

# The Influence of Internet Celebrity Economy on the Tourism

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**Abstract**—The rapid development of the Internet and digital economy has brought a new mode of urban competition represented by “network celebrity cities”, and attracting online attention has become a significant way for urban marketing and tourism development in the new era. However, there is limited literature making a deep analysis of how the Internet celebrity economy impacts the tourism industry. Based on the consumer utility function, this paper mainly analyzed the cases of Ding Zhen in Litang and Zibo City to study the impact of the Internet celebrity economy on tourism from micro, meso, and macro levels. The results show that: The Internet celebrity economy has significantly increased the flow of offline tourists and living standards in tourist destinations. However, if there is no effective control by the government, the surging flow may cause a rise in local price level and service costs, thus restricting tourists’ consumption demand. In the urban competition in the Internet era, if the government wants the Internet celebrity economy to have a sustained positive impact on the tourism industry, it needs to devote energy to solve the issue of mismatch between urban public services and tourist flow concentration, increase investment in urban infrastructure, improve service level, and effectively transform network traffic into the quality of urban economic development.

**Keywords**—consumer utility function, internet celebrity economy, tourism industry

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of information technology, new economic models such as the digital economy, network economy, and internet celebrity economy have become new driving forces for national economic growth, bringing both new opportunities and challenges to urban social and economic development. Especially for the tourism industry, the epidemic has promoted the digital transformation and upgrading of the tourism industry from the demand side, the supply side, and the field side<sup>1</sup>. From the demand side, the digital experience has deeply penetrated the lives of consumers. At the same time, from the field side, the channels of short video and live broadcasts are more popular than before, so the content operation on the network is becoming much more significant for the development of the tourism industry. Among the transformations, the Internet is playing an increasingly crucial role in the tourism industry, and the internet celebrities who act as leading roles on the network will inevitably have positive and negative impacts on tourism.

Internet celebrities usually refer to ordinary people who are well known to the public on the Internet because of a certain event or a group who rely on online platforms to accumulate personal influence and are sought after by fans in their respective fields (Cai, 2016). The Internet celebrity economy that comes with the Internet celebrities is essentially becoming a new business model, a purposeful, targeted

precision marketing method, which mainly refers to the Internet celebrities themselves or the manipulators behind the Internet celebrities who use their public influence and popularity to take certain monetization channels to obtain economic benefits, and its scope can be extended to the entire industrial chain with net celebrities as the core (Zhao & Zhang, 2016).

The phenomenon of Internet celebrity cities in China in recent years provides a perfect perspective for studying the impact of the Internet celebrity economy on tourism. With the help of various new media social platforms such as short videos and live broadcasts, some cities have gained huge attention on the Internet and continued to become popular, which has greatly facilitated the development of local tourism. For instance, at the end of 2020, a short video of “Ding Zhen’s World” on the Tiktok account “Smile Collector Boge” triggered the attention of the whole network once it was released, and a Tibetan boy named Ding Zhen detonated the network. Because of Ding Zhen’s popularity, the short video traffic of Internet celebrities has transformed into the number of tourists in Litang, his hometown, and seized the opportunity to develop tourism in combination with the economy of Internet celebrities. The emergence of such cities has led to preliminary studies on the impact of the Internet celebrity economy on tourism. However, most of them focus on micro and macro aspects, such as local tourism marketing strategies under the background of the Internet celebrity economy, but few make an in-depth analysis of how the Internet celebrity economy works. Besides, there is still a lack of analysis about the impact of the Internet celebrity economy on tourism from the medium level, such as the change in the catering industry and other related industries.

Therefore, based on the consumer utility function, this paper will analyze the influence of the Internet celebrity economy on the tourism industry at the micro, medium, and macro levels respectively, and find out the positive and negative influence of the Internet celebrity economy on tourism industry, put forward relevant suggestions on regulating the Internet celebrity economy to the development of tourism. In addition, the result of this paper can assist companies and local governments in understanding the change in consumer consumption patterns and adopting the appropriate marketing means.

## II. THE BACKGROUND OF THE INTERNET CELEBRITY ECONOMY AND TOURISM

### A. Internet Celebrity Economy

First of all, the emergence of Internet celebrities cannot be separated from the basis of celebrity theory. Celebrities are

<sup>1</sup> iResearch. 2021. China online travel industry research report. Available: [https://report.iresearch.cn/report\\_pdf.aspx?id=3889](https://report.iresearch.cn/report_pdf.aspx?id=3889). [https://report.iresearch.cn/report\\_pdf.aspx?id=3889](https://report.iresearch.cn/report_pdf.aspx?id=3889). [Accessed: 2023.7.1]

individuals who possess certain intrinsic qualities or possess skill, authenticity, star power, or charisma (Rojek, 2004). Celebrities can be produced, consumed, admired, and worshipped (Cashmore and Parker, 2003). They own symbolic capital due to their identity and have the ability to be transformed into other capital. The Internet celebrity is a new type of celebrity in the network era, which is not only a simple media phenomenon but also an economic and social phenomenon. In such background, the Internet celebrity economy also appears. The Internet celebrity economy has maintained a very rapid speed of development. From initially only developing in the field of individual women's fashion clothing, it has now related to various fields of social commodities, which has become a more universal Internet marketing phenomenon. Zhao and Zhang (2016) also put forward the idea that the Internet celebrity economy is a business model and a purposeful and targeted precision marketing method in essence. As it has become more and more prevalent, it has quietly changed the ecological chain of many industries such as entertainment, culture, and manufacturing. The Internet celebrity economy has made a new breakthrough for the traditional e-commerce economy.

Secondly, some research explores the characteristics of the Internet celebrity economy. Jia and Bie (2021) introduce three characteristics of the Internet celebrity economy and their value to the business. The first one is it has the power of influence. De Veirman (2017) has found that Internet celebrities have a huge fan base which means a greater range of information dissemination, and can make full use of the power of word of mouth. Torres *et al.* (2019) found that influencers usually specialize in a specific field and have influence within that field. When Internet celebrities collaborate with brands in their field of expertise, consumers are more likely to accept or trust influencers' opinions. The second feature of the Internet celebrity economy is perceived authenticity, which means that the influencer shows the real face and maintains consistency with the brand (Audrezet, 2020). Internet celebrities create credible personas on social media by sharing brand-matching details of their personal lives and transparency strategies. The third trait of this economy refers to the multi-identity of Internet celebrities. According to different literature, they have approximately four identities. Ge and Gretzel (2018) believe that Internet celebrities are content producers who share their own content online through social media platforms to attract consumers. Ki and Kim (2019) believe that Internet celebrities play the role of disseminators similar to traditional KOL. They keep up with new things and share information through social networks. Schouten *et al.* (2019) believe that Internet celebrities also have status as celebrities, they rely on self-creation to become famous on social media and are regarded as micro-celebrities. Shan *et al.* (2019) believe that Internet celebrities are consumers as well, who also purchase products and send comments on the product. All these characteristics contribute to the reliability of Internet celebrity and the type of economy behind it.

Wang (2016) in recent research has found that the Internet celebrity economy has some other characteristics compared with traditional business models, including concealment, integration, and individuation. The concealment or inducement of the Internet celebrity economy is manifested

in that when netizens experience Internet celebrity products, they do not feel that they are consuming and are completely immersed in the satisfaction of consuming these products. Under the induction of network celebrities, consumers continue to pay for their own consumption behavior. The Internet celebrity economy also has the trait of integration. Although the Internet celebrity economy arose from the Internet, it also needs to rely on some traditional industries to achieve its own sustained and steady development. For instance, the combination of Internet celebrity and venture capital companies, the combination of Internet celebrity and business, as well as mass media, etc. These are all specific manifestations of the integration of the Internet celebrity economy. The personalization of the Internet celebrity economy is not only reflected in the personalization of the influencers' own behavior, but more importantly, the Internet celebrity economy breaks through the traditional business-consumption led by firms but pays more attention to the needs and experience of consumers, and can provide consumers with more personalized and humanized products and services.

Finally, the Internet celebrity economy also has a huge impact in many ways. For instance, in brand management, Torres *et al.* (2019) have found that the Internet celebrity economy can enhance consumers' positive attitude toward the brand, increasing their willingness to purchase. Jiménez-Castillo and Sánchez-Fernández (2019) found out that it also plays an important role in word-of-mouth marketing. Internet celebrities can recommend brands through online word-of-mouth to increase consumers' expected value of brands thus it would boost their purchase intention.

Dan and Peng (2022) found out that the Internet celebrity economy also affects the rural development of China in their recent research paper. Farmers use self-media platforms such as TikTok to turn themselves into Internet celebrities in the process of sharing local customs and rural scenery with everyone. By live broadcasting, it is possible to expand sales channels for agricultural products and boost rural revitalization.

Zou *et al.* (2023) put forward that e-commerce is influenced by the Internet celebrity economy. In the short term, online celebrity live e-commerce can indeed bring more new customers than traditional online marketing. The live-streaming e-commerce of Internet celebrities is favored by brand owners because of the huge sales it brings. For example, cosmetics brands such as L'Oreal, Maybelline, and Marumi have long used live streaming of online celebrities for marketing.

#### *B. The Influencing Factors of the Tourism Industry*

The research on the influencing factors of tourism development mainly starts from the supply and demand side of the tourism market. On the one hand, the existing literature explores the tourism market from the perspective of tourism providers. Li & Huang (2015) studied the impact of China's infrastructure on regional tourism development and found that when the level of transportation infrastructure is low, it would have a positive effect on the development of tourism. Liu *et al.* (2020) have researched the influence of scenic spot resources on tourism. Specifically, the reform of the culture system has increased the number and income of overnight tourists in the region by enriching cultural tourism products

and services as well as the development of supporting industries such as accommodation and catering. Besides, recent research has found that eco resources are the basis for the development of the tourism industry and the evolution of the tourism industry will also affect the ecological environment (Yang, 2018). There are also findings that indicate that tourists are more likely to be suspicious of local service providers when travelers perceive a destination as having heavy air pollution (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). In addition, according to Ma *et al.* (2011), the level of economic development is also considered a crucial factor in attracting tourists.

On the other hand, the current research pays attention to the demand side of the tourism market, focusing on the factors that influence the formation of consumer travel strategies. Earlier research by Pleischer *et al.* found that under certain circumstances, the changes in income and prices are responsible for a shift toward multiple, short vacations. Also, Mutinda and Mayaka (2012) put forward the idea that the cost of tourism is one of the major factors that affect consumers' decisions. Their findings further indicated that the factors that motivated Nairobi residents in the choice of domestic tourism destination in rank order include: knowledge and adventure; economic concerns; personal safety; destination information; travel arrangement; destination features; family and friends; leisure and relaxation; religious and cultural considerations and travel bragging. Finally, Yin and Luo (2018) found that tourist perception can also guide consumers' decisions in their recent research paper. Therefore, they suggested that China's urban tourism development management should pay attention to tourists' perception of urban non-tourism elements and the improvement of tourists' satisfaction, so as to effectively enhance tourists' loyalty to travel.

### *C. The Connection between Internet Celebrities and Tourism*

#### *1) Internet celebrity city and Internet celebrity destinations*

Some researchers focus on the phenomenon of Internet celebrity cities or Internet celebrity destinations. Guo (2023) in his recent research has divided the concept of "Internet celebrity destination" into three dimensions, namely: context, content, and media. As a context, "Internet celebrity destination" provides the support of physical space and social relationship space for tourists' communication behavior and sightseeing activities. As content, "Internet celebrity destination" refers to the space image and symbol presented in the symbolic form on the mobile media platform. As a medium, "Internet celebrity destination" plays an intermediary role in the communication between travelers and the environment, and between travelers and others.

Yan *et al.* (2022) in their recent research define "checking into Internet-famous places" as an essential way for people to seek symbolic value and significance in the context of consumerism, adding new substance to tourism consumption and becoming a critical topic of cultural consumption and fan culture research. They put forward the causes of the popularity of checking into Internet-famous places, which include external factors such as the consumer market environment, popular consumption concepts, and technical conditions. Also, the purpose of realizing leisure pleasure and

self-worth demand has also caused the fashion of checking in Internet-famous places. Checking in Internet-famous places makes ordinary life more meaningful and provides a platform for people to take part in social interaction and help improve their social status and visibility in social networks, and then realize these participants' need for self-worth.

Zhou *et al.* (2023) paid attention to the non-scenic Internet celebrity tourist destinations and found that the tourist destinations favored by tourists in the boom of checking in Internet-famous places are not limited to traditional scenic spots, but more are the regional landscape "fragments" that do not have tourism functions and reception capabilities, which can be called non-scenic Internet celebrity tourism destinations, such as Liziba light rail station in Chongqing, Changsha International Financial Center sculpture. Non-scenic Internet celebrity tourism destinations have become a more dynamic and flexible dimension in tourism, which can provide opportunities for tourism destination brand and image building and sustainable development.

#### *2) Internet celebrity endorsement of tourist destination*

Thanks to the modern technological expansion of the Internet and mobile devices, individuals can share their private spatial experiences of destinations on social networks such as Foursquare, Flickr, Instagram, Panoramio, Facebook, etc. Never before has this exceptional amount of information on location-based social media exposed the dynamics of a city, a rural place, a region, or a whole geographical area, from its population and from all kinds of itinerant tourists (Ciuccarelli *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, some researchers discuss how Internet celebrities' posts about tourism destinations on social media may have an impact on potential consumers' tourism consumption.

In tourism, studies have progressively seen digital influencers' role evolving from simply publishing informal information (like a tourist's guide or a travel agent) to becoming able to exploit social media's connections' strength (Bokunewicz and Shulman, 2017). The growing number of people who photograph destinations promotes the inclusion of innovative viewpoints on places in the imagery of tourism (Hunter, 2016) and tends to generate a new idea of space in the minds of tourists and other key publics. Influencers are an important new intermediary between consumers and suppliers who not only are tourism consumers but also influence consumers to visit particular tourism destinations. The messages conveyed by them play an important role in consumers' consumption of tourism products and services. Enterprises from the global to the local are active in social media channels in order to create desire and demand (Hays *et al.*, 2013). Zhang *et al.* (2022). further analyzed the effects of Internet celebrity characteristics on the audience's concentration, happiness, immersive feeling, and flow experience when watching short tourism promotion videos, and found that personal characteristics of Internet celebrities such as attractiveness, credibility and popularity enhanced the audiences' interest in tourist destinations.

#### *3) Influence of specific Internet celebrity economy on tourism*

In addition, some special types of celebrity economy such as rural Internet celebrity economy, and fan economy, have attracted the attention of many people. Huang (2022)

researches the influence of rural Internet celebrities on rural tourism. On the one hand, it has some positive impact. It has brought economic benefits and helped the farmers to display and sell products quickly and effectively. While gaining influence and economic benefits, rural Internet celebrities also lead to better infrastructure in this region, provide people with more career opportunities, drive people out of poverty, and thus promote rural revitalization. On the other hand, it also has some negative impacts. The over-rapid influx of traffic and the excessive hype of the media industry have led to the original development of rural Internet celebrities from a good starting point to disharmonious chaos.

Some studies talk about the influence of the traditional fan economy on tourism as the fan economy can be considered one of the most traditional Internet celebrity economies. Xue (2018) believes that improving the influence and popularity of tourism resources through the star effect is a significant way for many regions to promote the development of the tourism industry and the support of fans drives tourism consumption. Wang and Wang (2020) take Haikou City as an example, introducing the impact of “concert + tourism” on Haikou tourism. Fan groups generate traveling activities in order to pursue their idols or participate in large-scale events they are interested in. Ke and Tong (2021) focus on the marketing mode of film and television tourism destinations from the perspective of fan economy. It is found that the influence of film and television works on tourist attractions includes shaping a positive image of tourist destinations and promoting the development of tourist destinations.

#### 4) Summary

Existing studies on Internet celebrity economy and tourism are relatively independent and scattered, mainly from the characteristics, influence, and mechanism of Internet celebrity and Internet celebrity economy, as well as factors affecting tourism consumption. Relatively few studies have been conducted in the field of tourism based on the Internet celebrity economy. Existing studies primarily focus on the Internet celebrity city and Internet celebrity destinations, the sharing behaviors of Internet celebrities on social media platforms, and the impact of film and television works on tourism. However, the discussion on how the Internet celebrity economy alters consumers’ travel choices, how it affects the tourism economy and its influence path is not thorough enough. Therefore, this paper discusses the influence of the Internet celebrity economy on people’s selection of tourist destinations and consumption mode from micro perspectives based on consumer utility function and then discusses the medium and macro influences of the Internet celebrity economy.

### III. APPLYING UTILITY FUNCTION TO ANALYZE THE INFLUENCE OF THE INTERNET CELEBRITY ECONOMY ON TOURISM

#### A. The Basic Concept of the Utility Function

In economics, utility represents the satisfaction or pleasure that consumers receive for consuming a good or a service. Utility function measures consumers’ preferences for a set of goods and services and represents the quantitative relationship between the utility that consumer obtains in different consumption bundles. The Utility function is widely

used to analyze human behavior.

The basic form of the utility functions is  $u(x, y)$ , where  $x$  and  $y$  are the consumption of two goods respectively, and  $u(x, y)$  is the utility brought to the consumer by such a consumption bundle. There are many functions that can represent consumer preferences, in this article, we use the Cobb-Douglas utility function to analyze consumer behavior, which is  $u(x, y) = x^a y^b$ .

Supposing that consumers have a budget constraint  $W$  and there are only two goods  $X$  and  $Y$  with different prices  $P_x$  and  $P_y$ , consumers will maximize their utility under the budget constraint. Then we solve the following formula:

$$\text{Max } u(x, y) = x^a y^b$$

$$\text{s. t. } W = P_x \cdot x + P_y \cdot y$$

The optimal quantity of goods that can be obtained is

$$\begin{cases} x^* = \frac{a}{a+b} \cdot \frac{w}{p_x} = \left( \frac{1}{1+\frac{b}{a}} \cdot \frac{w}{p_x} \right) \\ y^* = \frac{b}{a+b} \cdot \frac{w}{p_y} = \left( \frac{1}{1+\frac{a}{b}} \cdot \frac{w}{p_y} \right) \end{cases}$$

As a result, the quantity demanded for commodity  $X$  is related to  $a, b, w$  and  $P_x$ . Apply the result in the scenario of the influence of the Internet celebrity economy on the tourism industry. Assuming that there are only two tourist destinations to select from,  $x$  and  $y$ , where  $x$  is the consumption of tourist sites recommended by the Internet celebrities, or influenced by Internet celebrity economy, while  $y$  is the consumption of sites that haven’t been recommended or influenced, it is found that  $x$  is negatively correlated with  $P_x$ , positively correlated to  $a$ , and in the short run will not have significant effect on  $w$  since people’s income and wealth do not change regardless of the development of Internet celebrity economy in the short term. Therefore, we mainly discuss the impact of the Internet celebrity economy on index  $a$  and  $P_x$  in the following pages.

#### B. The Influence of the Internet Celebrity Economy on the Index of $a$

In most cases, the satisfaction or utility that traditional tourism brings to consumers is based on people’s expectations for spectacular landscapes. However, the Internet celebrity economy has brought extra utility to consumers’ tourism consumption. Checking in Internet-famous places is not only a leisure consumption activity, but also a symbolic consumption activity. It is a process in which the consumers recognize the meaning of symbols and internalize them into self-concept. On the basis of traditional tourism to meet people’s requirements for leisure and entertainment, the consumption significance of tourism affected by the Internet celebrity economy expands to accomplish people’s need for self-worth and identity construction (Yan *et al.*, 2022). When people travel to the Internet celebrity tourism destination, they will feel that the distance between themselves and the influencers has narrowed. Thus, they have gained a self-identity of keeping up with the trend. The need for such awareness is especially prevalent among younger people. Also, under the premise of

the fan economy, the symbolic value brought by the Internet celebrity economy is also very common. Fans will go to the places where their idols have traveled to or worked at. They will take this action as a kind of verification of their fan status.

Tourism resulting from the Internet celebrity economy is also considered to be a new mode of self-expression, a means to publicize self-characteristics to obtain affirmation, that is the construction of self-identity as well. For instance, by posting landscapes or selfies in Tibetan, people may build up a self-identity of pursuing freedom in addition to simply going after the icons. Another aspect is that through consumption in the Internet celebrity area, they strengthen their right to speech, thereby consolidating their sense of identity and values. Therefore, by imitating the behavior of Internet celebrities, tourists obtain the symbolic value and significance of Internet celebrities and establish multiple interactions between themselves and groups which has become a collective behavior based on cultural identity (Yan *et al.*, 2022).

Besides, relying on digital media consumption and word-of-mouth marketing on the Internet, Internet celebrity tourism brings a sense of place to the network audience, stimulates the motivation of Internet users to travel, and makes them have local imagination and attachment (Yan *et al.*, 2022). Combined with some advanced technology such as virtual reality, the intriguing customs and cultural landscape of this place are vividly presented. This will provide potential tourists with an immersive experience, arousing their interest and expectation of this travel.

As a result, it is indicated that under the impact of the Internet celebrity economy, people have a higher spiritual level of satisfaction for the process of tourism, and therefore, the parameter  $a$  will increase due to the Internet celebrity economy.

### *C. The Influence of the Internet Celebrity Economy on the Index $P_x$*

In the age of the digital economy, social media has become one of the most vital marketing methods for cities. With the development of digital technology, information interaction is accelerated and it is disseminated more widely and quickly, thus attracting consumers' attention at a greater level, inspiring their travel decisions, and bringing enormous offline traffic gathering to the city. Offline gathering in the short run may increase  $P_x$  and the consumption cost of consumers, because the number of resources is fixed in a short period of time, and supply doesn't change much. According to the relationship between demand and supply, when in a perfectly competitive market and without external intervention, the price  $P_x$  will rise when the demand increases and the supply remains constant.

For instance, Ding Zhen's popularity has an obvious traffic-attracting effect on his hometown, Litang. County officials there claimed that only during the National Holiday in 2021, did Litang's tourism revenue increase by 72.4% year-on-year<sup>2</sup>. But this overwhelming traffic has also driven up

prices and living costs in Litang. Taking the housing prices in Ganzi as a reference, have increased significantly after Ding Zhen's rise to fame in November 2020, with the price of new estates increasing from ¥7,647 /m<sup>2</sup> in December 2020 to ¥8,342 /m<sup>2</sup> in March 2021<sup>3</sup>. Before 2020, the annual rent of those private houses suitable for running a B&B that has convenient transportation and, a relatively huge customer flow is between ¥30,000 and ¥50,000. A year later, the rent there has risen to between ¥60,000 and ¥70,000 (Wang, 2021). Therefore, the  $P_x$  will increase in the short term without additional intervention, as a result of which the short-term aggregation of traffic brought about by the Internet celebrity economy will gradually reduce.

However, in the long run, if the government can take measures to maintain prices and encourage the development of tourism, it may make more merchants willing to provide services there and assist cities in improving their overall service level so that prices will not change much. Also, the government may spend some tax revenue on the infrastructure of the city. This can effectively increase convenience and reduce the cost of production for firms. Thus, it would also contribute to relative price stability.

For example, Zibo City in Shandong province became well-known online after March 2023 because of its characteristic barbecue and considerable service. Different from Ganzi, Zibo's government has implemented many policies to obtain more control over prices and quality of tourism. Before and after the May Day holiday in 2023, the Zibo government implemented many measures to control the increase in the price of hotel rooms throughout the city. According to the average actual transaction price of various types of rooms in hotels from March 1 to March 31, if it rises by more than 50%, it will be investigated and punished according to price gouging behavior. Zibo's price control policy has also made its tourism industry experience a long period of prosperity<sup>4</sup>.

### *D. The Influence of the Internet Celebrity Economy on Industry Related to Tourism*

According to the analysis above, based on the utility function, the Internet celebrity economy can promote the tourism industry in the short term. From the perspective of the industry level, it is found that the Internet celebrity economy also drives the development of local industries related to tourism such as catering, accommodation, and traditional characteristic industries. For instance, after Ding Zhen became celebrated, Litang's various industries have expanded a lot, of which the most significant change is catering-related enterprises. There are 287 new registrations of enterprises in the first eleven months of 2021, compared with 155 in the same period in 2020, an increase of 85.2% which is the peak of enterprise registrations in the last ten years. In addition, homestays, agricultural products, and tourism companies are also promoted compared to the same period in 2020. The number of registered homestay companies has increased more than eight times from 3 in

<sup>2</sup> The People's Government of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. (2021). During the National Holiday, Litang County received 137,967 tourists. Ganzi Daily News. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gzz.gov.cn/lyzx/article/58578>

<sup>3</sup> Jiwu. (2020) Price trend of Ganzi. Available: <https://ganzi.jiwu.com/fangjia> accessed:2023.10

<sup>4</sup> Zibo City Market Supervision Administration. (2023). Zibo will implement measures to control the increase of hotel room prices before and after May Day. Times CCTV network, [online] Available at: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1763937427620243405&wfr=spider&for=pc>

2020 to 26 in 2021 (Li 2021). At present, relying on its breathtaking natural scenery, cultural landscape resources, and popularity effect, the “tourism +” industry has become one of the significant aspects of the development of Litang.

Similarly, thanks to the cooperation of network traffic and the local government, Zibo rapidly became an Internet celebrity city and ushered in new development opportunities. Zibo barbecue became prevalent on the Internet leading to the promotion of the city’s visibility. In addition to the characteristic barbecue, the cultural tourism industry, the catering industry, and the food culture are simultaneously driven up. Zibo municipal government has implemented the plan for the integrated development of barbecue and scenic spots. The policy of ticket reduction and exemption in scenic spots and the construction of a high-quality bus sightseeing system have attracted more and more tourists to Zibo for sightseeing, giving new impetus to the local tourism industry. From January 1 to April 20 2023 the amount of information on Zhoucun Ancient Mall, Haidai Tower Zhongshuge, and Hongye Shizyan was 60937, 55101, and 53154, respectively, ranking among the top three attractions in Zibo. The popularity of scenic spot information is 7.5 times that of the same period in 2022 (Zhang, 2023).

The popularity of Zibo barbecue influenced by the Internet celebrity economy also contributes to the widespread of local traditional food of Zibo, representing the prosperity of the catering industry in Zibo. More and more people began to pay attention to Zibo food culture. Zhoucun baked roll is a national intangible cultural heritage and a famous specialty snack in Zibo, which is beloved by the local people. Taking Zhoucun baked roll as an example, in 2023 February and March, the average search volume was below 500, but when it comes to April and May 2023, the average search volume could reach about 2000, with the highest value of 2,692. From the data, it can be seen that the driving effect of the Internet celebrity economy to the tourism-related industry.

#### *E. The Macro Influence of the Internet Celebrity Economy on Tourist Destination*

From a macro perspective, under the influence of the Internet celebrity economy, the local economy and popularity of tourism of the destination would develop significantly. Before Ding Zhen became a rural Internet celebrity, Litang County had just gotten rid of poverty and was still in an urgent stage of development, and its rural tourism industry was developing on a small scale. Since November 11, 2020, due to Ding Zhen’s popularity on the Internet, the local government immediately adopted a series of measures to make Ding Zhen the tourism image spokesperson of Litang County to promote local tourism. Under the guidance of a series of public opinions, the Sichuan government has achieved remarkable results. Most obviously, there has been a surge in attention to Sichuan’s tourist attractions. Thirteen tourist attractions in the Tibetan area of Garze saw a 112.31 percent increase in the number of tourists in nine days (Yang,

2020). Litang County received a total of 137,967 tourists in 2021, achieving a tourism income of 152 million yuan<sup>5</sup>. With the popularity of Ding Zhen, the income level of local residents has also been improved. According to the data of the People’s Government of Litang County, the living standard of the people of Litang County has been greatly improved in 2020. The per capita disposable income of urban residents is 39,343 yuan with an increase of 4.3 percent<sup>6</sup>. According to the preliminary calculation of the Provincial Bureau of Statistics, the regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Garze in 2021 reached 44.704 billion yuan, an increase of 7% over the previous year<sup>7</sup>. Judging from these data, the Internet celebrity economy will play a prominent part in the promotion of the economy in the region.

In addition, the development of Internet celebrity tourism can also spread local culture to some extent. For instance, the “Wonderful Tour” series on Henan TV has enhanced everyone’s understanding of Henan’s culture and history. After the release of the TV series “Tang Palace Banquet”, the audience can tour the long history of Henan through the lenses of this series, from Yingtianmen in Luoyang to Qingming Shanghe Garden in Kaifeng, from Dengfeng Star Viewing Platform to Xianmen Mountain in Yangshao Winery in Sanmenxia; The popularity of Ding Zhen has also resulted in greater attention to Tibetan culture, such as “Kham Man” and nomadic culture.

On the other hand, tourism influenced by the Internet celebrity economy may not be sustainable. It may give rise to the problem of homogeneous competition. In the previous analysis, we assumed that  $P_y$  and  $b$  were both constant. But in the long run,  $P_y$  and  $b$  are both variable. When witnessing the success of destination  $x$ , destination  $y$  will also implement similar policies or advertising. For instance, in the beginning, individual local tourism bureaus released some intriguing short videos or designed some attractive products related to Internet celebrities. After it exploded on the Internet, more and more cultural and tourism bureaus joined them and rushed to imitate them. When this mode of dissemination has become a common phenomenon, the appeal to consumers will be lower than before, resulting in netizens’ aesthetic fatigue. In this case, the preceding differentiation between travel destinations will narrow and a new equilibrium will be reached in the long run. The influence of the Internet celebrity economy on the tourism industry will gradually lessen. Besides, the excessive influx of tourists brought by this type of tourism may also damage the ecological environment and affect the normal life of local residents. For example, the view of Chaka Salt Lake is magnificent, but many tourists do not abide by the regulations of the scenic area to enter the lake to shoot, a large quantity of shoe covers and other garbage piled up, and cleaning personnel can clean 12 tons of garbage from the scenic area in a day at the peak. From the perspective of public security, some Internet-famous sites may be residential areas, and the entry of tourists affects the privacy and normal

<sup>5</sup> The People’s Government of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. (2021). During the National Holiday, Litang County received 137,967 tourists. Ganzi Daily News. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gzz.gov.cn/lyzx/article/58578>

<sup>6</sup> The People’s Government of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. (2021). Analysis of income and expenditure of urban and rural residents in

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<sup>7</sup> The People’s Government of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. (2022). Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture 2021 National Economic and Social Development Statistical Bulletin. Ganzi prefecture statistical information network. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gzz.gov.cn/tjxx/tjgb/article/440336>

life of inhabitants. The Huiyuan community in Qinhuai District of Nanjing has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in Nanjing. The narrow 400-meter courtyard lane is crowded with hundreds of tourists, bringing traffic congestion, noise disturbance, public security chaos, and other problems. If these drawbacks of the tourist destination are presented, it will certainly bring greater disappointment to the tourists and seriously damage the reputation and original competitive advantage of the tourist destination.

#### *F. Suggestion*

As discussed above, the Internet celebrity economy can improve  $a$ , but it will also increase  $P_x$  in the short term. Under such conditions, it is necessary to strengthen the guidance and supervision of the government in order to avoid transient popularity. First, the government of tourist destinations ought to accelerate the transformation of resources, products, and economic advantages into real GDP, enhance the local infrastructure construction, improve the overall service level, retain the authenticity of tourist destinations, and continue the attraction of landmarks through the accumulation of intellectual property rights such as tourist destination image identification objects and by creating a highly distinctive and personalized image of the tourist site, so that the influence of the Internet celebrity economy on the tourism industry can continue to develop. Second, the government should also make full use of the Internet social media platform for publicity, focus on enhancing the visibility, awareness, association, and sense of place of the tourist destination, and consciously improve people's willingness to travel to or stay in a certain place. Third, the government should form a complete policy system as soon as possible to support and direct relevant departments and institutions to use advantageous platforms to increase publicity and marketing. Fourth, we can consider the establishment of professional institutions, the introduction of relevant teams, carrying out all-round publicity for the city, and establishing the city's figure. Fifth, the governments of tourist destinations should control the proportion of price increases of local enterprises, so as to prevent companies from setting unreasonable prices in order to make more profits. At the same time, we should combat false publicity and unfair competition, maintain the positive image of the city, and the sustainable development of tourism.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

With the development of the Internet and information technology, the transmission of ideas of urban marketing and urban development has become rapid, and the dissemination cost has been continuously reduced. With high interaction and strong social attributes, mobile media including short videos fully mobilize users' enthusiasm to record and discover the charm of cities, so that the image of cities can be spread faster and more widely, and a number of cities have become well-known on the Internet, attracting people to travel to local areas and driving local economic development. This paper uses the consumer utility function and mainly combines the cases of Ding Zhen in Litang and Zibo to analyze the positive and negative impacts of the Internet celebrity economy on the tourism industry from the micro,

medium, and macro levels respectively. From the micro level, it is concluded that the Internet celebrity economy will fortify people's willingness and the marginal utility of traveling to the local area to a certain extent. But at the same time, the lack of government supervision may also raise prices in the short run, making the cost of living even higher for tourists and local residents. From the medium level, it is analyzed that the Internet celebrity economy will not only promote the development of tourism itself but also drive the development of tourism-related industries such as catering and accommodation. From the macro level, it can be seen that the tourism industry influenced by the Internet celebrity economy plays a significant role in promoting the overall local economy, living standards, and cultural dissemination. On the other hand, it also brings new challenges to the maintenance of the local ecological environment and public security governance and also faces the problem of homogenization competition. With the advent of information technology, the Internet celebrity economy has become a marketing tool and urban development path that city authorities are keen on. However, the continuous popularity of a city still lies in whether the city has invested in infrastructure and services. Only by effectively transforming the popularity traffic into high-quality economic growth can short-term prosperity become sustainable development.

However, this paper also has some limitations. In terms of research methods, this paper does not carry out empirical research, so it can be improved by questionnaire surveys and first-hand data collection in the future. More in-depth data and empirical analysis can be carried out by sending questionnaires to consumers to investigate their reasons for traveling to influencer cities. It's also meaningful to collect real data on social media platforms.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author has claimed that no conflict of interest exists.

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