongyang.

References

All references can be found in the full version of the MA thesis available at <http://othes.univie.ac.at>

About the Author

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