

**DIFFERENTIAL DISTRIBUTION OF TOURISM REVENUES BY REGION: SPATIAL
DISPARITIES AND DETERMINANTS**

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Annotation: The differential distribution of tourism revenues across regions represents a critical issue in tourism economics and regional development studies. This article examines the spatial disparities in tourism revenue generation and analyzes the key economic, infrastructural, geographic, and policy-related factors that shape these differences. Drawing on empirical evidence from multiple regions—including China, Brazil, Europe, and emerging tourism destinations—the study highlights the persistent and often self-reinforcing nature of regional inequalities in tourism income. Special attention is given to the role of infrastructure development, natural and cultural capital, government intervention, and spillover effects between neighboring regions. The findings suggest that while tourism has the potential to promote inclusive economic growth, without targeted and coordinated policy measures it may instead exacerbate existing regional imbalances. The article concludes by proposing strategic approaches aimed at achieving more balanced and sustainable regional tourism development.

Keywords: tourism revenue distribution, regional inequality, spatial analysis, tourism economics, infrastructure development, sustainable tourism

Tourism has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy, contributing significantly to employment creation, foreign exchange earnings, and regional development. However, the benefits derived from tourism activities are unevenly distributed across regions, resulting in pronounced spatial disparities in tourism revenues. These disparities are shaped by a complex interplay of economic development levels, accessibility, infrastructure quality, institutional frameworks, and the availability of natural and cultural resources. Understanding the mechanisms behind the differential distribution of tourism revenues is essential for policymakers seeking to harness tourism as a tool for balanced regional development. This study aims to synthesize empirical findings from existing literature to identify the primary determinants of regional tourism revenue disparities and assess their implications for sustainable economic growth.

One of the most significant determinants of uneven tourism revenue distribution is the level of regional economic development. Regions with higher income levels tend to possess superior tourism infrastructure, well-developed service sectors, and stronger transportation networks, all of which enhance their attractiveness to tourists. Empirical studies from China illustrate this relationship clearly. Research on the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region reveals a marked east–west divide in tourism revenues, with eastern areas such as Hulunbuir outperforming western regions due to better connectivity and proximity to major population centers like Beijing and Tianjin. Similarly, within Shandong Province, coastal cities have consistently captured higher tourism revenues since the early 2000s, benefiting from urbanization, port access, and rich historical-cultural assets. Comparable patterns are observed globally. In Brazil, tourism-related employment and expenditures are concentrated in states such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, where iconic attractions coexist with advanced hospitality ecosystems. These examples underscore the tendency of tourism revenues to cluster in economically advantaged regions.

Infrastructure development plays a pivotal role in shaping spatial patterns of tourism revenue. Transportation systems, accommodation capacity, and digital connectivity directly influence tourist flows and expenditure levels.

The expansion of high-speed rail networks in China has had measurable positive effects on regional tourism growth, particularly by enabling secondary destinations to benefit from spillover demand originating in major tourism hubs. Improved accessibility allows tourists to diversify travel itineraries, thereby redistributing tourism revenues more broadly across regions. In contrast, regions with inadequate public transportation infrastructure face structural barriers. Limited mobility constrains not only tourist access but also local participation in tourism-related employment and entrepreneurship. Evidence from urban studies, such as those conducted in Greater Mumbai, demonstrates how restricted transit access undermines equitable participation in service-based economies—a principle equally applicable to tourism development.

Natural and cultural endowments constitute foundational drivers of tourism revenue concentration. Regions endowed with unique landscapes, religious significance, or UNESCO World Heritage Sites tend to attract higher visitor volumes and generate greater tourism income.

For instance, cultural and spiritual tourism sites such as Zen retreats at Donghua Temple in China have contributed to localized economic growth by attracting niche tourist segments seeking wellness and mindfulness experiences. However, the economic benefits of such attractions often remain geographically confined unless complemented by broader destination branding strategies and improved accessibility. At the global level, Europe continues to dominate international tourism arrivals and receipts, accounting for over half of global figures in 2017. Asia-Pacific and North America follow, while Africa and the Middle East lag behind despite possessing substantial untapped tourism potential. These patterns reflect historical development trajectories, infrastructure gaps, and differences in institutional capacity.

Government intervention plays a crucial role in either reinforcing or mitigating regional tourism revenue disparities. Targeted investments in tourism zones, visa facilitation policies, air connectivity incentives, and destination marketing campaigns can redirect tourism flows toward underdeveloped regions. Conversely, excessive reliance on mass tourism models may deepen regional dependence on limited markets and product types, increasing vulnerability to external shocks such as pandemics or geopolitical instability. Empirical evidence from Turkey indicates that a diversified tourism supply structure reduces revenue volatility and enhances resilience, highlighting the importance of strategic planning in tourism policy.

The relationship between tourism development and regional inequality remains contested in empirical literature. Some studies argue that tourism reduces income disparities through employment creation and multiplier effects, particularly when integrated into pro-poor development frameworks. Others contend that tourism exacerbates inequality by concentrating wealth in already advantaged regions. Spatial econometric analyses of Chinese provinces reveal that tourism revenue growth in one region can influence income distribution in neighboring areas through spillover effects. These findings emphasize the interconnected nature of regional tourism systems and the need for coordinated, cross-regional policy approaches.

The differential distribution of tourism revenues across regions arises from systemic asymmetries rooted in economic development levels, infrastructure quality, geographic endowments, policy frameworks, and market dynamics. While tourism holds significant potential as an engine of inclusive growth, unmanaged development risks reinforcing existing regional hierarchies. To promote balanced and sustainable outcomes, policymakers should pursue coordinated interventions, including decentralized investment strategies, community-based tourism initiatives, digital marketing outreach to emerging destinations, and sustainability-oriented planning. Only through such comprehensive approaches can tourism contribute meaningfully to equitable regional development.

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