

# Research on the Synergistic Effect of Tourism Investment Policies under the Digital China Strategy

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**Abstract:** With the comprehensive implementation of China’s “Digital China” strategy, digital technologies have become deeply integrated into various economic sectors. As a vital component of the modern service industry, the tourism sector is experiencing a profound transformation toward digitalization and intelligent development. This paper explores the synergistic mechanisms of tourism investment policies under the guidance of the national digital strategy. Centered on multi-level governance and cross-departmental collaboration, the study investigates how various policy tools—such as fiscal support, financial instruments, land planning, and digital platforms—interact and coordinate in practice. Through a combination of policy text analysis, case studies, and theoretical modeling, the study constructs a comprehensive evaluation framework that measures policy synergy across dimensions of goal alignment, resource integration, coordinated implementation, and feedback mechanisms. Empirical evidence from regions like Hainan and Zhejiang demonstrates that effective policy coordination significantly enhances investment performance and promotes innovation in tourism development. The study concludes that achieving high-quality investment in the tourism sector requires not only coherent policy objectives and supportive infrastructure but also digital governance capabilities and a responsive institutional environment. Finally, targeted policy suggestions are offered to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of tourism investment policy systems in the digital era.

**Keywords:** Digital China; Tourism industry; Investment policy; Policy synergy; Digital governance

**Online publication:** August 12, 2025

## 1. Introduction

As the “Digital China” strategy advances, the integration of digital technologies across various sectors, including tourism, has reshaped the industry. The tourism sector, traditionally driven by physical resources, is shifting towards a data-driven, platform-based model, leading to changes in investment patterns, governance structures, and consumer behaviors. However, the complexity and fragmentation of tourism investment policies pose

challenges for efficient policy implementation and investment outcomes. The lack of coordination among various policy tools and stakeholders often undermines the potential benefits of tourism investment.

This study focuses on exploring the synergistic effects of tourism investment policies under the “Digital China” strategy. The primary objective is to examine how different policy tools—such as fiscal support, financial incentives, land policies, and digital infrastructure—interact and work together to enhance tourism investment efficiency. It also aims to propose a comprehensive evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of policy coordination. The paper draws upon case studies from regions such as Hainan and Zhejiang to illustrate how effective policy synergy can drive successful tourism development.

The research combines theoretical analysis and empirical case studies to construct a collaborative governance model that can be used to optimize policy coordination. By integrating governance theory with practical policy analysis, this study contributes to a better understanding of how digital technologies impact tourism investment policies and how to improve policy integration in the digital age.

## **2. Development trends of the tourism industry under the digital China strategy**

The “Digital China” strategy, aiming to build an efficient digital infrastructure and integrate digital technologies into key sectors, has had a significant impact on the tourism industry <sup>[1]</sup>. The tourism sector is undergoing a profound transformation, from being resource-driven to being data-driven. The rapid development of digital technologies, including big data, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence, is reshaping the way tourism services are provided and how investments are made <sup>[2]</sup>.

Under the Digital China strategy, the government has introduced policies to promote the development of smart tourism platforms, digital content creation, and tourism data infrastructure <sup>[3]</sup>. These policies are designed to integrate digital technologies into various aspects of tourism, such as personalized travel experiences, online booking systems, AI-based navigation, and digital tourism platforms. These advancements are not only transforming the service delivery model but also reshaping investment strategies and consumer behavior <sup>[4]</sup>.

Digitalization is reshaping consumer expectations, particularly among younger, tech-savvy tourists. Social media, livestreaming, and mobile apps have become essential tools for planning and sharing travel experiences <sup>[5]</sup>. This shift in behavior has led to changes in the investment landscape, where digital platforms and content have become key focus areas <sup>[6]</sup>. As a result, investment in physical infrastructure is gradually being replaced by investment in digital technologies, content creation, and platform development.

As the tourism industry becomes more digitalized, it is essential for policy frameworks to evolve accordingly <sup>[7]</sup>. Traditional policy tools such as fiscal subsidies, tax incentives, and land-use policies need to be complemented with policies that support data governance, digital platform development, and the integration of emerging technologies <sup>[8]</sup>. This transition requires a new approach to policy design and implementation to ensure that tourism investments are aligned with the needs of a digitally driven economy.

## **3. Types and evolution of tourism investment policies**

The high-quality development of the tourism industry relies heavily on government intervention through effective investment policies <sup>[9]</sup>. Especially in the context of digital transformation, tourism investment policies have become more diversified and integrated. Understanding the classification and evolution of these policies is crucial for identifying the basis for policy synergy.

Tourism investment policies can be broadly classified into four categories: fiscal policies, financial policies, land and planning policies, and digital support policies.

The first category—fiscal policies—includes government grants, project subsidies, and incentive programs that directly stimulate tourism investment. While effective in the short term, these policies often lead to fiscal strain and dependency.

The second category—financial policies—focuses on leveraging financial instruments such as concessional loans, loan guarantees, and investment funds to stimulate tourism investment. Local governments have explored “tourism + finance” models, but challenges remain in terms of risk assessment and access to funding, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises.

The third category—land and planning policies—aims to lower barriers to entry for tourism projects by offering land supply incentives, optimizing approval processes, and implementing planning-first strategies. These policies are crucial in project implementation, but face limitations due to land scarcity and environmental regulations.

The fourth category—digital support policies—focuses on digital tourism platforms, data governance, and content creation, in line with the Digital China strategy. These policies support smart tourism infrastructure but are hindered by fragmented standards and overlapping platforms.

Over time, China’s tourism investment policies have evolved through three stages. The first stage was resource-oriented, focusing on infrastructure and scenic area development. The second stage expanded the scope to include industry integration, covering cultural tourism, rural tourism, and leisure projects. The third stage is platform-oriented, emphasizing digital platforms, data governance, and multi-departmental coordination.

Despite the increasing diversity of policy tools, the lack of coordination remains a significant barrier <sup>[10]</sup>. For example, fiscal subsidies may be available, but corresponding financial support is often lacking, leaving projects underfunded. Similarly, digital platforms may be launched without proper coordination with planning and technical agencies, leading to inefficiencies <sup>[11]</sup>.

In conclusion, the tourism investment policy system in China is evolving towards greater diversity and digital integration. To achieve policy synergy, it is essential to not only incorporate multiple tools but also ensure they are coordinated across departments and levels of government.

#### **4. Theoretical basis and evaluation framework of policy synergy**

The concept of policy synergy is central to understanding how tourism investment policies can be effectively coordinated and implemented. Policy synergy refers to the alignment and interaction of different policies, tools, and actors to achieve common goals. In the context of tourism investment, policy synergy is essential for optimizing resource allocation and ensuring that various stakeholders—such as government departments, investors, and consumers—are working towards shared objectives <sup>[12]</sup>.

Collaborative governance theory provides the theoretical foundation for understanding policy synergy. This theory emphasizes the importance of multi-level and multi-actor collaboration, where different stakeholders coordinate their actions to achieve common goals. It stresses the need for horizontal and vertical coordination between government agencies, the private sector, and other stakeholders, as well as the integration of various policy tools to maximize their collective impact.

An effective evaluation framework for policy synergy must consider several dimensions, including goal alignment, resource integration, execution coordination, and feedback mechanisms. The evaluation framework

proposed in this study uses these dimensions to assess the effectiveness of policy coordination and identify areas for improvement <sup>[13]</sup>. This approach provides a systematic way to evaluate the impact of policy synergy on tourism investment and development.

## **5. Practical issues and case analysis**

Despite the theoretical foundations for policy synergy, several practical challenges remain. One of the key issues is the lack of alignment between policy goals and actual implementation. Different government departments often have conflicting priorities, leading to fragmented policies that fail to work together effectively. Additionally, the rapid pace of digitalization in the tourism sector has outpaced the development of policy frameworks, leaving many policies outdated or ineffective <sup>[14]</sup>.

Case studies from Hainan and Zhejiang offer valuable insights into how effective policy synergy can be achieved. In Hainan, a collaborative approach to tourism development has been adopted, where different government departments work together to create a unified tourism policy framework. Similarly, Zhejiang has implemented a smart tourism platform that integrates various policy tools, such as fiscal incentives, digital support, and land-use policies, to drive tourism development in the region.

These case studies highlight the importance of cross-departmental collaboration, the integration of digital technologies, and the use of data-driven platforms in achieving effective policy synergy. The lessons learned from these regions can be applied to other areas of China to improve the coordination of tourism investment policies <sup>[15]</sup>.

## **6. Evaluation and performance measurement model**

Evaluating the effectiveness of policy synergy is essential for understanding its impact on tourism investment. This chapter proposes an evaluation model that focuses on key dimensions such as goal alignment, resource integration, execution coordination, and feedback responsiveness. By measuring these dimensions, governments can identify areas for improvement and optimize policy implementation.

The model uses a set of indicators to assess the effectiveness of policy coordination, including policy alignment, resource integration rates, and collaboration frequency among government departments. This approach provides a clear framework for measuring the success of policy synergy and identifying opportunities for improvement.

## **7. Optimization path for policy synergy**

To enhance policy synergy, the study suggests strengthening both vertical and horizontal coordination across government departments and integrating policy tools for better resource allocation. Improving the digital infrastructure and data sharing capabilities is also crucial for supporting smart tourism initiatives. Furthermore, creating dynamic feedback mechanisms will enable continuous policy adjustments based on performance evaluations.

Encouraging local innovation and fostering experimental zones for policy synergy can also help refine and scale successful practices. By adopting these strategies, tourism investment policies can become more coordinated and effective in supporting the development of the industry.

## 8. Conclusions and future prospects

This study explores the synergistic effects of tourism investment policies under the “Digital China” strategy. It concludes that effective policy coordination is crucial for optimizing tourism investment, particularly as the industry undergoes digital transformation. By integrating fiscal, financial, and digital policies, governments can better allocate resources and enhance the efficiency of tourism investments.

The research highlights that multi-level coordination, both vertical (across government levels) and horizontal (across departments), is essential for aligning policy goals and ensuring smooth implementation. Additionally, the study shows that developing digital infrastructure and creating data-sharing platforms are necessary for supporting smart tourism initiatives and improving policy coordination.

Case studies from Hainan and Zhejiang demonstrate successful examples of policy synergy, where multi-departmental collaboration and digital platforms have enhanced investment outcomes. These cases suggest that integrating digital technologies into tourism governance can lead to more effective policy execution.

However, challenges remain, such as policy fragmentation and slow adaptation to digital transformation. Future research should focus on refining the policy synergy framework, exploring the role of emerging technologies in tourism governance, and examining long-term policy impacts.

In summary, achieving effective policy synergy in tourism investment requires a holistic approach, including better coordination, resource integration, and digital infrastructure. This study provides insights for policymakers to improve the effectiveness of tourism investment policies, with implications for high-quality industry development.

## Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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