

# The Life Cycle of Historic and Cultural City-type Tourism Destination – a Case Study of Qingzhou in China

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## **Abstract:**

The high value and non-renewable characteristics of historical and cultural city-type tourism destinations make it difficult to reconcile the protection with tourism development of it. Studying the life cycle of historic and cultural city-type tourism destinations plays an important role in prolonging the life cycle of it by scientific intervention. However, there are few researches on the life cycle of historic and cultural city-type tourism destination. This paper takes Qingzhou, a famous historical and cultural city, as an example to analyze the life cycle of historic and cultural city-type tourism destinations and the factors influencing its vitality. It is concluded that a famous historical and cultural city-type tourism destination is an open system, so when judging the life cycle of this tourism destination, it cannot be only regarded as a tourism destination, but also recognizing the characteristics of it as an open urban system and analyzing its status and role in the region, as well as its spatial organization and linkages with the region, based on analyzing the influencing factors of vitality.

**Key Words:** tourism area life cycle, historical and cultural city-type tourism destination, Qingzhou, system vitality

## **1. Introduction**

China has a long history, splendid culture, and numerous historical and cultural cities. In 1982, the concept of “Historic and cultural city” was formally put forward—a city rich in cultural relics and of great historical and cultural value, artistic value, scientific value, and revolutionary significance. In 1982, 1986, and 1994, the State Council issued three batches of national historic and cultural cities to strengthen the protection and management of these cities.

With the development of the economy, tourism has become increasingly prosperous and become a strategic pillar industry of the national economy. After the establishment of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in China, the integration of culture and tourism has become a national development strategy. “Culture is the content, tourism is the scene”, cultural scenic spots, especially the historical and cultural city ushered in the Golden Age to develop. However,

due to the high value and non-renewable of historical and cultural tourism resources, the contradiction between the protection of historical and cultural cities and tourism development is difficult to reconcile. How to coordinate the contradiction, and promote the sustainable development of historical and cultural cities has become an urgent issue (Zhang Huili, 2010).

The development of tourism destinations has the characteristics of life evolution. The study of the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), combined with the intervention of scientific measures, can make the life cycle of tourism destinations much longer than that of natural growth. In 1990, Martin and Uysal proposed that different stages of tourism development should be planned. In the early stages, the plan of tourism development and environmental protection measures should be made to avoid the decline of tourism attractions, managers should also change the management practices at different stages of the process. However, there are relatively little researches on the life cycle of urban tourism destinations. Only Xu Honggang and LongjiangZhi (2005), Zhang Jianzhong, and Sun Gennian (2012) have studied the cycle development of cities and ancient towns in China. The study on the life cycle of the historic and cultural city-type scenic spot has great research space and practical significance.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Tourism Area Life Cycle**

As a community with special function, the tourism destination is an important carrier of tourist activities, it refers to the combination of tourism resources in a specific geographical space with tourism infrastructure, special tourism facilities, and other related conditions, and it is also the destination of tourists' stay and activities (Bao Jigang & Chu Yifang, 1998). The evolution of tourism destinations is a changing process, which has the characteristics of life evolution (Yin yimei et al, 2006). It is usually resource-oriented firstly, and then it turns to product-oriented stage based on resource and market. TALC is a study on the evolution of Tourism destinations. Butler (1980) put forward the tourism destination life cycle theory, which was accepted widely, and summarized the tourism destination evolution into six stages: exploration, participation, development, consolidation, stagnation, rejuvenation, stationary, or decline. According to Butler, changes in tourism destinations are caused by factors such as the rate of development of tourist destinations, the number of tourists, accessibility, government policies, environmental problems, and competition among similar regions. Martin and Uysal (1990) proposed that different stages of tourism development should be planned, not only in the early stages of tourism development to avoid the decline of tourism attractions, and change the management practices at different stages of the process.

Studying the life cycle of tourism, explaining and predicting the development of tourism destinations will guide marketing and planning theory. With the intervention of scientific measures, the life cycle of tourism destinations can be prolonged. Since the concept of TALC was put forward, scholars at home and abroad have conducted in-depth discussions and studies, the focus is mainly on the definition of the theory, the division of the periods, the characteristics

of the periods and the influencing factors, the theoretical value, the function mechanism and its combination with other theories, and the study of the tourism periods or the management practice in different types of case sites (Qi Zheng&Hu Xiao,2016).In the case study aspect, most of the cases selected by Western scholars are coastal or island-type tourist destinations, while the cases studied by Chinese scholars are abundant. Mountain scenic spots (Lu Lin, 1997; Wen Tong, 2007), karst caves in Kras (Bao Jigang, 1995; Bao Jigang, 2000; Li Rui, Ying Juying, Zhang Zhue, 2004) and man-made theme parks (Zhang Li, Wu Bihu, 1997; Wang Zhiwen, Huang Jiamei, 2004), cultural sites, national parks of China and other urban tourism destinations are in the majority. However, there are few studies on the life cycle of famous historical and cultural cities. The representative ones are that Wu Yuehu (2007), Huang Jie, zhangWeifeng (2015) discusses the protection of historical and cultural ancient towns based on the life cycle theory of tourist destinations. Xu Honggang and Longjiang (2005) constructed a system dynamic model of the life cycle of urban tourism destinations based on the System dynamics, focusing on the internal structure of cities and the influencing factors of advertising marketing. The hypothesis model is based on the single tourism product, homogeneous tourism market, no seasonal change, positive tourism experience, so there are certain limitations.

## **2.2 Vitality Theory of Tourism Destination**

The tourism destination Vitality theory is based on the “Three forces” model, which refers to the Attraction, Vitality, and Capacity of the destination, so it is also called AVC theory. The AVC theory focuses on the research to help the destination increase the tourists, attract investment and protect the ecological environment, developing tourism potential and promoting tourism rapid and sustainable development. Cai Guangyu (2004) pointed out that the vitality of tourist destination is the development ability and potential of tourism destination in the economy, society, and environment, at the same time, Liu Binyi (2004) based on the planning research of Chrysanthemum island tourism area concluded that “The vitality of scenic tourist area refers to the force that causes the development of scenic tourist area to go beyond the conventional and non-mechanical growth in unit time and space, and the current conditions and other objective factors often take a secondary position and continue to promote the growth and change of scenic area development.” Li Yilun (2005) emphasized that the vitality of a scenic spot is the interaction between the interior of the tourism system and the environment, which makes the natural environment as the attraction and the non-urbanization tourism destination exist and develop constantly. Zhu Yuanen and Wu qianni (2007) defined the vitality of tourist destination as “The comprehensive ability of tourism destination to obtain social, economic and environmental benefits and maintain the sustainability of its tourism service function under the comprehensive effect of tourism resources, location, facilities, image, service, and management.” The differences between vitality, attraction and capacity were carefully distinguished, and the factors affecting them included tourism resources, location, facilities, government and community support, and management guarantee.

### 2.3 System Theory

Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, an Austrian-American scientist, put forward the general system principle in 1937 and published “On the general system theory” in German philosophy weekly in 1945. Since then, System Theory has become a research tool. In 1973, Bertalanffy pointed out that the system is an organic whole connected by several factors, and the study of system theory focuses on factor, level, structure, function, environment, etc.. It has been accepted by many scholars to study tourism as a complex system (Zhang Hui et al. , 2004), such as tourism resources and products (Lin Hong, 1998), tourism activity experience (Wu Bihu, 1998), urban tourism image (Cheng Jinlong, 2006), driving forces of urban tourism development (Tang Chengcai, 2007; Sun Jianzhu, 2009), and life cycle of tourist destinations (Zhang Hui, 2004; Xu Honggang, 2005, Yang Chunyu, 2009). Lin Hong and Wang Xiang (1998) established the development model of tourism attractors and tourism products based on the method of system theory, taking tourism attractors as the benchmark system and tourists and market environment as the system environment. Wu Bihu (1998) explained tourism activities and tourism disciplines from the perspective of the tourism system and divides the tourism system (recreation system) into four subsystems: source market system, destination system, trip system, and support system. It is pointed out that the use of the conceptual system of tourism system to describe and understand tourism and leisure activities could satisfactorily explain many issues that are still in dispute. The classification method of the tourism system is accepted by many scholars (Zhang Hui et al. , 2004; Yang Chunyu, Huang Zhenfang, and Mao Weidong, 2009) and should be applied in the study of the life cycle of tourist destinations. The development of tourism destinations cannot be separated from the support of source market, travel system, support system, and destination system. Other factors such as linkages and development between cities and regions, emergencies also influence the development.

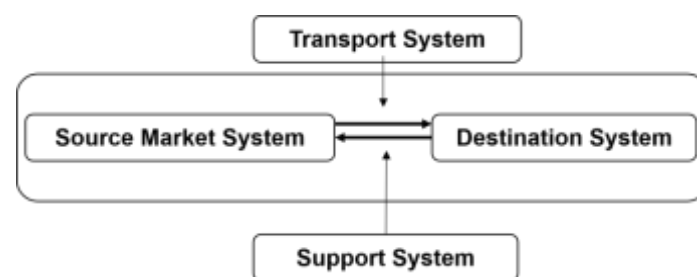


Fig. 1 tourism system (redrawn according to the literature)

Zhang Hui et al. (2004) pointed out that the evolution of tourism destinations is influenced by the tourism market system, the destination system, the travel system, and the support system, and the products of tourism destinations also have an important impact on their life cycle, the development and evolution of various tourism products is an important factor in the formation of different time-scale cycles of tourism destinations.

### 3. Case Study

Qingzhou, a county-level city of Shandong Province, is one of the ancient “Nine states”. The name Qingzhou originated from the earliest geographical monograph of China, *Shang Shu Tribute of Yu*. According to “*Zhou Li Xia Guan Zhi Fang Shi*”: “Because the Earth is located in Shaoyang, its color is green, hence the name Qingzhou. Qingzhou has a history of more than 7,000 years of development, a history of more than 5,000 years of civilization, and 12 years of splendour as the capital of the country. The historical remains are very rich, the style and features of the urban area preserved intact, distinctive features. In 2001, Qingzhou was approved as an “Outstanding tourist city in China”, and on November 18, 2013, it was named a national historic and cultural city by the State Council. In 2017, the ancient city scenic spot of Qingzhou was awarded the “National 5A class tourism scenic spot”.

### 4. TALC of Qingzhou

This paper analyzes the annual growth of tourists and tourism income in Qingzhou, and analyzes the life cycle stages in the light of the actual development process.

Table 1 tourists and tourism income in Qingzhou

|      | tourists ( million person-time ) | tourism income (billion) | growth rate of tourists (%) | growth rate of tourism income (%) |
|------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2000 | 146                              | 0.678                    |                             |                                   |
| 2002 | 260                              | 4.89                     | 78.08                       | 621                               |
| 2004 | 230                              | 6.4                      | -13.04                      | 30.87                             |
| 2005 | 260                              | 8                        | 13.04                       | 25                                |
| 2006 | 280                              | 10.5                     | 7.69                        | 31.25                             |
| 2009 | 750                              | 33.2                     | 167.86                      | 216                               |
| 2010 | 870                              | 39.3                     | 16                          | 18.37                             |
| 2011 | 970                              | 43                       | 11.49                       | 9.41                              |
| 2012 | 489.9                            | 44.7                     | 19.3                        | 22.5                              |

|      |        |        |                |                |
|------|--------|--------|----------------|----------------|
| 2013 | 548.7  | 51.9   | 12             | 16.2           |
| 2014 | 632.5  | 60.3   | 15.3           | 16.1           |
| 2015 | 723.4  | 68.2   | 14.4           | 13.2           |
| 2016 | 719.24 | 82.05  | 8.8            | 16.1           |
| 2017 | 943.4  | 92.4   | 31.2           | 12.7           |
| 2018 | 1067.6 | 107.3  | 13.2           | 16.1           |
| 2019 | 991.13 | 116.34 | -7.91          | 8.42           |
|      |        |        | average: 14.77 | average: 18.17 |

1980s.-1999. Exploratory period. Since the 1980s, tourism in Qingzhou has grown. Qingzhou museum is one of the largest county-level museums in China with the largest collection of cultural relics. Yunmenshan, Tuoshan, Linglongshan, Ou Yuan, and Fan Gongting Park are restored and developed to attract Chinese and foreign tourists. Qingzhou received 410 foreign visitors in 1987, according to the statistical yearbook. In 1997, Qingzhou Yunmenshan, Tuoshan, Linglongshan, Yangtianshan, and the city became one of the top five tourist List of national parks of China in Shandong province.

From 2000 to 2019, excluding the statistical extreme value caused by the change of statistical caliber, the average growth rate of visitor arrivals in Qingzhou was calculated to be 14.77%, and the average annual growth rate of total tourism revenue was 18.17%. According to Butler’s life cycle theory, Qingzhou is in the period of the development stage of TALC. Qingzhou has the potential to develop. Although the overall economic environment has made it difficult to develop, it has remained resilient.

### 5. Conclusion and Discussion

The life cycle of tourism destinations is not fixed and can be prolonged through artificial regulation. Martin and Uysal (1990) proposed that different stages of tourism development should be planned and regulated according to actual conditions, such as tourism resources, product renewal, brand marketing, etc. The management measures are constantly changing at the stage. Qingzhou, a historical and cultural city, is in the development stage of its life cycle. Based on its location, transportation, tourism resources, tourism facilities, and policy support and guarantee, it can be further concluded that Qingzhou will continue to develop for a long time in the future.

Qingzhou City is located in the middle of Shandong Peninsula, west of Weifang City, west of Zichuan and Linzi Districts of Zibo City, 150 km west of the provincial capital Jinan, 240 km east of the coastal city Qingdao, south of Linqu, north of Dongying City Guangrao borders, and the northeast borders Shouguang City. Qingzhou is an important node area connecting north and south, and connecting the coastal and inland areas.

Qingzhou City is located on the Jiaoji Channel, an important connection channel of the peninsula city group, with convenient transportation. It is 120 km away from Jinan International Airport, 210 km away from Qingdao International Airport and Qingdao Port, and 55 km away from Weifang Airport. You can enjoy the overflow of tourism development in Jinan and Qingdao's effect.

According to statistics released by the Qingzhou Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism, Qingzhou has sixteen A-level scenic spots, including one 5A-level scenic spot, three 4A-level scenic spots, and eight 3A-level scenic spots. There are one national scenic spot, one national forest park, one national industrial tourism demonstration site, four provincial industrial tourism demonstration sites, three provincial agricultural tourism demonstration sites, and six national key cultural relics protection units. There are fifteen key cultural relics protection units in Shandong Province, eleven key cultural relics protection units in Weifang City, and 701 key cultural relics protection units in Qingzhou City. Cultural and tourist resources are abundant. Among them, the ancient city of Qingzhou is well preserved and is a key historical and cultural protection block. Shandong's economic and tourism development growth poles - Jinan and Qingdao respectively have "Quancheng Culture" and "Island Tourism" as their main brand images. Qingzhou's historical and cultural resources have differentiated development advantages.

At the same time, the Qingzhou Municipal Government has also attached great importance to the development of the tourism industry. Since the establishment of the Tourism Bureau in 1986, it has gradually established the development strategy of "Tourism City". Centered on the overall goal of building a "Cultural City and Tourism City", it has fully launched the "Oriental Huadu, Cultural Ancient Qingzhou" characteristic tourism brand, and has gradually implemented the "One Ticket Travel Qingzhou" and "Free Tickets for Qingzhou People" system to further expand the brand influence. In 2014, Qingzhou became the only county in Shandong Province to be awarded the title of "Beautiful China" Top Ten Tourism Counties (Districts). In 2018, it was named the 2018 Model City of Tourism and Leisure with Chinese Characteristics and the Top 10 Counties and Cities with China's Tourism Influence.

However, to further sustainable development and extend the life cycle of tourist destinations, the development strategy of "city based on the city" is not advisable. We must also attach importance to economic links with Jinan and Qingdao, establish tourism cooperation, and differentiate tourism products and tourism brands. Besides, all kinds of unexpected events also deserve attention, such as the outbreak of the COVID-19 had a huge impact on the development of tourism. There has been a sharp drop in the number of tourists and tourist income. A historical and cultural city-type tourism destination, before being a tourist

destination, it is firstly a city. A city is an open system. The development of a city cannot be separated from the interconnection with other cities and regions (Zheng Guo, Zhao Qunyi, 2004). Therefore, when judging the life cycle of a tourist destination, it is necessary not only to analyze the tourism destination system, travel system, source market system, and support condition system, but also to recognize the characteristics of it as a city system and analyze its spatial organization and connection of cities and regions, the impact of social emergencies, as well as its vitality influence factors. Combining the assessment of TALC of Qingzhou City and the analysis of vitality factors and systems, the author has initially established a life cycle judgment system for historical and cultural city-type tourism destinations, as shown in Figure 2.

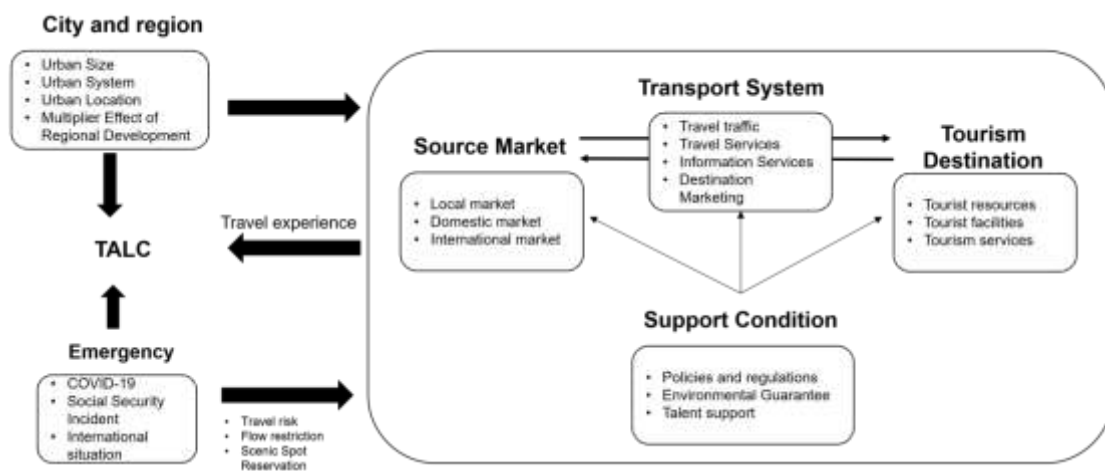


Fig. 2 Life Cycle Assessment System of Historic and Cultural City-type Tourism Destination

There are still shortcomings in the article, and the result analysis is relatively simple. There has not been much research into the impact of the outbreak of the COVID-19 on tourism. In this paper, a literature review method and case method is used to judge the TALC of Qingzhou, while when analyzing the factors affecting its vitality, quantitative analysis of the model should be further introduced to summarize the cycle curve model of this type of tourism destination. This will contribute to the development, protection, and sustainable development of China’s historical and cultural city-type tourism resources. Development strategies can be specified according to local circumstances. The product system of tourist destinations can be developed and updated according to actual needs, and reasonable scenic carrying capacity can be established to promote history. Sustainable development of cultural city-type scenic spots.

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