



Management Strategies of Tourism Enterprises under the Background of “Internet Plus”

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Abstract

In the “Internet Plus” era, China’s tourism industry is experiencing profound structural transformation driven by digital technologies and evolving consumer behavior. Traditional travel agencies and business models are increasingly challenged by online platforms, data-driven marketing, and the growing demand for personalized travel experiences. This study investigates strategic management adaptation among tourism enterprises within this changing environment by analyzing the evolution of the tourism value chain and the role transformation of travel agencies. Drawing on policy analysis, market data, and a big data–driven CPRC innovation framework, this research identifies emerging trends in digital integration, online–offline collaboration, and consumer participation. The results demonstrate that tourism enterprises leveraging information technology, big data analytics, and cross-platform collaboration achieve higher service efficiency, optimized resource allocation, and enhanced customer experience. Moreover, the “Internet Plus” paradigm is shown to reshape enterprise structures and facilitate value co-creation between suppliers and consumers. The study contributes theoretical and managerial implications for promoting sustainable development and strategic upgrading of China’s tourism industry in the digital economy era.

Keywords

Internet plus; Tourism management; Integrated development strategy

1. Introduction

In recent years, China’s tourism industry has undergone rapid change. As social and economic development accelerates, tourists have become more independent, self-directed, and diverse in their preferences. They now expect higher-quality and more personalized travel experiences, requiring the market to offer products and services that align with individual needs and improve convenience (Gretzel et al., 2020). The growing demand for personalization also reflects a wider global trend of “smart tourism,” in which digital tools support tailored and seamless travel experiences (Kuo, Chen, & Tseng, 2022).

Advances in computer and information technology have fundamentally reshaped industrial ecosystems worldwide. The tourism industry has been particularly affected, as e-commerce platforms and digital intermediaries redefine how services are designed and delivered (Sigala, 2020). These technological innovations have disrupted the traditional tourism value chain and replaced many functions once controlled by conventional travel agencies (Huang, Song, &

Lee, 2021). According to Boto-García and Leoni (2021), digital transformation not only alters business processes but also enhances firm performance and industry specialization through data integration and analytics.

At the same time, upstream enterprises—such as travel suppliers, destination marketing organizations, and accommodation providers—are now able to reach customers directly. They distribute products through websites, online networks, and mobile applications, forming new digital ecosystems that bypass traditional intermediaries (Li, Nguyen, & Coca-Stefaniak, 2021). Mobile Internet operators have promoted diverse tourism applications that help users plan, book, and experience travel more efficiently. As Yang, Zhang, and Chen (2020) note, these platforms have become essential for real-time interaction and service innovation. Meanwhile, Xiang, Fesenmaier, and Werthner (2021) emphasize that social media and e-ticketing systems enhance both convenience and immediacy, transforming how tourists engage with destinations.

Against this background, Chinese tourism enterprises face both challenges and opportunities under the “Internet Plus” initiative. This national strategy encourages the integration of the Internet with traditional industries to promote innovation and competitiveness (Romão & Nijkamp, 2020). In the tourism sector, it represents a shift toward intelligent management, data-driven collaboration, and user-centered innovation. As Kim, Lee, and Preis (2020) observe, enterprises that combine technological advancement with service innovation achieve stronger performance in the digital economy.

This study therefore explores how Chinese tourism enterprises can strategically transform within the “Internet Plus” framework. It analyzes changes in the tourism value chain and applies strategic management theory to propose an integrated development pathway. Specifically, the study addresses two key questions:

- (1) How does the “Internet Plus” paradigm influence the structure and function of tourism enterprises?
- (2) What strategies can help these enterprises build sustainable competitiveness in the digital era?

Building on prior research, this paper argues that innovation and integration are the essential directions for China’s tourism development. Through digital transformation, tourism enterprises can move beyond traditional service delivery to achieve intelligent management, cross-platform collaboration, and value co-creation with consumers (Gretzel & Koo, 2021). These capabilities allow firms to create adaptive, networked, and sustainable models of tourism growth suited to the demands of the “Internet Plus” era.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Research on the tourism value chain has developed through two main perspectives: the traditional linear model and the digital, networked model. In the traditional model, suppliers, intermediaries, and consumers formed a closed sequence in which travel agencies played a key coordinating role (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2021). Each participant added value through its own specialized function, while intermediaries combined products and services from multiple suppliers to form integrated tour packages. However, this system was often criticized for high transaction costs and limited flexibility. Scholars such as Huang, Song, and Lee (2021) have pointed out that traditional agencies struggled to respond to fast-changing consumer needs

and global competition.

With the rise of digital technologies and e-commerce, the value chain has become more dynamic, decentralized, and consumer-oriented. Li, Nguyen, and Coca-Stefaniak (2021) observed that digital tourism connects suppliers and consumers through open online ecosystems, while Boto-García and Leoni (2021) showed that such systems improve firm efficiency and reduce distribution costs. At the same time, Sigala (2020) emphasized that technological advances are driving structural convergence across the tourism and service sectors, creating new competitive logics. Xiang, Fesenmaier, and Werthner (2021) further argued that the evolution of e-tourism represents not only disintermediation—where traditional agents are bypassed—but also “reintermediation,” as new digital platforms act as intelligent intermediaries that personalize services for users.

The literature increasingly agrees that digitalization has transformed value creation from a supply-driven to a demand-driven model. Tourists are no longer passive consumers but active co-creators of experiences. Through social media and online communities, they generate and share content that influences others’ travel choices (Mariani, Borghi, & Cappa, 2021). Gretzel and Koo (2021) emphasized that such participatory engagement is central to “smart tourism” and co-creation, while Law, Li, Fong, and Han (2022) demonstrated that data-driven forecasting can better capture changing tourist preferences. Romão and Nijkamp (2020) provided empirical evidence from Europe showing that innovation, specialization, and productivity collectively enhance regional tourism competitiveness. Together, these studies confirm that digital transformation fundamentally redefines how value is created and shared in the tourism sector.

Despite growing research attention, few studies have analyzed how China’s “Internet Plus” initiative specifically reshapes enterprise management and value-chain structure. Kim, Lee, and Preis (2020) discussed innovation capabilities in hospitality firms, noting that digital tools improve both operational efficiency and customer experience. Similarly, Kuo, Chen, and Tseng (2022) examined service quality and tourist satisfaction in smart-tourism contexts, suggesting that technological integration strengthens loyalty. These findings imply that innovation and customer orientation are crucial for success in the digital era. Yet, as Sigala (2020) observed, existing literature still lacks a comprehensive framework to explain how digitalization interacts with management strategy, especially in emerging markets like China.

To address this gap, the present study adopts a strategic integration framework that emphasizes the interaction between technological capability and managerial innovation. Building on prior research by Huang, Song, and Lee (2021) and Gretzel et al. (2020), it proposes that competitiveness in the “Internet Plus” era depends on combining online and offline resources, merging digital tools with organizational systems, and integrating technology with human creativity. This approach reflects the broader understanding of digital tourism as a process of continuous adaptation, where enterprises co-evolve with consumers, markets, and policies (Romão & Nijkamp, 2020; Xiang, Fesenmaier, & Werthner, 2021).

3. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative and conceptual research design to examine how Chinese tourism enterprises adapt their management strategies under the “Internet Plus” initiative (Sigala, 2020). Instead of collecting new primary data, it combines a comprehensive literature review, policy analysis, and interpretation of secondary data. This qualitative approach provides a broad understanding of how digital transformation is reshaping the strategic and managerial

logic of tourism enterprises in China.

A conceptual qualitative design is suitable because the phenomenon of strategic transformation in the digital economy is still developing and involves complex, multi-level interactions. Following an interpretive research tradition (Romão & Nijkamp, 2020), the study focuses on identifying patterns and mechanisms that explain how policies, technologies, and markets interact to influence enterprise transformation. The goal is to generate theoretical insights rather than statistical generalizations, which fits the exploratory nature of this research.

The study draws on three main types of secondary data: national policy documents, academic and industry publications, and official statistics. The first type includes major government frameworks such as the Guiding Opinions on Promoting Smart Tourism (Huang, Song, & Lee, 2021) and the Internet Plus Action Plan issued by the State Council and the China National Tourism Administration in 2015. These policies emphasize the use of big data, mobile Internet, and digital platforms to improve service efficiency and management innovation. They form the institutional foundation for understanding the digitalization of China's tourism industry. The second data source consists of peer-reviewed research, white papers, and industry reports from organizations such as the World Tourism Organization and the China Academy of Tourism, which offer both theoretical and practical perspectives. The third source includes market statistics, annual reports, and datasets from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, providing quantitative context on digital adoption and industrial restructuring.

All collected materials were analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Xiang, Fesenmaier, & Werthner, 2021). Policy documents, academic papers, and reports were systematically reviewed and coded to identify key themes related to digitalization, innovation, and organizational change. These codes were grouped into broader categories—policy drivers, technological enablers, and organizational responses. Together, they form an analytical framework that shows how external policy pressures and internal capabilities interact to shape digital transformation in the “Internet Plus” environment.

Table 1 Major policy on big data and tourism development promulgated by the state in 2015

Policy name	Time of issuing	Unit of promulgation	Main content
Guiding opinions of the National Tourism Administration on promoting the development of smart tourism	2015.1	National Tourism Administration	It's proposed to realize the intelligentization of tourism by using the new generation of network technology, and promote the transformation and improvement of tourist formats to integrated and fusion type
Guidance on actively promoting the “Internet plus” action	2015.7	The State Council	It's put forward clearly to accelerate and promote the development of “Internet plus”
Several opinions of the general office of the State Council on further promoting investment and consumption in tourism	2015.8	The State Council	It's proposed to actively promote the development of online travel platform enterprises, and promote the integration of tourism and the Internet industry
Action outline on promoting the development of big data	2015.9	The State Council	To systematically deploy the development of big data
Circular of the National Tourism Administration on the implementation of the “tourism + Internet” action plan	2015.9	National Tourism Administration	To put forward concrete train of thought and target to the integration of tourism and Internet

To strengthen the reliability of the results, the study employed data triangulation across all three data sources (Law, Li, Fong, & Han, 2022). Comparing evidence from policy documents, academic literature, and market statistics helped minimize bias and ensure analytical

consistency. The emerging framework was also compared with existing theories of strategic management and digital transformation to confirm theoretical coherence and robustness.

The second type of data includes macroeconomic indicators that describe the broader environment of China’s tourism industry. As shown in Figure 1, China’s gross domestic product (GDP) grew steadily from 2008 to 2015—a period marked by stable economic expansion, structural upgrading, and rising household income. This sustained growth stimulated domestic tourism demand and created favorable conditions for the rise of online travel platforms and digital services. The steady increase in GDP therefore provides essential context for understanding the evolution of China’s tourism market and the economic foundations of its digital transformation (Boto-García & Leoni, 2021).

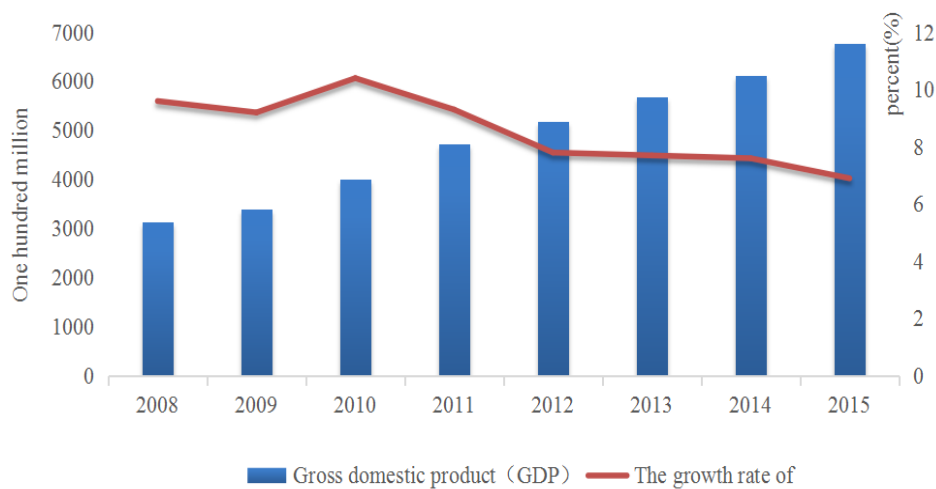


Figure 1 Changes in China’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008-2015

The third type of data focuses on consumer behavior and the use of mobile Internet technologies in tourism. As shown in Figure 2, the use of mobile applications among Chinese Internet users has increased sharply over the past decade, reflecting the rapid spread of digital connectivity in daily life. Data summarized in Table 2 show that most tourists now rely on online travel guides, booking platforms, and social media as their main tools for obtaining information, planning trips, and interacting with services. These findings indicate a major shift in tourist behavior—from dependence on traditional intermediaries to a more independent, technology-driven, and participatory form of travel. This transformation highlights the growing influence of digital ecosystems on travel decision-making and supports analysis of how tourism enterprises are responding strategically to the “Internet Plus” environment.

Table 2 Adoption rate and reliability on sources of tourism information for Chinese outbound tourists in 2014

Sources of tourism information	Adoption rate (%)	Reliability (%)
Travel Guidance	53	10
Friends around	52	14
Accommodation booking website / travel website	48	13
travel agency	47	10
Travel magazines and travel brochures	39	4
Social media	33	5
Travel promotion / discount	31	7
Mobile applications	30	5

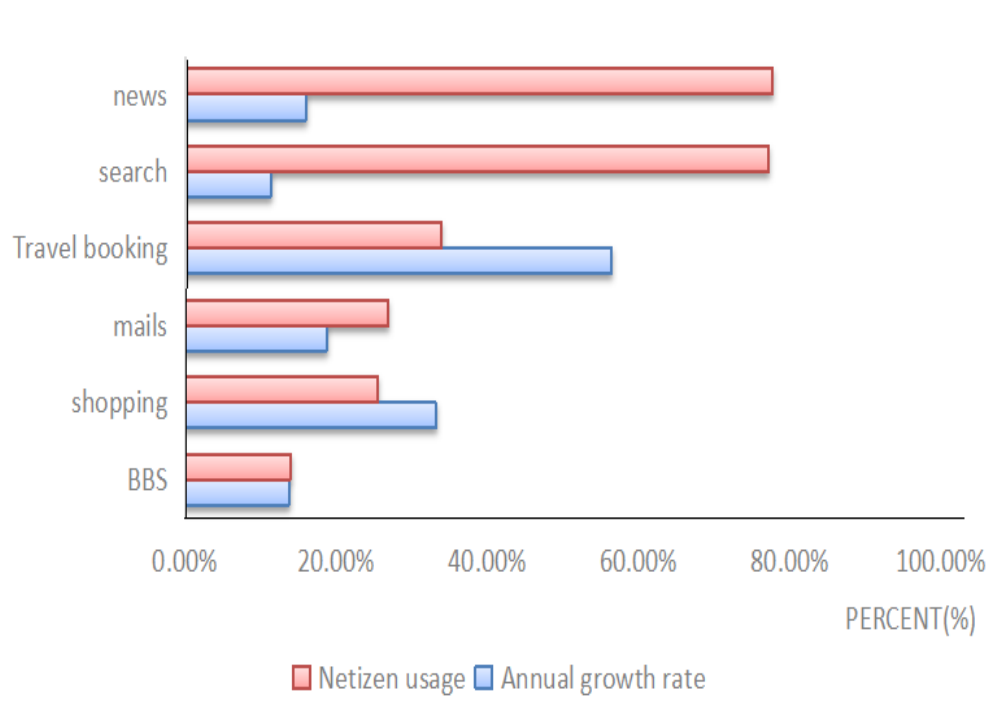


Figure 2 Schematic diagrams of various types of mobile Internet applications for Internet users in China in 2015

Building on these datasets, this study follows a three-stage analytical process to explore how Chinese tourism enterprises adapt to the “Internet Plus” environment. The first stage, environmental scanning, identifies key policy trends and market forces driving digital transformation in the tourism industry. The second stage applies a comparative analysis to distinguish between the structural characteristics of traditional and digital tourism value chains, emphasizing how value creation and business relationships have evolved. The third stage involves a strategic synthesis, combining the previous findings to generate practical insights and managerial implications for enterprise transformation.

To support this analysis, Figure 3 introduces the CPCPR model, which represents the cyclical process of Customer Perception–Processing–Customization–Refeedback in digital tourism marketing. The model explains how big data connects enterprises and consumers through continuous interaction: firms collect consumer information, process it through data analytics, customize services, and refine strategies based on user feedback. This iterative cycle enables precision marketing, personalized experiences, and long-term customer engagement (Xiang, Fesenmaier, & Werthner, 2021).

By integrating quantitative indicators with qualitative insights, the study builds a coherent, multidimensional framework for analyzing digital transformation in tourism. The combination of national policy review, macroeconomic context, and consumer behavior analysis offers both empirical and theoretical support for developing integrated strategies that enhance the sustainable competitiveness of China’s tourism enterprises in the digital era.

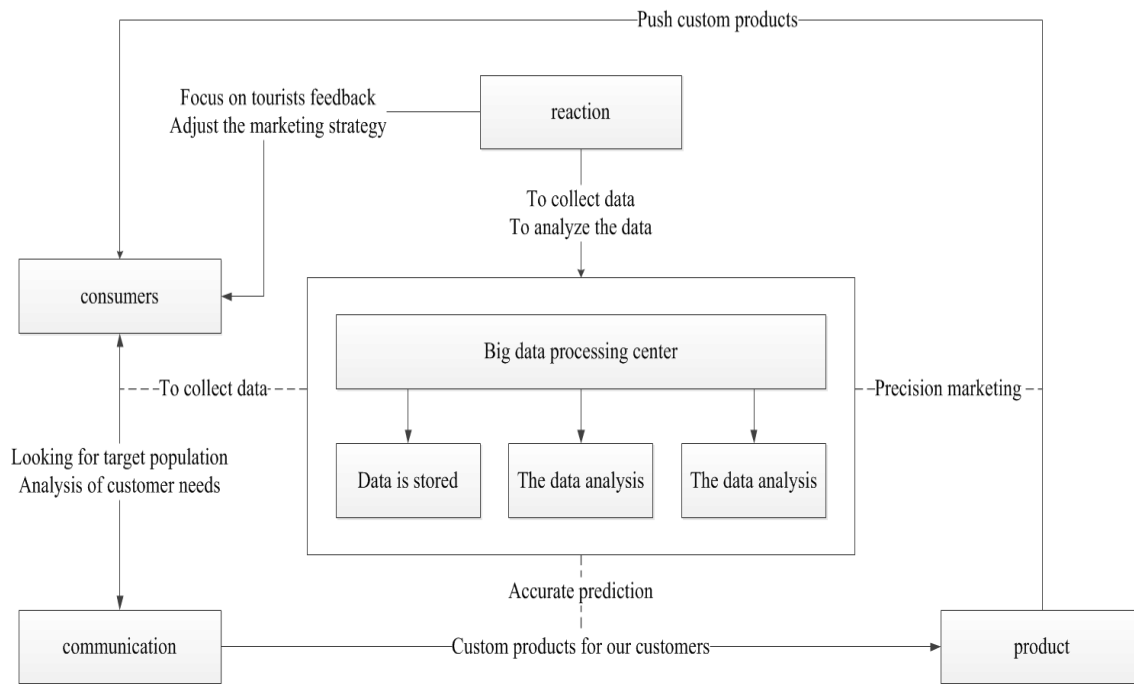


Figure 3 Innovation model of tourism marketing: CPR

4. Results and Discussion

China’s tourism market has entered a stage of deep development in which travelers increasingly move beyond traditional group tours toward personalized and experience-oriented forms of travel. As tourists demand more diversity and customization, service providers must offer richer, real-time information and more flexible solutions. Offline tourism services have also become more adaptive. In addition to offering itineraries, they now provide real-time updates on transport, dining, and entertainment, improving the immediacy and quality of the travel experience. The findings show that the integration of the “Internet Plus” framework with tourism has deeply reshaped both the value-chain structure and the managerial logic of the industry (Huang, Song, & Lee, 2021).

Digital platforms now function as hubs of cross-industry collaboration, connecting attractions with banking, insurance, retail, and e-commerce sectors to jointly design and promote tourism products (Boto-García & Leoni, 2021). For instance, LY.COM has partnered with multiple enterprises—such as Didi Taxi, JD Mall, Ping An Insurance, Dianping, China Merchants Bank, and Vinda Paper—to launch the “Happy Spot Tour” campaign, which offered millions of discounted tickets to encourage secondary spending at destinations. Such collaboration increases tourism flow and generates additional revenue for restaurants, shops, and leisure facilities, demonstrating the value-creating potential of digital integration (Romão & Nijkamp, 2020).

At the same time, platforms such as Qyer.com exemplify data-driven transformation. By using data analytics and algorithmic modeling (Gretzel & Koo, 2021), Qyer helps users filter travel information and customize their experiences. Its cooperation with Airbnb through API integration allows travelers to link accommodation choices directly to personalized itineraries. Qyer has thus evolved from a simple B2C transaction model to a Cost-per-Sale (CPS) commission model—shifting from an intermediary to an active facilitator of value co-creation in the “Internet Plus” ecosystem (Xiang, Fesenmaier, & Werthner, 2021).

Traditionally, travel agencies dominated the tourism value chain. Their advantage lay in wide sales networks, bulk purchasing power, and control of information flows. Because tourists and service providers—such as hotels and attractions—lacked direct communication, agencies acted as intermediaries that bundled products, set prices, and managed distribution. This information asymmetry allowed them to control market access and, in many cases, monopolize value creation (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2021).

In the “Internet Plus” era, digital platforms have enabled direct transactions between suppliers and consumers, disrupting this model. Online systems now allow suppliers to communicate directly with travelers, bypassing intermediaries (Li, Nguyen, & Coca-Stefaniak, 2021). This disintermediation reduces information distortion, shortens transaction chains, lowers costs, and leads to better quality and pricing. As a result, the traditional role of travel agencies has weakened, pushing them to reconfigure their business models and explore new value propositions in the digital tourism ecosystem (Sigala, 2020).

Table 3 Basic business and functions of travel agencies

The decision-making process of travel (tourists)	The basic business of a travel agency (travel agency)	The basic function of a travel agency (travel agency)
Tourism motivation	Development and design of tourism products	Production function (assembly function)
Information search	Travel products and promotions	Agency sales function
Intentional consultation	Consultation service	Information providing function
Purchase	Sales = purchasing	Sales distribution function
Travel	Reception	Organizational coordination function
Return	After-sale service	Information providing function

In summary, the application of the “Internet Plus” framework has reshaped the value chain of tourism enterprises, transforming it from a linear system of production and distribution into a networked system of collaboration and interaction (Mariani, Borghi, & Cappa, 2021). As reflected in Table 3, this transformation signifies a deeper structural shift—from information monopoly to information sharing, from standardization to personalization, and from isolated operations to integrated cooperation. These changes collectively lay the theoretical and practical foundation for the next stage of strategic discussion on how tourism enterprises can achieve integrated, innovative, and sustainable development in the digital era.

5. Conclusions

This study investigates how Chinese tourism enterprises are transforming their management strategies under the framework of the “Internet Plus” initiative. Through the analysis of policy documents, statistical data, and prior research, the findings demonstrate that the integration of Internet technology and tourism has not only redefined operational models but also fundamentally reshaped the structure of the tourism value chain.

First, the convergence of Internet technology and the tourism industry is transforming the sector’s operational logic and profit-generation mechanisms. The rise of independent travel, the expansion of online platforms, and the evolution of digital marketing collectively pose significant challenges to the traditional tourism model. To adapt, tourism enterprises must adopt Internet-oriented thinking—emphasizing openness, interconnectivity, and user-centric design—to reconstruct their value chains and organizational ecosystems. Concepts such as large-scale data analytics, platform-based collaboration, and shared-value management are becoming essential tools for enterprise innovation and competitiveness. This transformation challenges

not only traditional travel agencies but also emerging online travel enterprises, both of which must continuously evolve to meet the changing expectations of digital consumers.

Second, the research highlights that integration is the prerequisite for sustainable development in the “Internet Plus” era. The strategic fusion of online and offline resources, digital technology and human expertise, and enterprise innovation with consumer participation enables tourism firms to enhance service quality, expand market reach, and achieve long-term value co-creation. In this context, “user-centered integration” emerges as a key guiding principle for digital transformation within the tourism industry.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that this study represents an initial exploration rather than a definitive model. Future research should further examine the mechanisms through which integrated development strategies optimize the tourism industry’s value chain, particularly focusing on how travel agencies can transition from intermediaries to strategic coordinators within the digital ecosystem. Empirical studies combining firm-level data and network analysis would also strengthen the theoretical propositions presented here and provide a more comprehensive understanding of China’s tourism digitalization process.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author(s) declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Ethics Statement

Not applicable.

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