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ITJ

ISSN 1812-5638

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY JOURNAL

ANSI*net*

Asian Network for Scientific Information
308 Lasani Town, Sargodha Road, Faisalabad - Pakistan

A Study on the Competitiveness of Urban Tourism Destinations Taking Loudi City in Hunan Province for Example

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Abstract: With the acceleration of urbanization and rapid development of tourism, the competitiveness of urban tourism destinations is gradually becoming a hot topic of research. Based on previous research results, this study established a system to evaluate the competitiveness of urban tourism destinations by Delphi Method and analytic hierarchy process. This system is composed of two major first-level indices, 17 second-level indices and 52 third-level indices. Besides, fundamental approaches were proposed in this study to determine the weight of indices, evaluate criteria and implement overall evaluation, in order to provide reference suggestion for the research of urban tourism destination competitiveness and the development of tourism cities. Empirically analyzing Loudi City, the tourism competitiveness is 5.02 which indicates the level of Loudi City tourism competitiveness is low. Based on the transverse comparison, with the help of radar map to analyze the internal structure of the tourism competitiveness of Loudi, provide decision reference for improving the tourism competitiveness of Loudi City.

Key words: Urban tourism destinations, competitiveness, evaluation system, Loudi city

INTRODUCTION

With the acceleration of urbanization and development of regional tourism, a good many cities emerge as new force with rapid growth in their tourism and the competition between urban tourism destinations is intensified which has become a key issue studied by planners, developers and administrators of these destinations. Tourism competitiveness abroad study started earlier, Crouch and Ritchie competitiveness of tourism destinations defined the most representative. They studied over the years and defined the tourism destination competitiveness from the residents of welfare, social prosperity and sustainable development perspective. They concluded that the tourism destination competitiveness is the ability to improve a high standard of life for local residents. Kozak and Rimmington (1999) put forward a destination competitiveness evaluation index system which with the combination of quantitative evaluation and qualitative evaluation. Edwards (1995) studied four of 19 destination price competitiveness. Enright and Newton (2004) proposed a comprehensive model of destination competitiveness factors and for Hong Kong, studied the importance and relative competitiveness of the tourist attractions and business-related factors.

Urban tourism destination competitiveness evaluation study has important theoretical and practical significance for the rapid development of urban tourism industry. In the 1990's, Chinese scholars have begun study urban tourism competitiveness from different angles and different methods. The research in this area of China lags behind other countries, different national conditions, urban tourism competitiveness are different. The purpose of this study is to discuss factors impacted urban tourism destination competitiveness from the regional tourism industry competitiveness theories and try to use AHP and Delphi method to establish urban tourism destination competitiveness model. The emerging China Excellent Tourism City Loudi City as the empirical object, use competitive forces model to calculate the score of Loudi tourism competitiveness. With the help of radar map to analyze the internal structure of the tourism competitiveness of Loudi, provide decision reference for improving the tourism competitiveness of Loudi City, aiming to provide reference suggestion for the research of urban tourism destination competitiveness and the development of tourism cities.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The methodology of the study is: Collect, identify and organize related research literature through literature

analysis and through the comparison on literature, comprehensive considerate and improve the urban tourism competitiveness supporting plate system. Using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and Delphi method, according to certain principles to select evaluation index and with the aid of computer processing, identify related index weight and build the evaluation index system. In empirical research, in order to ensure objectivity, research urban area index data mainly come from "Chinese city statistics yearbook 2011", "2011 in Hunan province statistical yearbook", "2011 Loudi city statistical yearbook" and Hunan province as well as other state in 2011 the national economic and social development statistical bulletin and Hunan province and other city government websites. Use rigid index data and individual soft data using expert scoring. For the calculation of city tourism competitiveness C_i , use the multi-index comprehensive evaluation model of weighted summation to solve. Finally, using the method of structural analysis and with radar map analyze the Loudi tourism competitiveness of internal structure.

The study research results is: Established tourism competitiveness evaluation index system, the index system includes two levels (first-grade index), 17 second-grade index and 52 third-grade index. Loudi city as the empirical object, Loudi tourism competitiveness calculated score is 5.02, suggests that Loudi tourism competition level is low. Based on the transverse comparison between 14 city of Hunan province and with the help of radar map to analyze the internal structure of the tourism competitiveness of Loudi. Loudi destinations has more obvious advantages in tourism economy development situation, urban natural environment bearing capacity, government industrial policy tilt, climate conditions and tourism resources. In the performance of the historical and cultural background, characteristic of business development, tourism facilities, city image and popularity has obvious deficiencies. At the same time, the tourism economy support system is imperfect, the city tourism consciousness is not strong and city overall image characteristics is not distinct, all of that will hinder improving the competitiveness of tourism.

DEFINITION OF THE COMPETITIVENESS OF URBAN TOURISM DESTINATIONS

Tourism destinations refer to destinations in which tourism resources within certain geographic space are organically integrated with special tourism facilities, tourism infrastructure and other relevant conditions, tourists stay and travel around. The author considers that metropolises are centers for regional politics, economy,

transportation, cultures and foreign exchanges. While urban tourism destinations are territorial economic complexes where urban societies, economies, cultures and environment, etc are used to attract tourists and carry out tourist activities in forms of business conferences, leisure shopping, visiting relatives or friends, study tours and sightseeing vacations and so on. For providing foreign and domestic tourists as well as local citizens with complete tour experience and enabling them to enjoy tourism-related services (Wu, 2010).

Many scholars have defined the competitiveness of tourism from different perspectives. Referring to relevant literature, the author defined the competitiveness of urban tourism destinations according to the features of urban tourism as follows. The competitiveness of urban tourism destinations indicates the ability to compete for tourism resources, obtain and integrate elements for industrial development and gain the driving power for sustainable growth (Enright and Newton, 2004).

REVIEW ON EVALUATION MODEL FOR COMPETITIVENESS OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS

Foreign researchers began to study the evaluation model for competitiveness of tourism destinations earlier, whose research mainly focused on the selection of factors impacting competitiveness, among which the most representative, authoritative and typical analysis model is Michael Porter's Diamond Model. Thereafter, Ritchie and Crouch (scholars) proposed a model of sustainable competitiveness. On the basis of Crouch's and Ritchie's conceptual model, Euright and Newton examined destinations' tourism competitiveness from the perspective of practices in combination with industry management, providing a basic framework for subsequent research on various models of tourism destinations' competitiveness.

Domestic research in this area started late, most of domestic scholars draw or modify abroad existing models. After comparison, it can be found that foreign and domestic scholars are more inclined to studying the factors affecting the competitiveness of tourism destinations. And most of which are related to the attractiveness of destinations, whereas they seldom take those factors regarding economy, infrastructure support and systems for safeguarding sustainable development into consideration, as a result of which these studies are not so operable with less guiding significance. According to the guiding ideology for Ritchie's and Crouch's creation of evaluation index system for competitiveness of tourism destinations, this study primarily aimed at urban tourism destinations and constructed a model for

evaluating the competitiveness of cities in combination with the features of urban tourism destinations and referring to the indices used for selecting the world's best tourism destinations and China's most excellent tourism cities.

MODEL BUILDING FOR COMPETITIVENESS OF URBAN TOURISM DESTINATIONS

Principles for constructing evaluation system: The evaluation index system shall be constructed in accordance with certain principles for the competitiveness of urban tourism destinations, to ensure that the evaluation indices determined are somewhat scientific and operable. Principles that shall be followed are mainly shown as follows:

- Evaluating the pertinence of evaluation index system. Urban tourism destinations' competitiveness indices need to be selected according to research objects. In particular, regional characteristics shall be highlighted, such as the role of local government, features of local tourism resources and tourism (e.g., integral, spatial and cultural traits of tourism)
- Evaluating the integrity of index system. Urban tourism is affected by many factors, so it is necessary to establish an index system as complete as possible to comprehensively evaluate the competitiveness of urban tourism destinations, in order that evaluation results can be more explanatory
- Evaluating the combination of rigid and flexible indices. Rigid indices, also called as inflexible indices, reveal the eventual results of the competitiveness in tourism destinations such as GDP per capita and tourism revenues which mostly stem from existing system of tourism statistics. Flexible indices indicate the competitiveness of the same categories of tourism destinations in the near future including the image and tourism management capacity of destinations which are mostly concluded from market survey. In terms of flexible indices, comprehensive and non-quantitative indices shall be transformed into comparable indices by data extraction techniques. Scholars have many arguments against relative weight of flexible indices but have less different opinions in the evaluation of rigid indices. Nevertheless, rigid indices are not so dynamically comparable and measurable in terms of time. Thus, the evaluation index system for the competitiveness of tourism destinations shall be constructed based on rigid and flexible indices. On one hand, the evaluation effect of flexible indices can

be tested by the evaluation results of rigid indices. On the other hand, the competitiveness of urban tourism destinations can be comprehensively evaluated in combination of subjective and objective data. Hence, it is really pretty necessary to establish evaluation index system by integrating rigid and flexible indices

- Evaluating the feasibility of index system. The selection of evaluation indices shall not be affected by subjective factors as far as possible, so as to objectively analyze the economic implications of selected indices. Meanwhile, there is a need to consider the operability of indices and make every possible effort to adopt quantitative indices of data support, while indices shall be appropriately abandoned if it is hard to acquire corresponding data

Determination of index system: Urban tourism competitiveness is a complicated multiplex system, so it is critical to construct a scientific, accurate and complete evaluation index system to evaluate tourism competitiveness (Thornton *et al.*, 2011a).

Based on the principles of system dynamics, this study analyzed the dynamic mechanism for the development of urban tourism destinations by Analytic Hierarchy Process and Delphi Method as follows. First of all, various factors influencing the competitiveness of urban tourism destinations were classified and decomposed hierarchically to confirm the subordinate relationships between different levels. Then, the index system was revised repeatedly until the expert panel reached a consensus by consulting experts about the rationality of each level of specific evaluation indices. Finally, the competitiveness of urban tourism destinations was decomposed into 2 first-level indices, 17 second-level indices and 52 third-level indices with the aid of computer processing. The principal factors impacting the competitiveness of urban tourism destinations were further decomposed. Furthermore, a comparatively more complete system was established for third-level indices which was important basis for empirical evaluation. Meanwhile, second-level indices were further interpreted by third-level indices which further explained first-level indices. Quantitative indices could be directly obtained from related research materials or calculated from survey data. In consideration that indices included relative, absolute, rigid and flexible indices, all indices were normalized after calculation (Carter and Weissbrod, 2011).

Approaches to calculate weight: Matrixes were judged by comparing the importance of factors by Delphi Method. The contribution of lower level elements to higher level

Table 1: Indicators Relative Importance of Calibration Values

Comparison of relative importance between 2 factors	Calibration value
Extremely important	9
Much more important	7
Apparently important	5
Slightly important	3
Equally important	1
Slightly less important	1/3
Unimportant	1/5
Very unimportant	1/7
Extremely unimportant	1/9

Table 2: Relative importance calibration value matrix

	X_1	X_2	X_3	...	X_n
X_1	1	X_{12}	X_{13}	...	X_{1n}
X_2	X_{21}	1	X_{23}	...	X_{2n}
X_3	X_{31}	X_{32}	1	...	X_{3n}
...	...	...	...	...	...
X_n	X_{n1}	X_{n2}	X_{n3}	...	1

X_i is the i th assessment factor

elements was determined by measuring max characteristic root of matrix and corresponding characteristic vector. By step-by-step calculations, the importance of basic elements for overall goals was finally ranked in order.

Specific steps were listed as follows:

Step 1: The relative importance of factors was determined by Delphi Method and the calibration value for comparing the importance of factors was obtained by CCID Scaling Technique as shown in Table 1 (including 9 scales from 1 to 9). The Factor relative importance of judgment matrix is shown as Table 2

Step 2: Description: x_i is the i th assessment factor and x_{ij} is the calibration value obtained from the comparison of relative importance between the i th factor and the j th factor ($i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n$; $j = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n$). In all matrixes, $X_{ii} = 1$ and $X_{ij} = 1/X_{ji}$

Step 3: Elements of judgment matrixes were multiplied by lines. Then, Vector $\bar{W}$ was calculated according to the amount of factors and corresponding amount of roots by following formula, namely:

$$\bar{W}_i = \sqrt[n]{\prod_{j=1}^n X_{ij}} \quad (i, j = 1, 2, \dots, n)$$

Step 4: Roots were normalized. In other words, W (the weight of each element) was calculated by:

$$W_i = \frac{\bar{W}_i}{\sum_{i=1}^n \bar{W}_i}$$

Table 3: Average random disposable indicators of judgment matrix

Order of Matrix	1	2	3	4	5
RI	0.00	0.00	0.58	0.90	1.12
Order of Matrix	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00
RI	1.24	1.32	1.41	1.45	1.49

RI represented average stochastic consistency index

Step 5: The maximum characteristic root of judgment matrix was calculated by:

$$\lambda_{\max} = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{(AW)_i}{nW_i}$$

where, (AW) was the i th component of Vector AW

Step 6: Test on the consistency of judgment matrixes: index for testing consistency was calculated by:

$$CR = \frac{CI}{RI}$$

where, $CI = (\lambda_{\max} - n)/(n-1)$ and n indicated the dimension of matrix. RI represented average stochastic consistency index and its value was determined as Table 3

In each level of consistency test, $CR \leq 0.1$ which indicated that judgment matrixes are satisfactorily consistent (Thornton *et al.*, 2011b).

Each level of index system and weight are shown in the following Table 4.

GENERAL SITUATION OF LOUDI CITY

Locating in the central part of Hunan Province, Loudi City occupies a total area of 8, 117.7 km² (accounting for 3.8% of the total area of Hunan Province) and has a population of 4, 180, 000 people, the coordinate of which is (111°56'-112°03'E, 27°41'-27°47'N). It is adjacent to Changsha City's Ningxiang County and Xiangtan City's Xiangxiang County in the north, bounded on the east by Hengyang City's Hengyang County, adjacent to Shaoyang City's Shaodong County, Xinhao County and Longhui County in the south and sharing a common boundary with Huaihua City's Xupu County and Yiyang City's Anhua County in the west. Loudi City has jurisdiction over Louxing District, Lengshuijiang City, Lianyuan City, Shuangfeng County, Xinhua County and Municipal Economic Development Zone which was founded in 1977 and transformed into a city in 1999. This is a medium-sized city that has emerged through reform and opening up. Besides, it is a beautiful, attractive and

Table 4: Evaluation system of urban tourism competitiveness

Perspectives	System	Weight	Items	Weight	Indices	Weight
Realistic competitiveness (I)	Destinations' urban tourism attraction system (A)	3	Climatic conditions (A1)	0.2	Annual average climatic comfort degree (A11)	0.10
					Annual months suitable for travel (A12)	0.10
			Historical backgrounds (A2)	0.3	Urban development histories (A21)	0.05
					Abundance of Historic Sites (A22)	0.15
			Cultural deposits (A3)	0.2	If it was an ancient capital in the past or not (A23)	0.10
					Richness and Diversity of Folk Custom (A31)	0.05
			Tourist resources (A4)	0.8	Uniqueness of folk custom (A32)	0.05
					Amount of Special Festivals (A33)	0.10
			Urban Landscapes (A5)	0.5	Amount of Tourist Resources (A41)	0.10
					Density of Tourism resources	0.10
			Characteristic Businesses (A6)	0.6	Proportion of Excellent Tourist Resources (A43)	0.30
					Combination Degree of Tourism Resources and Landscapes (A44)	0.30
			City Image and Popularity (A7)	0.4	Project about Leisure Square (A51)	0.15
					CBD/RBD (A52)	0.20
			Development of National Economy (B1)	0.5	Project about Landscape Boulevard (A53)	0.15
					The Ratio of Tourism Shopping to Tourism Revenues (A61)	0.30
			Scale of Urban Tourism Market (B2)	0.3	Construction of Tourism Commodity Market (A62)	0.20
					Construction of Unique Cuisine Street (A63)	0.10
			Performance Management in Government Industry (B5)	0.8	Geographic Location (A71)	0.15
					Destination Popularity (A72)	0.15
Competitiveness in Development (II)	Subsystem for Supporting Economic Departments and Infrastructure (B)	4	Development of National Economy (B1)	0.5	Destination Image (A73)	0.10
					GDP per capita (B11)	0.15
			Scale of Urban Tourism Market (B2)	0.3	Per Capita Income of Residents (B12)	0.10
					Engel Coefficient (B13)	0.05
			Performance Management in Government Industry (B5)	0.8	Growth of GDP (B14)	0.20
					Ratio of Tourists Received to National Tourists (B21)	0.10
			Subsystem for Safeguarding Sustainable Development (C)	3.0	Ratio of Tourism Revenue to National Tourism Revenue (B22)	0.20
					Supportive Tourism Facilities (B3)	1.20
			Urban Carrying Capacity of Natural Environment (C2)	0.8	Restaurant Occupancy Rate (B31)	0.20
					Contribution Rate of Travel Agencies to Tourism Revenues (B32)	0.20
			Destinations' Social Tolerance (C3)	0.4	Ratio of Catering in Tourism Consumption (B33)	0.20
					Amount of Buses and Subways Available (B34)	0.15
			Social Security (C4)	0.4	Accessibility of Intercity Transportation (B35)	0.15
					Amount of Tourism Attractions (B36)	0.30
			Employment Rate (C42)	0.2	Municipal Infrastructure (B4)	1.20
					Communication-n Facilities (B41)	0.35
			Human Resources Security (C5)	0.4	Drinking Water Supply (B42)	0.30
					Electric Power Consumption per capita (B43)	0.20
			Urban Carrying Capacity of Natural Environment (C2)	0.8	Public Hygiene and Medical Devices (B44)	0.35
					If plans are made for the development of tourism (B51)	0.15
			Destinations' Social Tolerance (C3)	0.4	Input Intensity in Tourism (B52)	0.40
					Tourism Management	0.25
			Social Security (C4)	0.4	Development Trend of Tourism Economy (C1)	1.00
					Growth of Tourism Revenues (C11)	0.40
			Employment Rate (C42)	0.2	Contribution Rate and Growth of Tourism (C12)	0.40
					Government Support in Tourism (C13)	0.20
			Human Resources Security (C5)	0.4	Tourism Environmental Capacity (C21)	0.30
					Greenbelt Coverage (C22)	0.25
			Urban Carrying Capacity of Natural Environment (C2)	0.8	Sewage Treatment Rate (C23)	0.25
					Hospitality of Local Residents (C31)	0.20
			Destinations' Social Tolerance (C3)	0.4	Tourists' Occupation of Infrastructure (C32)	0.20
					Crime Rate (C41)	0.20
			Social Security (C4)	0.4	Number of University Students among 10,000 People (C51)	0.20
					Structure of Tourism Employees' Academic Qualifications (C52)	0.20

miraculous welfare. Loudi City is advantageous in geographic location and convenient transportation, so it has been a major strategic hinterland and a key area with

roads extending in all directions since ancient times, in which Luoyang-Zhanjiang Railway intersects with Hunan-Guizhou Railway, Shanghai-Ruili Expressway,

Taiyuan-Macau Expressway, Erenhot-Guangzhou Expressway, Loudi-Xinhua Expressway are intersected, No. 207 National Highway, No. 320 National Highway and No. 1810 Provincial Highway run through, high-grade Loulian and Louxiang Highways cross. In Particular, with the further implementation of strategies for urban agglomeration of Changsha City, Zhuzhou City and Xiangtan City, Loudi City has become another important transportation junction and material distribution center after Zhuzhou City in Hunan Province, all of which are quite influential all over China.

Loudi City has been honored as “Top 10 Livable City in China”, “China’s Best Eco-tourism City” and “China’s Excellent Tourism City”, where there are abundant tourist resources, including 2 Grade-5 resource zones, 4 Grade-4 resource zones, 6 Grade-3 resource zones, 10 Grade-2 resource zones and 10 Grade-1 resource zones. As tourism develops rapidly in Loudi City, a thematic tourism image is gradually created, namely “a mythological hometown, a kingdom of terraced fields, a countryside mansion and a world’s antimony capital. Rich tourist resources become indispensable for Hunan Province to be competitive in tourism. In 2011, Loudi City gained RMB5.702 revenues from tourism and received 10, 138, 800 tourists which grew by 45.3 and 34.9%, respectively, achieving steady growth in tourism services (Sohel-Uz-Zaman and Anjalin, 2011).

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS ABOUT LOUDI CITY’S TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS

Analysis of calculation results: In view of the results of above analysis and research, the total score of Loudi City’s tourism competitiveness was calculated as:

$$C = \sum_{i=1}^{52} V_i \times W_i$$

where, C indicates urban tourism competitiveness and the full mark is 10. The higher the score is, the higher the competitiveness. V_i is the score of index weight provided by experts for each item and W_i represents the weight of each index.

After calculation, it was concluded that 5.02 scores were obtained by Loudi City’s tourism competitiveness which indicates Loudi City is not so competitive in tourism and the tourism there remains to be further improved (Li and Yu, 2011).

Cross-sectional comparison among 14 areas of Human Province: All in all, the tourism competitiveness greatly differs in different areas in Hunan Province due to the

Table 5: Overall scoring and ranking of 14 areas’ tourism competitiveness in Hunan Province

Cities	Score	Rank
Changsha	7.89	1
Xiangtan	6.57	2
Yueyang	6.44	3
Hengyang	6.27	4
Zhuzhou	6.22	5
Zhangjiajie	6.07	6
Changde	6.04	7
Chenzhou	6.01	8
Yongzhou	5.93	9
Shaoyang	5.34	10
Loudi	5.02	11
Jishou	4.86	12
Yiyang	4.84	13
Huaihua	4.67	14

differences in geographic conditions, tourist resources and economic foundations, etc. Only Changsha City is competitive in tourism, while most cities are less competitive in tourism. This reflects that there are great regional differences in terms of urban tourism competitiveness in Hunan Province and has proven that urban tourism competitiveness is highly correlated to urban economic development (Katsinos and Mariolis, 2012).

Loudi City’s lower competitiveness (as shown in the following Table 5).

Analysis on the structure of Loudi City’s tourism competitiveness:

This study focused on various projects as regards Loudi City’s realistic competitiveness in tourism and development. During analysis, the competitiveness was mainly judged according to the scoring rate of each item. At last, following radar Fig. 1 was acquired.

As shown in the above Fig. 1, the colored part indicates the overall scoring rate of competitiveness evaluation items. The larger the area of this part is, the higher the scoring rate. For a single item, the scoring rate will be higher and this item will become more competitive if it is closer to the edge. On the contrary, it will be less competitive if it is indented towards the inner part to a larger extent. From the colored part, it can be analyzed that Loudi has relatively remarkable advantages in tourism economic development state, urban carrying capacity of natural environment, government industry management, climatic conditions and tourism resources, etc. However, there are obvious disadvantages in historical background, cultural deposits, development of characteristic businesses, tourist facilities, city image and reputation. Moreover, the system supporting tourism economy isn’t perfect and citizens are not highly conscious of urban tourism, while the city’s overall image isn’t unique.

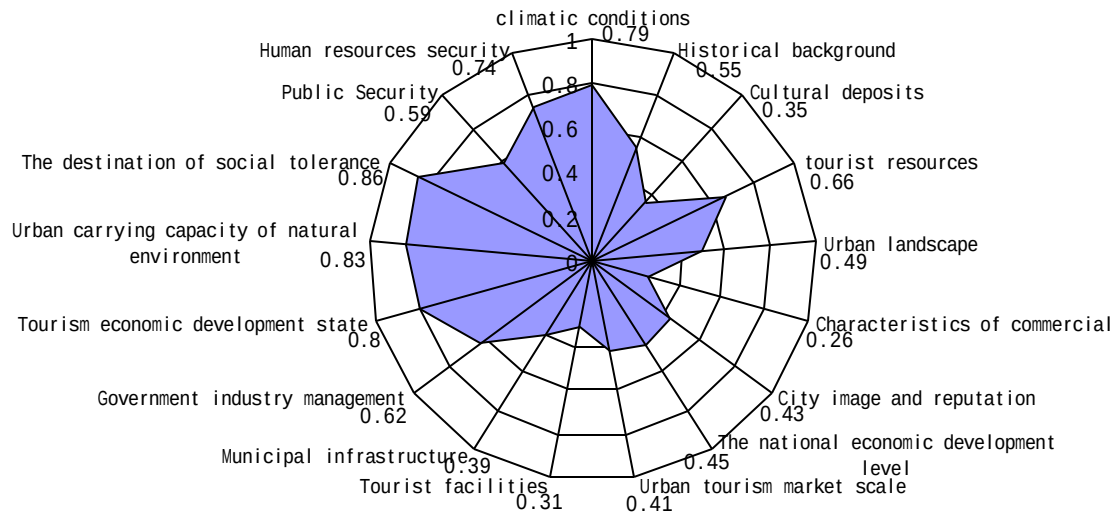


Fig. 1: Radar map of each project scoring rate of Loudi City tourism competitiveness

During future market competition, Loudi City shall make full use of its competitive advantages such as abundant tourist resources, extensive economic hinterlands and excellent geographic conditions etc. Further optimize supportive tourism system and product mix, enhance the connotation of products, innovate tourism marketing, reinforce regional cooperation, improve the management and services in tourism, create good tourism environment and shape an overall regional tourism brand image.

CONCLUSION

During the construction of index system for urban tourism competitiveness, attentions need to be paid to rigid indices which account for 86.5% of all indices (included in third-level indices) as much as possible. Besides, the influence of subjective factors shall be minimized as far as possible during evaluation and calculation, to guarantee the reasonableness and reliability of the entire urban evaluation system to certain extent. Nonetheless, it is rather difficult to precisely quantify some indices from which problems can be indicated or measure if the information is indispensable or not, due to which the evaluation system may become less convincing. Therefore, it is necessary to further explore if the indices for evaluating the competitiveness of urban tourism competitiveness are universal and representative and if the evaluation index system is scientific. Additionally, urban tourism competitiveness is dynamic, as it changes as time passes by. In this study, the author

hasn't analyzed and forecasted the trends in future changes of urban tourism competitiveness. Thus, in the future, relevant studies can further examine the competitiveness of urban tourism competitiveness from following aspects. Firstly, further modifying and improving the evaluation index system for urban tourism competitiveness. Secondly, dynamically analyzing, forecast and making cross-sectional comparison of urban tourism competitiveness more scientifically and reasonably so as to provide realistic basis for optimizing competitiveness. Thirdly, weight granted during the establishment of competitiveness index system. How to quantify qualitative factors scientifically and objectively and provide each factor with reasonable weight deserve further exploration.

This study was greatly supported by the Tourism Bureau of Loudi City. Meanwhile, the undergraduates 2006, 2007 and 2008 majoring in Tourism Management in Hunan University of Humanities, Science and Technology are also appreciated for their hard work in field surveys.

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