
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Analysis of the Viability of Tourism and Future Development Strategy in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Region

Yening Wang

Faculty of International Tourism and Management, City University of Macau, Macau SAR, 999078, China

Corresponding Author: Yening Wang, **E-mail:** T19090125831@cityu.mo

| ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article is to evaluate the current situation of the tourism industry in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and discuss further developing strategies. The main research approach is through the SWOT method, and the main data resources are secondary data from relative articles and organizations. In general, through the SWOT analysis, the strength of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau regions in to develop tourism industry includes unique natural and socio-cultural environments, high-quality infrastructure, and government support; the weakness includes the lack of professional tourism operators and innovative and diverse tourism products; the opportunities including the increasing number of middle classes in China and possible involvement of the local community in the future; the threats mainly from the negative impacts from tourism to the unique natural and socio-cultural local environments. Future developing strategies are focused on 4 perspectives: being sustainable, having business viability, increasing the involvement of the local community, and building infrastructure in a more sustainable approach.

| KEYWORDS

Qinghai-Tibet Plateau; sustainable development strategy; SWOT analysis

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 05 September 2022

PUBLISHED: 15 September 2022

DOI: 10.32996/jhsss.2022.4.4.2

1. Introduction

With an average altitude of 4,500 meters and an area of 2.5 million square kilometers, Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is known as the "Roof of the World", "Snow Plateau," and "Third Pole", mainly including Tibet Autonomous Region and Qinghai Province (Fig.1). It stretches for 1,000 kilometers from the south to north and about 2,500 kilometers from east to west (Marston et al., 2002). Most parts of the plateau are above 3,500 meters above sea level and tend to be higher in the northwest region and lower in the southeast region. The main mountains are east-west or nearly east-west, and most of them are above 5,500 meters above sea level. The extreme nature environments formed its unique landscapes, including the frozen soil area of 1.5 million square kilometers; it is also the area with the widest distribution, the largest thickness, and the highest altitude in the middle and low latitudes of the northern hemisphere; mobile dunes and Gobi deserts formed by wind erosion are common in some dry wide valleys and lake basins of the plateau; many limestone mountains have ancient or modern karst landforms (karst caves, stone buds, peak forests, isolated peaks, stone walls, etc.); four volcanic groups in the Kunlun Mountains in northern Tibet, with volcanic landforms such as volcanic cones, square mountains and lava plains(China Encyclopedia Editor-in-Chief Committee China Geography Editorial Committee, 1993).

With the economic development in China, an increasing number of people tend to choose tourism as a major leisure activity. The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, with its unique natural, social, and cultural environment, could bring a special experience for tourists and therefore supports its economic growth.

1.1 Tourism Industries on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau

Tourism is one of the major and fast-growing industries in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau region. In Qinghai province alone, from 2015 to 2020, the engaged persons of travel agencies had grown by about 63.5%, from 2138 to 3496, and the total number of tourists had grown from 23,154,000 to 50,802,000 (Qinghai Provincial Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

At the same time, the rapid development of tourism has also brought some impacts on the ecological environment of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The most prominent problem is that the rapid growth of tourism demand and the insufficient carrying capacity of the existing tourism environment has resulted in serious damage to the ecological environment. The impacts of tourism on local traditional culture are also complex, which not only promotes its inheritance and promotion but also stimulates its changes. Due to the role of market mechanisms and differences in people's understanding, the development of tourism on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau has also brought some negative impacts on local ethnic culture.

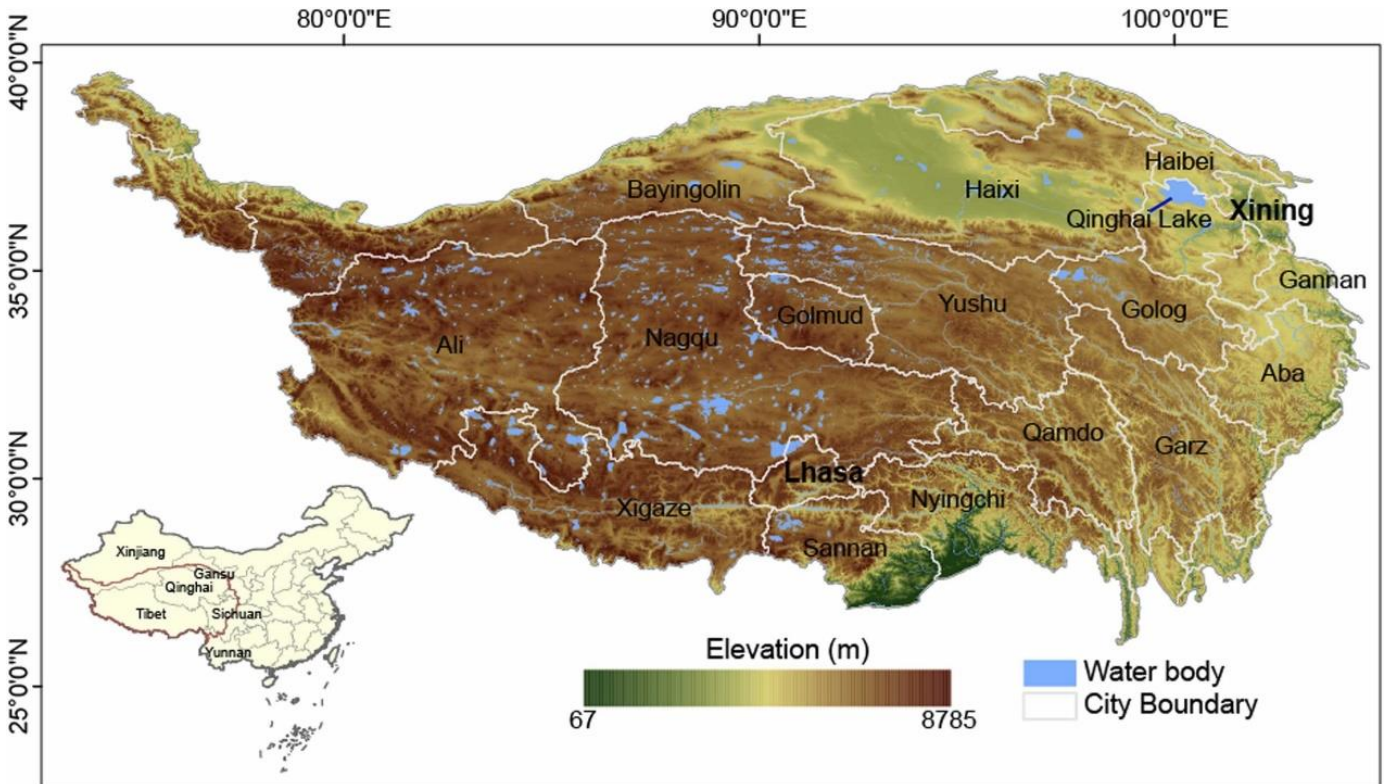


Fig. 1. Location of the study area (Hua et al., 2022)

1.2 Tourism Resources

Tourism on Qinghai-Tibet Plateau can be mainly divided into two categories: nature tourism products and socio-culture tourism products. Ma and Qing (2012) argue that nature tourism products include forest tourism, lake tourism, grassland tourism, wildlife tourism, and hiking tourism. The socio-culture tourism includes Tibetan Buddhism tourism, folklore tourism, and Three River Source area tourism. Relying on the rich tourism resources of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, a series of ecotourism products have been developed in the Qinghai-Tibet region.

1.3 Research Method

The main research method in this study is desk research, also known as secondary research, which involves compiling existing data sourced from various channels. Desk research covers a range of activities. Literature reviews are the most common approach to collecting different data. With the growing usage and the number of materials available on the Internet, the word 'literature' has also expanded to include material that can be found on it (Moore, 2006). The main source of the materials presented in the article is the literature from other researchers' works.

For the situational analysis, the SWOT analysis is implemented. SWOT analysis is an analysis method used to evaluate the 'strengths', 'weaknesses', 'opportunities', and 'threats' of an activity or plan. Effective organizations need to implement planning strategies to identify issues and needs (Culp et al., 2016). In this research, SWOT analysis will be used to analyze the current situation of the tourism industry on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

2. Tourism on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau

To be effective in the situational analysis, the SWOT analysis is implanted.

2.1 Strength

For the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the top strength would be its unique nature and socio-culture environment that differs itself from the rest of the world. The unique natural environment is not only constrained in the geographic environment mentioned above but also in terms of biodiversity. According to Chen (2009), in terms of vertebrates, there are 3 orders, 5 families, 45 genera, and 152 species of fish in the whole Qinghai-Tibet Plateau; there are 3 genera and 1047 species of terrestrial vertebrates, accounting for 43.7% of the total number of such animals in China. Among the 1,009 endangered and threatened species of higher plants listed in China, there are more than 170 species on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, and 95 species of endangered and threatened terrestrial vertebrates on the plateau are known (China now lists 301 species). As for the plants, there are more than 1,500 genera and more than 12,000 species of vascular plants on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, accounting for more than 50% of the total vascular plant genera and 34.3% of the total species in China. Some of the rare species, like Tibetan antelope, has been served as a billboard for the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau region to attract tourists for a long time.

Next would be its good infrastructure. According to the research by Zhao (2002), modern transportation on Qinghai-Tibet Plateau started in the mid-20 century. By 2000, both land and air transportation had penetrated the interior of the plateau. The transportation network was initially formed, but it was heavily dependent on highways. By 2006, the construction of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway had significantly improved the connection between Xining-Nagqu-Lhasa and other cities along the route (Li et al., 2018). By the end of June 2022, the Qinghai-Tibet railway has transported more than 260 million people and 74.6364 million tons of cargo, playing a vital part in the development of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

The last strength would be the support from governments. The president of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, argued that environments are invaluable assets (Xi, 2014). For remote areas like Qinghai-Tibet Plateau that do not have enough resources, good infrastructure, and a suitable natural environment to develop secondary industries, tertiary industries, including tourism industries, become a much better choice (Hu et al., 2020). In research directed by Zhang et al. (2019), they concluded that the development of Tibet's tourism policy has gone through several stages: first with both old and new systems coexisting, then a stage of socialist market economic transition, followed by a stage of perfecting and deepening of the socialist market economy. And tourism policy goals have changed from governmental activities to foreign exchange activities, from foreign exchange earning to the stimulation of consumption, then to employment, the improvement of service quality, and lastly to the people's livelihood. Throughout different stages, the special policies and systems of the central government have played an important role in the economic development of Tibet. In terms of the effects of improving the local economy, before 2001, the contribution rate of Tibet's tourism development to GDP fluctuated below 10%, except in 1987 (33.72%) and 1991 (15.49%). After 2002, the contribution rate of Tibet's tourism development to GDP fluctuated above 10%. Among them, 2003 and 2008 were affected by the "SARS" and "Bash, Smash, Rob and Burn" violent incidents in Lhasa, respectively, and contribution rates were 2.15% and -48.54%, respectively, with an average annual contribution rate of 13.13% (Zhang et al., 2019). In general, the tourism industry is the pillar industry of Tibet's economic development and economic growth.

2.2 Weakness

The first weakness is the lack of professional service personnel and business operators. With the development of Tibet's tourism industry in recent years, the number of tourists visiting Tibet has risen sharply. However, due to the lack of Tibet's own ability to train professional tourism talents and the lack of attracting talents from other regions in China, the number of professional tourism service personnel and talents does not match the market development needs. From the perspective of tourism management, although local tourism planning and management personnel have relevant professional knowledge, their experience is insufficient, which has caused certain obstacles to the further development of tourism (Li, 2019). The development of Tibet's tourism industry, whether it is management planning, the lack of high-quality employees, or the weak social and economic foundation, it directly affects the promotion of tourism to other related industries and even the overall economic development.

The next weakness is the tourism supply structure is single and lacks innovation. In research by Yuan and Chen (2020), from the perspective of Tibet's tourism supply infrastructure structure, while the number of travel agencies is gradually increasing, the number of star-rated hotels is decreasing year by year. One of the important reasons is that there are many overlapping parts in the service scope of the two and the service price is relatively expensive. In addition, the proportion of operating income of star-rated hotels in Tibet is also obviously unreasonable compared with other provinces in China.

2.3 Opportunities

The biggest opportunity comes from the growing number of middle-class in China. According to research from McKinsey Greater China (Hou et al., 2019), half of the Chinese households were already among the wealthier, with an annual disposable income of

140,000 to 300,000 yuan. Income growth has led them to pursue a higher quality of life after meeting their basic needs, such as eating out regularly, buying cosmetics, flat-screen TVs, and holiday travel. As absolute poverty was eradicated in 2020 in China, the number of people that can afford to travel will continue to grow. Considering the protection regulations of COVID-19 in China, most people who want to travel can only travel within China, resulting in high expectations in the domestic travel market.

Next would be the involvement of the local community. Traditionally, the investment in the tourism sector and most employees in the industry are well-trained government officials and workers from the other provinces of China (Li, 2019); the local communities could only take the lower-paid job in the industry. According to the research (Li et al., 2021), the involvement of the local community in the tourism sector has 4 main advantages: 1. The sense of identity of the residents in agricultural and pastoral areas has a positive impact on their willingness for tourism development; 2. The sense of identity of the residents in agricultural and pastoral areas has a positive impact on their community attachment and community participation; 3. Community attachment and community participation have a positive impact on the resident's willingness to support tourism development; 4. Community attachment and community participation partly mediate the relationship between residents' sense of identity and their tourism development intention.

2.4 Threats

The main threat comes from the negative impacts on the local environment. According to research made by the Minzu University of China (2012), 37.29% of the respondents argued that the tourism industry hurts the local environment, and 47.62% of the respondents did not have a clear conclusion on it. The development of the tourism industry will cause irreparable damage to water, air, vegetation, etc., most of which are permanent damage. Tibet, known as the “third pole of the world”, if the ecological environment is destroyed, the loss for human beings will be immeasurable. Qinghai-Tibet Plateau has many rare species, and the research value of these makes the ecological environment of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau can no longer be destroyed. According to news reports in recent years, the environment in Qinghai-Tibet Plateau has been polluted so much that tourist attractions such as Mount Everest Base Camp are no longer open to tourists. To meet the needs of tourists, Qinghai-Tibet Plateau will develop more scenic spots to attract tourists. Repeatedly, it will fall into a vicious circle, which will have a greater impact on the local ecological environment.

Overall, the SWOT analysis can be demonstrated in the table below.

Table 1. The summary of the SWOT analysis

Strength The unique environment, high-quality infrastructure, government supports	Weakness Lack of professional tourism operators and innovative and diverse tourism products
Opportunities Increasing number of middle classes in China as a growing market and the involvement of local community.	Threats The threats are mainly from the negative impacts of tourism on local environments.

3. Sustainable Development Strategy

To reach sustainable development on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the government and communities should pay attention to the following issues.

3.1 Sustainability

The concept of tourism sustainability is to make sure that the local community can benefit from their natural and cultural heritage without compromising the ability of future generations to do so, and it is fundamental to ecotourism development. Unfortunately, most tourism in rural areas is unsustainable, according to the report from IUCN (Botswana) and Symbiosis Consulting (Pty) Ltd (2002). And if tourism resources are managed badly, it may destroy the resources. To protect tourism resources from being diminished, some steps must be taken, and some objectives need to be established.

3.1.1 Objective 1: Ensure that Tourism does not Overload the Tourism Resources

Because of the nature of the tourism industry, the environment would be influenced, no matter how careful the management is. Especially for a fragile environment like Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the development method of “developing before sustainable development” does not suit. To decrease the impacts on the environment to a minimum, one thing the manager must do is to make sure that the number of tourists it receives does not exceed the carrying capacity of tourism resources. Managers can employ a series of measures, including increasing the involvement of the local community and visitor education. If the actions can be implemented successfully, the level of impact on the local environment and tourism resources can be lowered. At the same time, it can enable a better relationship between the local communities and tourists, provide a better travel experience, and therefore

increase the revenue from the tourism industry. In addition, managers need to change their directions according to the actual situation of the environment and tourism industry.

As for the specific actions, well-round environmental protection regulations should be set. Managers need to coordinate rights and responsibilities, interest division, and conflict resolution methods of various stakeholders in the relevant systems, guide and encourage the promotion of the ecological service-oriented economic development model, establish a market guarantee mechanism; improve the local incentive mechanism and the supervision system for local governments, rewards and punishments are clearly defined. For traditional industries like grassland animal husbandry, the limitations for the available areas and time for husbandry should be set. The government should check the health level and water level from time to time and make sure the damage to the natural environment has been decreased to a minimum.

3.1.2 Objective 2: Monitor and Alleviate the Impacts on Local Socio-Culture Perspectives

Due to historical issues, socio-culture environments in Qinghai-Tibet Plateau differ from the rest of China. On the one hand, it does give the area a unique selling point that could attract millions of tourists from the rest of China; on the other hand; it also means that the impacts on local communities' socio-culture perspectives would be much larger than the rest of China. Because of the nature of the tourism industry, tourists would have different minds, beliefs, education levels, etc., the misbehaving of one tourist may influence the local communities' view of the tourists as a whole and therefore influence all other tourists' tourism experience, and cause an economic depression.

The difficulty of the objective is that the impacts are not precise data, and they can not be predicted with great accuracy. Considering the massive area of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the situation would only get more complicated. Managers must do the relevant research and keep monitoring the environment and the impacts of socio-cultural impacts.

The actions that could be used include promoting the involvement of local communities and other stakeholders in the local government or other management approaches; providing enough training opportunities and financial support for residents to fully utilize the business opportunities and ease the resistance to culture confliction; encourage local tourism businesses to source local products first.

3.2 Business Viability

Qinghai-Tibet plateau is rich in both natural and cultural resources to support the development of tourism industries, but only having the resources do not suggest a successful outcome. Only with the help of business sectors can the resources be transformed into actual economical rewards. For the local business, the understanding of the danger of running a business and the profits they can earn and receive as a stockholder may not be enough, and it can result in serious management conflicts. The key issues for the business viability include the balance between development and protection, the diversification of tourism products, and the lack of management talent.

3.2.1 Objective 1: Address the Problem between Environmental Protection and High Cost

The high standard of environmental protection is often associated with the high cost and therefore influences the revenue of the business and their competitiveness in the tourism industry.

The actions could be taken into consideration, including encouraging the cooperation between tourism businesses, like teaming up to buy supplies so the transportation efficiency is increasing and the relative damage to the environment is decreased; supporting regulations for ecotourism pollution to establish a trading system like China Carbon Emission Trade Exchange and providing some tax benefits for small businesses; last would be the investment in developing new technologies that could reduce pollution and not increase the cost significantly, like the PV panels.

3.2.2 Objective 2: Improve Financial Support for Prospective Investors

After the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China raised the issue of ecological and environmental protection to the national strategic level. Therefore, it is very necessary to appropriately develop "green finance". The so-called green finance refers to the funds used for the construction and maintenance of the ecological environment, including the infrastructure construction of ecological tourism bases, the development of tourism products, and daily maintenance fees of scenic spots. To this end, the State Council can ask local taxation bureaus to provide certain tax incentives, reductions, and exemptions to relevant departments. However, the construction of ecotourism cannot rely solely on the national government or local government, especially considering the amount of GDP the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau region has. Investors at all levels (universities, social enterprises, non-profit organizations, and individuals) can jointly raise funds to build the third-pole ecotourism industry chain. At the same time, local governments should brainstorm and introduce corresponding drainage policies and use preferential

policies to attract the above-mentioned people at all levels to increase their investment to realize the steady development of ecotourism on the *Qinghai-Tibet Plateau*.

3.2.3 Objective 3: Train or Attract Enough Professional Business Operators

Travel businesses need to be able to tap into a wide range of business management, technical, operational, and personal skills. New and existing ecotourism entrepreneurs with small businesses lack hiring resource specialists, so they must take responsibility for all aspects themselves. Therefore, many new local entrepreneurs quickly become overwhelmed. On top of that, most professionally trained talents do not want to work in remote areas. Contemporary young talents (especially those who majored in tourism management) often choose big cities and popular scenic spots to seek development opportunities. In remote areas like the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, there is no corresponding independent management organization or department, and undergraduate and master's graduates of related majors will not choose to come here. According to Burns and Dewhurst (1996), Small businesses are most vulnerable in 12 to 30 months after starting a business, and the main reasons for failure include:

- Financial management and liquidity issues.
- Inexperience and incompetence in management.
- Address inflation and economic conditions outside the company.
- Poor or non-existent books and records.
- Sales and marketing issues.
- Staffing.
- Failure to seek and use expert suggestions.

The actions could take include encouraging the government, universities, and NGOs to formulate more training programs for the local young talents and unemployed residents. The government could give the participants some incentives or benefits like tax benefits. Also, some programs need to raise awareness for the existing tourism operators and develop their business skills. In addition, the government needs to provide some benefits to attract young talents and businesses from the rest of China to prove the service standard and provide some cutting-edge examples for local businesses.

3.2.4 Objective 4: Improve access to Experts for Business Operators

The unique cultural and natural environment provides unique selling points for the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, but altitude sickness, coldness, low density of air, and distance between it and densely populated areas means that most experts do not have much experience, information, and advice that are capable of the plateau region's current situation.

For local governments, providing easy access to essential information and expert advice on market sources, customer expectations, marketing, sound business management practices, and more can help new ecotourism businesses survive the critical start-up phase and subsequently keep up, adapt, and therefore stay on top of the competitive, ever-evolving travel market. We believe it is a problem that remains to be solved.

The actions include encouraging local universities to research to identify the needs and demands; inviting experts from other regions of China to make development manuals that provide clear instructions on the basic problem that local businesses may come across; and encouraging old, big, experienced business operators to guide the latter product development options.

3.3 Involvement of Local Community

The process of community residents voluntarily participating in various community activities or affairs is community participation (Zhang & Wang, 2003). It can also be understood as community participation is not the participation of one person, nor the participation of some people, but the participation of most or all of them (Pan & Liu, 2010). If this theory is applied to the development of tourism, it should refer to the participation of residents of scenic spots, tourism departments, governments, and tourists. Different types of people will participate in different forms and content, but the commonality is that they all participate in tourism industry development. A deeper understanding is that every resident of the tourist destination has the right and opportunity to display and contribute their talents, but the premise is that the residents can seek the common interests of the community (Chen et al., 2010). Every resident has the right to safeguard their interests and has the opportunity to express their opinions to the local government. Ensuring effective community participation depends on the smooth flow of information, the knowledge level and the ability of residents, and the effort and time spent. In terms of making some important decisions and planning, in addition to the active guidance of the government and the quasi-decision-making and quasi-plan of the tourism department, residents of the tourist destination can also express their opinions and opinions, as long as it is for the development of the tourist destination and the tourist destination. For the benefit of residents, to provide more comfortable tourism services, the relevant departments should consider the opinions of residents, promote the development of the tourist destination, and make the residents of the tourist destination actively and optimistically participate in tourism.

3.3.1 Objective 1: Increase the Percentages of Local Employees Holding Managerial Roles in the Tourism Industry

Tourism is a labor-intensive industry, creating an estimated one job for every ten tourists. Many jobs are created for locals, but the vast majority of them are worked in low-paid and low-skilled required jobs, with few in senior management positions.

The government and business sectors need to work together to address this: tourism businesses must be more committed to training and recruiting local people to senior positions within their organizations, and the government can make it easier for them to do this by improving efficiency without jeopardizing productivity training and education to increase the number of residents with appropriate skills (IUCN (Botswana) and Symbiosis Consulting (Pty) Ltd, 2002).

Possible actions include encouraging cooperation make commitments to train and employ residents when it comes to senior roles.

3.3.2 Objective 2: Increase the Involvement in the Tourism Industry for Normal Local People

Different types of people will participate in different forms and content, but the commonality is that they all participate in tourism. The problem with the current Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is that normal people can only participate in the tourism industry by being employed or making some folk handicrafts. According to Kui Peng from Global Environmental Institute, handicraft cooperatives and women's cooperatives formed spontaneously by the villagers in the community are the main sources of promoting local economic development. Its tourism products are mainly handicraft products of ecological service type with local characteristics (such as messenger bags made of yak and wool). The main tourism products in the region are offline products. Without online marketing channels, most tourists do not understand the local characteristic culture. In addition, the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is mainly based on religious culture (Buddhism) and herdsman culture, so most of its tourism products tend to be religious in nature, and the development of folk handicrafts is relatively simple.

The actions that could be taken into consideration include cooperation with designers that are familiar with the current trend among the target customer to design the more popular style for the villagers, utilizing the advantages of developed e-business in China to extend its selling channels, and forming a partnership with folk culture themed store in other provinces, adapting the product quality and touch to smoother to please the customers, and cooperate with NGOs to increase its power in influence.

3.4 Infrastructure

Although the infrastructure in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau region has been effective, especially after the construction of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, the sustainability side of the infrastructure is often ignored. Sustainability can not only be constrained to the activities made by the tourists but every part of tourism development. In remote and fragile areas like Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the design and construction practices would have huge impacts on the environment, culture, and aesthetics. The well-designed infrastructure may result in higher build costs and longer building periods; the trend in China suggests it makes sense from both business and sustainable development perspectives.

Objective 1: facilitate the developing needs in infrastructure while minimizing the negative impacts and maximizing the positive impacts

The actions to reach the objective include employing local labor and resources, adopting environmental-friendly and aesthetical design, and monitoring the surrounding environment to make sure the damage to the environment has been minimized.

4. Conclusion

This paper is focused on the current tourism situation in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and its future developing strategy. In general, the current situation in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is quite common in the popular tourism region: have a unique environment to develop tourism, but face many challenges in different fields. Through the SWOT analysis, the current situation can be divided into 4 perspectives: the strength includes the unique environment, high-quality infrastructure, and government supports; the weakness includes the lack of professional tourism operators and innovative and diverse tourism products; the opportunities include an increasing number of middle classes in China as a growing market and the involvement of local community; the threats mainly from the negative impacts from tourism to local environments. With a clear understanding of the current situation, local government can improve and create a better experience both for tourists and residents, and the tourism corporations can also squeeze the opportunities to enlarge the market and therefore earn more market share.

For future development, the main theme of the strategies is to attract tourists without scarfing the tourism resources and make sure that their future generations can still do so. The main income of residents relies on the usage of the environment; therefore, enabling sustainable development and making sure residents can benefit from the development is the top priority. Specifically, strategies are focused on 4 perspectives: being sustainable, having business viability, increasing the involvement of the local community, and building infrastructure in a more sustainable approach. The concerned bodies like government and NGOs should take these opportunities to manage the tourism resources sustainably and improve local people's living standards.

The limitations of the study including the majority of data were captured in the 2010s and are secondary data, so there could have issues in correlation, timeline, and reliability. Also, the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is a vast area; this study tended to be general research on the whole area instead of specific tourism destinations; the real situation may differ from the paper. Future studies could focus on a specific tourism destination and make the destination differ from others in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau region. Also, since the main research method adopted is desk research, specific field trips to the tourism destination would be an important approach for future studies.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

References

- [1] Burns, P., & Dewhurst, J. (1996). *Small business and entrepreneurship*. Red Globe Press.
- [2] Chen, Z. Y., Wang, H. W., & Li, L. J. (2010). Research on the perception of tourism empowerment among residents in ethnic minority villages. *Business Research*, (9), 173-178. <https://doi.org/10.13902/j.cnki.syyj.2010.09.032>
- [3] Culp, K., Eastwood, C., Turner, S., Goodman, M., & Ricketts, K. G. (2016). *Using a SWOT analysis: Taking a look at your organization [2016]*. UKnowledge. https://uknowledge.uky.edu/ced_reports/3/
- [4] Hou, D. C., Pu, R. W., Zhou, J., & Ze, P. D. (2019). *2020 China consumer survey report*. McKinsey. <https://www.mckinsey.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/%E9%BA%A6%E8%82%AF%E9%94%A12020%E5%B9%B4%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E6%B6%88%E8%B4%B9%E8%80%85%E8%B0%83%E6%9F%A5%E6%8A%A5%E5%91%8A.pdf>
- [5] Hu, J. P., Ma, S., Zou, Q., & Zeng, Y. X. (2020). An empirical analysis of the factors influencing the output value growth of industrial enterprises above designated size in Tibet. *Hubei Agricultural Science*, 59(S1), 452-454+458. <https://doi.org/10.14088/j.cnki.issn0439-8114.2020.S1.124>
- [6] Hua, T., Zhao, W., Cherubini, F., Hu, X., & Pereira, P. (2022). Continuous growth of the human footprint risks compromising the benefits of protected areas on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. *Global Ecology and Conservation*, 34, e02053. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2022.e02053>
- [7] IUCN (Botswana) and Symbiosis Consulting (Pty) Ltd. (2002). *Botswana national ecotourism strategy*. . <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/bot179068.pdf>
- [8] Li, Q. (2019). Research on the development path of rural tourism from the perspective of supply-side reform. *Agricultural Economy*, (2), 52-53.
- [9] Li, S., Gong, J., Deng, Q., & Zhou, T. (2018). Impacts of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway on accessibility and economic linkage of the Third Pole. *Sustainability*, 10(11), Article 3982. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10113982>
- [10] Li, W. Y., Ye, Z., & Xiao, C. C. (2021). A study on the influence of residents' sense of identity in Tibet's agricultural and pastoral areas on their willingness to develop tourism: the mediation of community attachment and community participation. *Journal of Tibet University (Social Science Edition)*, 36(4), 167-175. <https://doi.org/10.16249/j.cnki.1005-5738.2021.04.021>
- [11] Ma, D. S., & Qing, X. H. (2012). The current situation and countermeasures of ecotourism development in Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. *Journal of Tibet University*, 27(1), 26-33+46. <https://doi.org/10.16249/j.cnki.1005-5738.2012.01.024>
- [12] Marston, S. A., Knox, P. L., Liverman, D. M., Casino, D. V., & Robbins, P. (2002). *World regions in global context: Peoples, places, and environments*. Prentice Hall.
- [13] Minzu University of China. (2012). *Investigation report on the impact of Tibet tourism development on the life of local residents*. <https://www.docin.com/p-2468791394.html>
- [14] Moore, N. (2006). Desk research. In N. Moore (Ed.), *How to do research: The practical guide to designing and managing research projects* (pp. 106-111). Facet. <https://doi.org/10.29085/9781856049825.011>
- [15] Pan, S. B., & Liu, F. (2010). Research on the ecotourism model based on community participation. *Journal of Anqing Normal University (Social Science Edition)*, 29(4), 27-30.
- [16] Qinghai Provincial Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *The development of tourism in Qinghai Province (1999-2020)*. . National Qinghai-Tibet Plateau Scientific Data Center.
- [17] Xi, J. P. (2014). *General secretary Xi Jinping's series of important speeches*. Xuexi Publishing House.
- [18] Yuan, S., & Chen, M. X. (2020). Analysis of the present situation of tourism development in Tibet. *National Circulation Economy*, (5), 129-130. <https://doi.org/10.16834/j.cnki.issn1009-5292.2020.05.059>
- [19] Zhang, J. W., Liu, Z. W., & Wang, F. L. (2019). Tibet tourism development: Historical evolution, policy change, and economic growth. *Journal of Tibet University (Social Science Edition)*, 34(3), 208-217+228. <https://doi.org/10.16249/j.cnki.1005-5738.2019.03.028>
- [20] Zhang, P., & Wang, B. (2003). The enlightenment of foreign community participation in tourism development to China—Taking South Pembroke, England as an example. *Fujian Geography*, (4), 38-40+45.
- [21] Zhao, J. A. (2002). Discussion on the development prospect of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau transportation network in the early 21st century. *Resource Science*, (4), 5-10.
- [22] China Encyclopedia Editor-in-Chief Committee China Geography Editorial Committee. (1993). *Encyclopedia of China: Chinese Geography*. China Encyclopedia Publishing House.