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Exploratory analysis of the position of Chinese cities as international tourism hubs: product destination versus business environment internationalization

Análisis exploratorio de la posición de las ciudades chinas
como centros turísticos internacionales:
internacionalización del producto destino versus del entorno empresarial

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Abstract

This paper measures the level of tourism internationalization of 50 major cities in Mainland China by analyzing their connectivity as international tourism hubs. A typology of cities is presented based on a comparison of their 'product destination internationalization' and 'business environment internationalization' in the tourism sector. Results are interpreted in the context of three dimensions of the internationalization of the Chinese economy: the imbalanced development of the space-economy; the uneven impact of policy plans and mechanisms; and the imprint of spatio-political hierarchies. We discuss how this study can be complemented with research using other spatial imageries, and used as the starting point for further comparative studies on tourism internationalization in other geographical contexts.

Key words: globalization; China; tourism hubs; ranking.

Resumen

Este documento mide el nivel de internacionalización del turismo de 50 ciudades importantes en China continental mediante el análisis de su conectividad como centros turísticos internacionales. Se presenta una tipología de ciudades basada en una comparación de su "internacionalización del destino del producto" y la "internacionalización del entorno empresarial" en el sector turístico. Los resultados se interpretan en el contexto de tres dimensiones de la internacionalización de la economía china: el desarrollo desequilibrado de la economía espacial; el impacto desigual de los planes y mecanismos de políticas; y la impronta de jerarquías espacio-políticas. Discutimos cómo este estudio puede complementarse con una investigación que utilice otras imágenes espaciales y utilizarse como punto de partida para futuros estudios comparativos sobre la internacionalización del turismo en otros contextos geográficos.

Palabras clave: globalización; China; centros turísticos; ranking.

1 Introduction

It is now widely accepted that the Chinese tourism industry has evolved into a critical economic sector that is fast expanding and has further significant growth potential (Zhou, 2019). While China's economy almost tripled from US\$5.2 trillion in 2009 to US\$15.2 trillion in 2019, the overall revenue related with the tourism sector practically grew tenfold during the same period, from US\$0.19 trillion in 2009 to US\$1.02 trillion in 2019 (Ministry of Cultural and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, 2020). Even though COVID19 has clearly shaken up things in the short run, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (2018) China is predicted to overtake the USA by the end of the decade in terms of overall tourism revenue, thus becoming the world's largest travel and tourism economy.

Tourism in China has been developing in a specific context due to the country's unique political, economic and cultural background (for a global perspective, see Díez-Pisonero et al., 2018). For example, the tourism sector has for a large part been shaped by the gradual 'opening up' of the Chinese economy from 1978 onwards (leading to internationalization), which has in turn gone hand in hand with a stepwise transition towards market-based approaches (leading to marketization). The gradual nature of these changes not only implies that, in relative terms, the Chinese tourism industry is perhaps not as well developed as in many other countries, but also that –at least until recently– it has been less internationalized. Nonetheless, tourism in China is increasingly establishing itself as a major economic sector with an increasingly international outlook. In this context, it is important to note that it has become one of the ways to 'earn' foreign currency (Feng, 2011), further mimicking China's overall economic development trajectory in terms of international orientation and export focus. As a consequence, we are witnessing a more focused development and international marketing of cultural and historical attractions alongside brand-new tourism facilities and infrastructures that collectively fuel the growth of international tourism to China.

It is well documented that China's economic growth in general and the international dimensions of that growth in particular have a crucial urban component (Ren, 2013; Gu et al., 2017). This centrality of cities is, albeit to an uneven degree, also observable in the tourism industry. Because many key tourist facilities and infrastructures as well as major historical and new attractions tend to be located in or near cities, China's major cities have come to play a key role in the internationalization of its tourism industry (Feng, 2011). This is not to say that the development of rural tourism is less important or marked in China. For example, according to statistics from the

China National Tourism Administration, 3.2 billion tourists choose rural destinations during China's three 'golden-week' peak travel seasons in May, October, and the Spring Festival or China's Lunar New Year in 2019 (Ministry of Cultural and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, 2020). Nonetheless, major cities play a crucial role in the development of the *international* tourism market in particular because they often act as the gateways –in a geographical sense– for the industry at large. Zhang et al. (2011) and Deng et al. (2017), for example, point to the pronounced centrality of cities in the Chinese international tourism industry because of the accessibility offered by major airports, a range of implicit facilitating factors such as the level of English in tourism services, and the gateway function offered by cities. In this paper, we therefore specifically focus on the geographies of the internationalization of Chinese tourism at the urban scale.

Gorcheva (2011) argues that tourism internationalization not only pertains to the overall attractiveness of that location, but is also defined by the broader business environment in which the tourism industry is embedded. Nonetheless, much conceptual and empirical research on international tourism tends to focus on the former, for example on the more visible and direct dimension of cities as destinations for international inbound tourists. This research agenda thus focuses on the resources and products that give a destination its attractiveness, with the analytical focus ranging from the geographies of international tourists/tourism income to understanding international market segmentation and embeddedness (see Demir & Gozgor, 2018; Valadkhani & Omahony, 2018). Although such an approach goes a long way to reveal how locations act as international tourist hubs, it also implies that we know less about how locations are integrated in international tourism business networks.

Following Gorcheva's (2011) distinction, in this paper we analyze how Chinese cities are unevenly integrated in the networks of international tourism businesses ('business environment internationalization', BEI) and compare this to the volume of international inbound tourism ('product destination internationalization', PDI). The background against which we interpret patterns, similarities, and differences consists of three complementary dimensions: we hypothesize that, first, cities' roles are shaped by the overarching geographies of the internationalization of the Chinese economy; second, that the ensuing parallels between BEI and PDI are deepened because key firms active in international tourism co-create the position of these cities as international destinations; and third, that there are nonetheless differences between BEI and PDI which emanate from the particularities of tourism markets and policies. Rather than turning these into formally testable hypotheses, which would be difficult given the relatively

limited number of observations, we will use these dimensions as a broad interpretative framework to organize the discussion of results and sense-check findings.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we review the relevant scientific literatures, zooming in on the key aspects informing our analytical framework and discussion of the results: the literature on international tourism development, and the literature on the internationalization of the Chinese economy. We then specify our analytical framework, which compares the presence of key firms that can be related to international tourism across 50 major Chinese cities to their importance as destinations for international tourism. The subsequent section presents an overview of the main results and discusses the implications in substantive terms. The paper is concluded with a summary of our main findings and a discussion of the broader potential of our methodology, as well as an overview of possible avenues for further research.

2 Literature review

2.1 Tourism internationalization

In its most narrow sense, the term 'economic internationalization' can simply be used to describe processes of increasing border-crossing interactions (Welch & Luostarinen, 1988). As Melin (1992) already pointed out almost 30 years ago, internationalization has become a major dimension of the ongoing strategy of many businesses. Williams and Shaw (2011) more broadly define economic internationalization as the process of becoming aware of the importance of international transactions, as well as processes of investing in and undertaking business transactions in other countries. Regardless of the more-or-less subtle differences between these and other definitions, they all acknowledge that in the economic domain internationalization is reflected in at least two complementary and partially interacting dimensions, i.e. firms' products being consumed by customers in other countries as well as firms' location strategies. Gorcheva (2011) points out that both dimensions are also relevant for, and visible in the tourism industry: tourism internationalization entails both (1) the production of services to be consumed by international tourists as well as (2) actors seeking out and creating business environments for organizing and disseminating these services. In this first part of the literature review, we argue that although both dimensions –captured by PDI and BEI– are indeed two pertinent themes for tourism research, their parallels and differences have not been specifically broached in the literature. We briefly discuss each strand of the tourism internationalization literature in turn.

In the literature on PDI, indicators used to measure the degree of international tourism often revolve around the number of international tourism arrivals, which can be complemented and/or extended with a range of associated indices such as the length of stay and the level of spending (e.g. Valadkhani & Omahony, 2018). This approach has also been adopted in the literature studying the development of international tourism in China, which has become an important research topic in recent years (Su et al., 2017; Wang & Bramwell, 2012). Many of these studies use such indices as their starting point to reveal the international competitiveness of specific destinations (Ma & Hassink, 2013; Zhang et al., 2011), stakeholder partnerships (Cui & Ryan, 2011; Liang & Hui, 2016) or the impact of fast-evolving tourism developments (Liu et al., 2017; Peng & Xiao, 2018).

BEI, in turn, concerns firms' presences in 'foreign' destinations. Scheyvens and Russell (2011), Biggs et al. (2011) and Erkus (2016) classify international tourism firms into two groups, i.e. those that are directly and those that are indirectly tourism-related (see Table 1). Direct tourism-related firms are, for example, hotels, travel agencies, theme parks and tourist NGOs, whose daily business primarily consists of dealing with tourists. Indirect tourism-related firms, in turn, refer to business such as restaurants, grocery stores, hospitals and insurance companies where tourist services are only a part –sometimes even a small one– of companies' daily business, but may be required in the context of international tourism. Of course, the distinction between direct and indirect tourism firms is rarely clear-cut, as each of these firms is only to a (varying) degree tourism-oriented: hotels also cater to business travelers, while the tourism-related turnover of grocery stores may be very small or even negligible. Furthermore, as Lassen (2006) points out, 'tourism' and 'business' are by no means mutually exclusive travel categories on a given trip, which makes the straightforward labelling of 'tourism' as a self-evident 'product category' difficult at best. In addition, tourism services offered by these firms have to an uneven degree an international dimension: major hotels cater to domestic and international guests alike, and there may be complex relations (e.g. franchising) that may render the identification of international versus non-international difficult. While we acknowledge these caveats, previous research by Scheyvens and Russell (2011), Biggs et al. (2011) and Erkus (2016) has shown that in broad terms (1) the distinction between direct and indirect holds and (2) it is possible to differentiate international from national/local players, and we therefore adopt it to differentiate between different aspects of BEI.

Table 1. Typology of international tourism firms

Direct tourism-related	Indirect tourism-related
International hotels	International supermarkets
International travel agencies	International restaurants
International theme parks	International hospitals
International tourism NGOs	International insurance companies

Source: authors, based on Scheyvens and Russell (2011), Biggs et al. (2011) and Erkus (2016)

Even though BEI and PDI are posited as different processes, a number of parallels can be assumed. This is partly because of similar processes shaping overall internationalization (see the next section), but also because the presence of key firms active in international tourism co-create the position of cities as international destinations. Williams and Shaw (2011), for example, point out that international tourism is in part characterized by consumers who often lack local knowledge and therefore face uncertainty. For some tourists this is of course part of the experience, but many other tourists value this uncertainty negatively, which creates market opportunities for international companies with known and trusted brands that are thought to deliver tourism services with less (perceived) risks. The assumed parallels between ‘business environment internationalization’ and ‘product destination internationalization’ may be especially germane in China, as international tourists may assume, and key actors in international tourism may therefore need to pay attention to, the assumption that tourism facilities and infrastructures may not reach the standards they are used to. This is corroborated by the research on the airline industry, which show that national loyalties of travellers and international visibility of carriers rank next to price in terms of influencing travellers’ selection (e.g. Bruning, 1997). Both tour operators and individual tourists may therefore be inclined to choose cities with a shown abundance of international brands with the inherent promise of a certain standard in the quality of service so that BEI and PDI create a virtuous cycle of tourism internationalization. At the same time, however, specific tourism policies and city development strategies of local governments may result in idiosyncratic patterns for specific cities.

2.2 Interpreting the internationalization of the Chinese tourism economy

Irrespective of the PDI/BEI differentiation, when interpreting the development and internationalization of the Chinese economy and tourism industry, researchers explicitly or implicitly draw on geographical imageries and frames that shape their perspective. Obvious

examples include the alleged urban-rural division (Zhu et al., 2020) or the coastal provinces-inland provinces division (Wei et al., 2017) which in China, although clearly present, also shape how geographical patterns are framed and understood. On the one hand, these geographical frames risk imposing a pre-defined analytical lens that not only clarifies but also obfuscates. For example, a focus on the internationalization of the tourism industry in and through cities acknowledges China's remarkable urban trajectory (Miller, 2012) and Chinese cities' pronounced international gateway function (Taylor et al., 2014), but it also obscures the dynamics of rural tourism in China (Su, 2011) and the interconnected nature of the urban and the rural in China's tourism industry (Li et al., 2019). On the other hand, however, using such geographical frames can help focusing, organizing and structuring the discussion of patterns and provide a coherent interpretative framework. In this paper, we focus on the position of cities as this allows more coherently framing results in the context of three broader dimensions underlying the geographies of the internationalization of the Chinese economy: the imbalanced development of the space-economy, the uneven impact of policy plans and mechanisms, and the imprint of spatio-political hierarchies. In the remainder of this section, we discuss each of these in turn, but we emphasize the value of and need for research that uses other spatial imageries —e.g. rural tourism— as well.

First, Chinese cities' uneven tourism internationalization need to be understood against the background of broader spatio-economic inequalities across China. On a very general level, the geography of foreign direct investment and gross domestic product in China has two major dimensions: first, a gradient from relatively more developed coastal regions areas to relatively less developed regions in western China (Li & Wei, 2010); and second, the dominance of a set of densely settled polycentric urban regions, with above all Beijing–Tianjin–Tangshan, the Yangtze River Delta, and the Pearl River Delta standing out (Liu et al., 2016) According to Huang et al. (2016), in 2015 these three urban agglomerations covered 18% of the Chinese population on a mere 2.8% of the landmass, but represented 36% of national GDP. Paralleling the deeper integration of these parts of China in the global economy, which has roots in the uneven 'opening up' of the Chinese economy, major tourism and hotel groups have been unevenly setting up branches across Chinese cities (Wen & Sinha, 2009; Wen & Tisdell, 1997). For example, in 1982 122 cities located in the eastern coastal areas of China were permitted to open up to foreign tourists (Goh et al., 2014), and these and related forms of head start are likely to produce path dependencies that are visible to date. In addition to these more straightforward parallels between cities' economic internationalization-at-large and their involvement in international tourism, one can hypothesize a range of other processes reinforcing this pattern. For

example, Polyzos and Minetos (2011) find that local resources, tourist demand, infrastructures, and expertise alongside the broader economic environment are the main attributes influencing international tourism firms' location decisions. This implies that cities with larger average purchase power and/or a well-developed domestic tourism market are relatively more attractive to international firms as they can tap into a relatively large pre-existing market.

Second, the development of China's economy also has an obvious spatio-political dimension. China has a unique five-tier hierarchical urban system: in descending order of administrative power, these are provincial-level cities (including Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqing), sub-provincial level cities (e.g. Nanjing and Hangzhou), prefecture-level cities (e.g. Suzhou), county-level cities, and counties (Wang et al., 2015). When developing their industrial basis, provincial capitals and other key cities usually enjoy special policy treatments in terms of investments (Pine et al., 2013). Meanwhile, these cities usually find it easier to develop international engagements, ranging from foreign direct investment to international trade, because resources such as transportation, manpower, and financial capital are (being) concentrated there (Yu et al., 2003). As a result, provincial-level cities and sub-provincial level cities are often more internationalized. In addition, in the "National Urban System Planning (2005–2020)", the Ministry of Housing and Urban–Rural Development of China listed Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and Guangzhou as four globally oriented megacities while Chongqing, Shenyang, Nanjing, Wuhan, Chengdu, and Xi'an are designated as regional centers. Again, in the Chinese context such decisions have major ramifications in terms of resource allocation to facilitate the internationalization of the economy (Huang et al., 2016). In other words, the imprint of the spatio-political hierarchies in the urban system is often visible in uneven patterns of internationalization, especially outside the three major urban agglomerations and/or away from coastal areas as identified above, and this will likely be visible in the tourism sector as well.

And third and finally, the uneven internationalization across urban economies is driven by different policy plans and mechanisms. In terms of the tourism sector, for example, different cities set themselves different objectives as they develop their tourism sector, such as attracting more international tourists (Tang et al., 2015), having a more balanced spatial distribution within the tourism industry (Zhang et al., 2011), protecting history and culture (Lim & Pan, 2005), increasing the overall international dimension of their economy (Deng et al., 2017), or working towards an enhanced international business environment (Kucukusta & Guillet, 2015; Tukamushaba et al., 2013). The implementation of these development goals often triggers differences across cities in attracting international tourists and international tourism companies. A

city such as Hangzhou, for example, is well known to take a very proactive approach when developing tourism plans and mechanisms (Feng, 2019).

3 Data and methodological framework

3.1 Selection of cities and PDI data

The first step in the construction of our dataset is the choice of cities. The selection of cities drawn from the 2017 yearly report on 'China's National Tourism Statistics' in 2017, which includes information on the 50 main international tourism gateways in Mainland China (see Table 2 and Figure 1). The selection itself reflects a PDI perspective, as it is based on a combination of (1) the number of international arrivals and (2) the length of stay of international visitors in a certain year. Multiplying both values produces the PDI value used in the remainder of this paper. Results are shown in Table 2. Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing have the largest PDI values, and the Gini coefficient of 0,63 suggests that PDI is skewed towards a relatively small number of cities.

Table 2. PDI and BEI of the 50 Chinese cities

PDI ranking	City	Abbreviation	International	Length	Product Destination	
			arrivals (IA) (in thousands and rounded)	of stay (LS), in days	Internationalization (in thousands and rounded)	Business Environment Internationalization
1	Shenzhen	SHZ	11,700	2.35	27,500	951
2	Guangzhou	GZ	8,600	3.11	26,800	1516
3	Shanghai	SH	6,900	3.21	22,200	4449
4	Beijing	BJ	4,200	4.30	17,900	2045
5	Xiamen	XM	2,300	4.98	11,500	214
6	Chongqing	CQ	1,800	5.30	9,600	622
7	Suzhou	SZ	1,600	4.19	6,800	1042
8	Quanzhou	QZ	1,300	5.06	6,300	124
9	Wuhan	WH	2,200	2.80	6,300	672
10	Fuzhou	FZ	1,100	5.85	6,200	213
11	Zhuhai	ZH	3,200	1.79	5,700	115
12	Chengdu	CD	2,700	1.93	5,200	637
13	Guilin	GL	2,300	2.24	5,200	47
14	Hangzhou	HZ	1,600	2.60	4,100	856
15	Xi'an	XA	1,300	2.92	3,900	321
16	Qingdao	QD	900	3.65	3,400	333
17	Huangshan	HS	1,500	1.86	2,800	12
18	Tianjin*	TJ	800	2.95*	2,400	719
19	Dalian	DL	1,000	2.10	2,200	375
20	Nanjing	NJ	600	3.51	2,200	480
21	Shenyang	SHY	700	3.19	2,200	285
22	Zhangzhou	ZAZ	600	3.89	2,200	29
23	Kunming	KM	1,200	1.67	2,100	156
24	Ningbo	NB	800	2.18	1,800	348
25	Yantai	YT	400	4.14	1,700	104
26	Zhongshan	ZS	600	2.66	1,700	128
27	Changchun	CC	500	3.40	1,500	144
28	Yanbian	YB	700	2.08	1,500	18
29	Wuxi	WX	400	3.09	1,400	387
30	Sanya	SY	400	2.61	1,200	98
31	Wenzhou	WZ	500	2.34	1,200	125
32	Nanning	NN	600	1.99	1,100	112
33	Qinhuangdao	QHD	100	7.23	1,100	37
34	Urumqi	URU	300	3.45	1,100	33

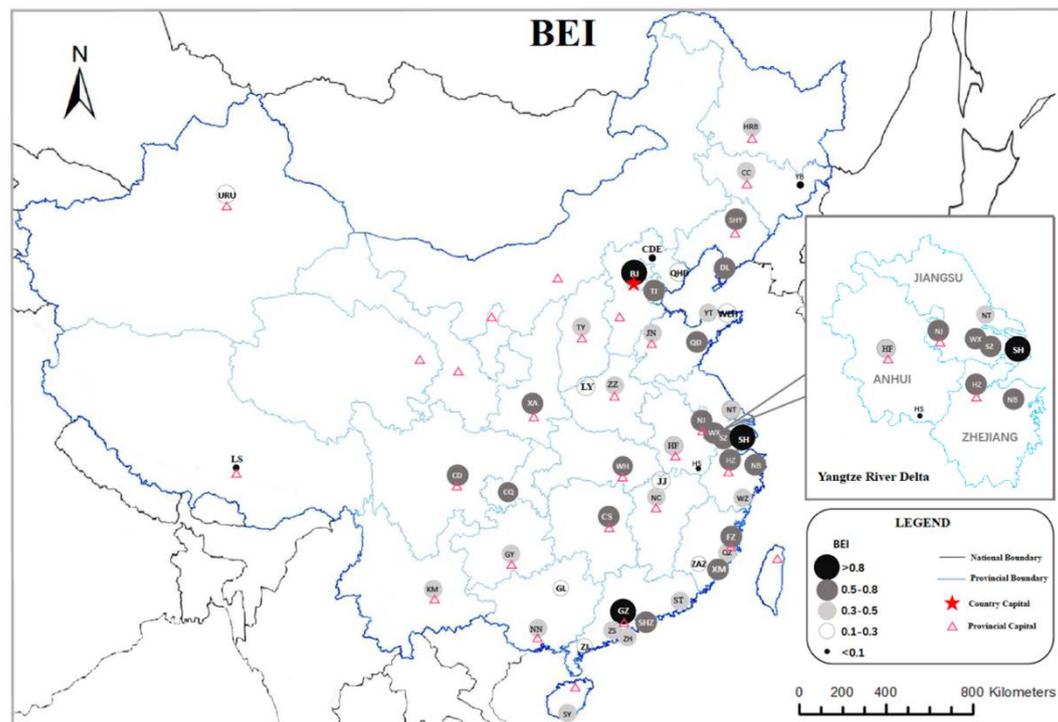
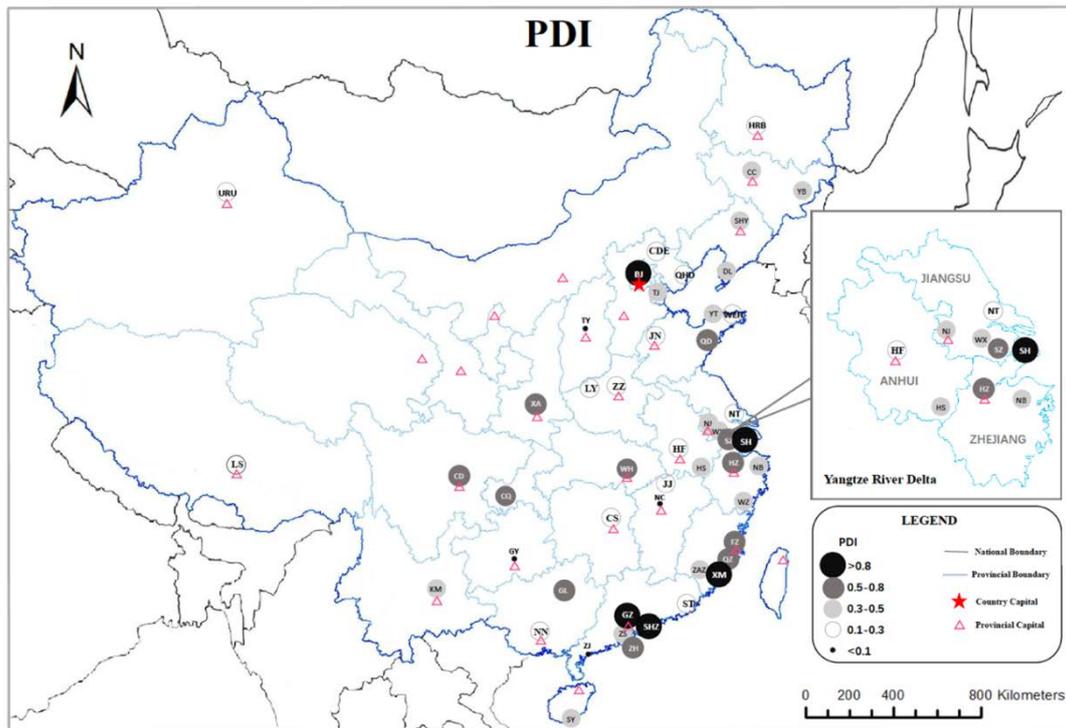
Table 2. Continuation

PDI ranking	City	Abbreviation	International	Length	Product Destination	
			arrivals (IA) (in thousands and rounded)	of stay (LS), in days	Internationalization (in thousands and rounded)	Business Environment Internationalization
35	Weihai	WEH	300	3.01	1,000	37
36	Zhengzhou	ZZ	400	2.48	1,000	188
37	Changsha	CS	600	1.53	900	232
38	Hefei	HF	300	2.94	800	180
39	Jinan	JN	300	3.16	800	175
40	Chengde	CDE	200	2.40	600	16
41	Jiujiang	JJ	300	2.12	600	32
42	Lhasa	LS	200	3.00	600	10
43	Luoyang	LY	300	1.80	600	38
44	Harbin	HRB	200	2.23	500	198
45	Nanchang	NC	200	2.03	500	120
46	Nantong	NT	200	2.82	500	151
47	Shantou	ST	200	2.04	500	68
48	Guiyang	GY	200	2.00	400	78
49	Taiyuan	TY	200	2.67	400	106
50	Zhanjiang	ZJ	400	0.81	300	49

Source: authors' calculations based on China's National Tourism Statistics

(2017), <http://www.forbes.com/>, <http://fortune.com/>, www.marketingandtechnology.com/,
www.qualitytourism.cn/ and <http://www.teaconnect.org/>

Figure 1. Location of 50 most important Chinese cities in terms of PDI and BEI, based on data in Table 1



Source: authors' calculations based on China's National Tourism Statistics (2017), <http://www.forbes.com/>, <http://fortune.com/>, www.marketingandtechnology.com/, www.qualitytourism.cn/ and <http://www.teaconnect.org/>

3.2 Measuring BEI

Operationalizing BEI is of course a somewhat more complex exercise compared to operationalizing PDI, as there is no readily available data. We analyzed how cities are integrated in the networks of the largest chains, groups and firms in international tourism. Following Table 1, we include direct and indirect tourism-related firms into our analysis. To measure the integration of a city in the corporate networks of international tourism chains, we adopt a simplified version of the company location measurement methodology developed by Derudder and Taylor (2018, 2020). This methodology starts from an appraisal of the (importance of the) offices of international tourism firms. Although we recognize that in the tourism industry local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are a major provider of accommodation, food and beverages, transportation, entertainment, etc. (Aydin & Emeksiz, 2018), international chains and their brands exert a major and very visible influence in the internationalization of a city's tourism industry. Our measure of a city's BEI is the total number of branches or offices of international tourist companies. Linking firms with a city was done based on the information available on the websites of each of the firms identified below. Typically, websites of tourism firms provide an option that allows selecting their locations, giving information on the addresses of offices and often with a world map of their distribution to showcase their 'global' presence. We used the websites to 'scavenge' all possible relevant information, firm by firm. When tourism firms exist as groups, they were treated as a single network in our research and allocated to their core sector.

International tourist firms were chosen based on their ranking in lists of the largest international tourism firms for each of the different categories. These rankings were the most recently available at the planning of the research in 2018, and tended to be based on 2017 data. For the international restaurant, grocery store and insurance sectors, we included the top firms by cross-checking two indices, i.e. the Forbes 2000 (<http://www.forbes.com/>) and the Fortune 500 rankings (<http://fortune.com/>). A total of 13 restaurant, 10 retail and 42 insurance groups were identified as having a presence in (some of) the 50 Chinese cities. For the international hotel sector, 85 global hotel companies from the 'Hotel 325' list (www.marketingandtechnology.com/) were identified as having at least one presence in China. For international travel agencies, we reviewed the list of international travel agencies that are allowed to run business in China by the Chinese government (www.qualitytourism.cn/). For international theme parks, we reviewed the top 10 theme park groups worldwide from the global attractions attendance report of Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) (<http://www.teaconnect.org/>) and identified 2 theme parks operating in China. For international NGOs, we identified 7 organizations affiliated with the

UNWTO and WTTC and having offices in China. By crawling the data on international hospitals in China provided by the Allianz international medical insurance group, we identified 10 international hospital groups that have branches, joint ventures or cooperation agreements in China. Taken together, this resulted in a list of 205 international firms (see appendix 1) with a direct or an indirect tourism component that have set up some sort of presence across 50 major Chinese cities. As mentioned, in some of the cases the link of the firms that are indirectly related firms with tourism may seem opaque, but we emphasize that the selection of those firms is skewed towards international tourism. For example, the hospitals in our dataset have a tourism component in that these are recommended by international insurance companies providing travel insurance.

The BEI ranking is shown in Table 2. It is led by Shanghai, Beijing and Shanghai, and also exhibits an uneven distribution with a Gini coefficient of 0,63: a small number of cities exhibiting more internationalization than others, with broadly the same set of cities re-emerge atop the ranking.

3.3 Data transformation

To be able to better compare both distributions and the position of different cities therein, we transformed the data in two consecutive steps. First, given that the distributions in Tables 1 and 2 are negatively skewed, we use the natural logarithms of the input data. Second, we apply a min-max normalization to these logarithms so that we create distributions ranging from 0 (lowest value) to 1 (highest value). These data, summarized in Table 3, are subsequently used as our main input in the next section to discuss parallels and differences between both dimensions of tourism internationalization for Chinese cities. These further analyses include: (1) correlation analysis to measure the degree of relevance between PDI and BEI; and (2) a quadrant analysis to construct a typology among the 50 Chinese cities.

4 Results

Table 3 shows the transformed PDI and BEI values for the 50 Chinese cities. Two initial observations can be drawn from the overall pattern. First, correlation analysis confirms the broad-based link between PDI and BEI ($r = 0.65$ with $*p < 0.01$). For example, while Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou exhibit a high level of PDI and BEI, Lhasa, Jiujiang and Chengde lack this international dimension. Nonetheless, and second, given that the correlation is far from perfect there are also clear differences between both rankings. Straightforward examples include

Shenzhen ranking less high in the BEI ranking and cities in the Yangtze River Delta (e.g. Nanjing, Hangzhou, Suzhou) having a somewhat higher BEI ranking.

Table 3. Normalized PDI and BEI values of the 50 Chinese cities. PDI and BEI values range from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating the most internationalization and 0 the least internationalization among the 50 cities

Rank	City	Abbreviation	Normalized PDI degree	Rank	City	Abbreviation	Normalized BEI degree
1	Shenzhen	SHZ	1	1	Shanghai	SH	1
2	Guangzhou	GZ	0.994	2	Beijing	BJ	0.873
3	Shanghai	SH	0.952	3	Guangzhou	GZ	0.823
4	Beijing	BJ	0.905	4	Suzhou	SZ	0.762
5	Xiamen	XM	0.807	5	Shenzhen	SHZ	0.747
6	Chongqing	CQ	0.767	6	Hangzhou	HZ	0.73
7	Suzhou	SZ	0.689	7	Tianjin	TJ	0.701
8	Quanzhou	QZ	0.675	8	Wuhan	WH	0.69
9	Wuhan	WH	0.674	9	Chengdu	CD	0.681
10	Fuzhou	FZ	0.672	10	Chongqing	CQ	0.677
11	Zhuhai	ZH	0.651	11	Nanjing	NJ	0.635
12	Guilin	GL	0.632	12	Wuxi	WX	0.6
13	Chengdu	CD	0.63	13	Dalian	DL	0.594
14	Hangzhou	HZ	0.579	14	Ningbo	NB	0.582
15	Xi'an	XA	0.568	15	Qingdao	QD	0.575
16	Qingdao	QD	0.536	16	Xi'an	XA	0.569
17	Huangshan	HS	0.495	17	Shenyang	SHY	0.549
18	Tianjin	TJ	0.463	18	Changsha	CS	0.516
19	Nanjing	NJ	0.445	19	Xiamen	XM	0.502
20	Dalian	DL	0.44	20	Fuzhou	FZ	0.502
21	Shenyang	SHY	0.438	21	Harbin	HRB	0.49
22	Zhangzhou	ZAZ	0.437	22	Zhengzhou	ZZ	0.481
23	Kunming	KM	0.427	23	Hefei	HF	0.474
24	Ningbo	NB	0.397	24	Jinan	JN	0.469
25	Yantai	YT	0.383	25	Kunming	KM	0.451
26	Zhongshan	ZS	0.378	26	Nantong	NT	0.445
27	Changchun	CC	0.362	27	Changchun	CC	0.437

Table 3. Continuation

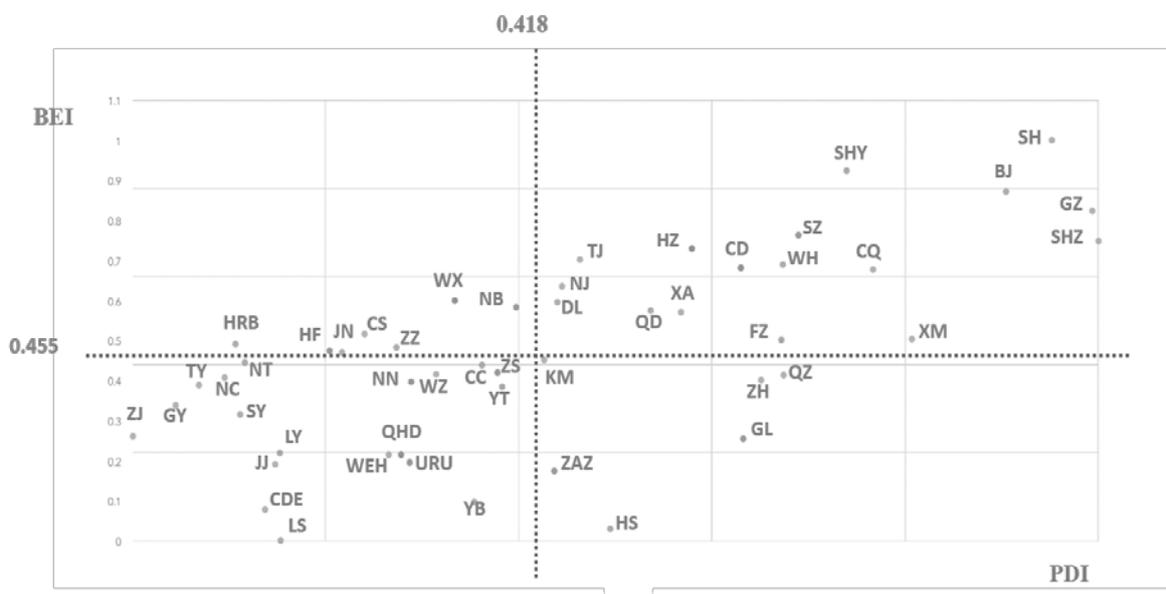
Rank	City	Abbreviation	Normalized PDI degree	Rank	City	Abbreviation	Normalized BEI degree
28	Yanbian	YB	0.354	28	Zhongshan	ZS	0.418
29	Wuxi	WX	0.334	29	Wenzhou	WZ	0.414
30	Wenzhou	WZ	0.315	30	Quanzhou	QZ	0.413
31	Sanya	SY	0.301	31	Nanchang	NC	0.408
32	Nanning	NN	0.289	32	Zhuhai	ZH	0.401
33	Urumqi	URU	0.287	33	Nanning	NN	0.396
34	Qinhuangdao	QHD	0.278	34	Taiyuan	TY	0.387
35	Zhengzhou	ZZ	0.273	35	Yantai	YT	0.384
36	Weihai	WEH	0.265	36	Sanya	SY	0.374
37	Changsha	CS	0.24	37	Guiyang	GY	0.337
38	Jinan	JN	0.217	38	Shantou	ST	0.314
39	Hefei	HF	0.204	39	Zhanjiang	ZJ	0.261
40	Lhasa	LS	0.153	40	Guilin	GL	0.254
41	Luoyang	LY	0.153	41	Luoyang	LY	0.219
42	Jiujiang	JJ	0.148	42	Qinhuangdao	QHD	0.215
43	Chengde	CDE	0.138	43	Weihai	WEH	0.215
44	Nantong	NT	0.117	44	Urumqi	URU	0.196
45	Shantou	ST	0.112	45	Jiujiang	JJ	0.191
46	Harbin	HRB	0.106	46	Zhangzhou	ZAZ	0.175
47	Nanchang	NC	0.096	47	Yanbian	YB	0.096
48	Taiyuan	TY	0.069	48	Chengde	CDE	0.077
49	Guiyang	GY	0.045	49	Huangshan	HS	0.03
50	Zhanjiang	ZJ	0	50	Lhasa	LS	0
Standard Deviation			0.258	Standard Deviation			0.219
Mean			0.418	Mean			0.455

Source: authors' calculations based on China's National Tourism Statistics (2017), <http://www.forbes.com/>, <http://fortune.com/>, www.marketingandtechnology.com/, www.qualitytourism.cn/ and <http://www.teaconnect.org/>

To organize the discussion of the position of different cities in both distributions, we devise a typology of cities and discuss a number of concrete examples in this typology. The typology is presented in Figure 2, which centres the distribution on mean values of PDI and BEI thus dividing the distribution into four quadrants. For example, cities in the upper-right quadrant of Figure 2 have above-average PDI and BEI values. We will organize the discussion by zooming in on

examples of cities in each of the quadrants, using the three main dimensions of the geographies of China's internationalization as a broad interpretative framework.

Figure 2. PDI versus BEI of 50 Chinese cities



Source: authors' calculations based on China's National Tourism Statistics (2017), <http://www.forbes.com/>, <http://fortune.com/>, www.marketingandtechnology.com/, www.qualitytourism.cn/ and <http://www.teaconnect.org/>

4.1 Upper right quadrant

There are 17 cities in this quadrant, i.e. cities that have above-average PDI and BEI values. In general, all three broad patterns underlying Chinese cities' tourism internationalization profile are present here.

First, a strong internationalization profile can be understood in terms of a city's dominant position within the Chinese space-economy. For example, Shanghai having the highest BEI value corroborates to a large extent the city's leading role in global business networks, which has been extensively documented in the literature (e.g. Li et al., 2017; Wu 2011). Extensive foreign direct investment (Wei et al., 2006), the agglomeration of multinational companies headquarters (Cai & Sit, 2003), the presence of the largest seaport in China (Li & Dawood, 2016) as well as the vast economic hinterland of Yangtze River Delta (Li et al., 2017) all attest to the global attractiveness of Shanghai for international business. Wu (2003) furthermore argues that the position of Shanghai in global business networks does not only reside in the volume of foreign investments per se, but in the catalytic effects associated with these foreign investments. Given this, it is no surprise that

international tourism companies often open offices in Shanghai: it acts as a key gateway into the Chinese market. In our study, we thus found that over 4000 international tourism enterprises have an operational basis in Shanghai. As a consequence, over and above a large PDI value Shanghai also has a proportionally large BEI value.

Hangzhou, in turn, provides a somewhat different example of a city with large BEI/PDI values but with the former being proportionally somewhat larger. International airlines such as Qatar Airways and KLM, which operate a more-than-daily service to Shanghai, have chosen Hangzhou a regular direct destination, and this even though the travel distance between Shanghai and Hangzhou is only 45 minutes by high-speed rail (CAPA, 2013). The CAPA report suggests that one of the reasons why these airlines are interested in Hangzhou is that it is one of China's wealthiest cities and therefore home to a local market with sizable consumption power. Meanwhile, as Shutt and Cheng (2016) elaborate, the city's international profile in general and in tourism in particular should also be understood in the context of the Hangzhou-based e-commerce giant Alibaba Group. The Alibaba Group plays an important role in attracting e-commerce conferences and exhibitions to Hangzhou (Wang et al., 2018), which in turn further enlarges the size of the local market for hotels, restaurants, etc. Alongside the logic of 'foreign business following foreign tourists', Hangzhou's local market potential constitutes a possible reason for attracting international tourism enterprises. This is further confirmed by our data, which shows that the main contributor to Hangzhou's BEI is the large number of branches of international hotels, restaurants and grocery stores.

Second, some of the non-coastal cities in this quadrant elaborate how a city's particular position in the national administrative system underlies its tourism internationalization. In the context of the Chinese state's policy, Chongqing, Xi'an and Chengdu all belong to the –relatively less developed– western region.¹ Xi'an and Chengdu are provincial capitals, while Chongqing is a municipality under the direct control of the central government. The political power derived from their position in the administrative system coupled with further support in light of a national 'Go

1 The Seventh Five Year Plan adopted by the National People's Congress in 1986 formally divided China into three regions: the East, the Middle and the West. The eastern part refers to the provinces and cities that first implemented the coastal opening policy and have a high level of economic development; the central part refers to the economically underdeveloped areas, while the western part refers to the economically underdeveloped western areas. This is a division based on policy, not on administration nor on geographical concept. Among them, the eastern region includes 11 provinces (cities) of Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Liaoning, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Shandong, Guangdong and Hainan; the central region includes 10 provinces (autonomous regions) of Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei, Hunan and Guangxi; the western region includes nine provinces (autonomous regions) of Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Xizang, Shanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang.

West' economic development strategy (Roberts & Goh, 2011; Wang 2018; Zhai & Ng, 2013) has led to the concentration of economic activities and international connections within these cities (Liu et al., 2016). One visible embodiment is the support of the Chinese state for these cities' airport construction, as shown by Chongqing, Xi'an and Chengdu being the only cities from Western China listed in the top 10 with the largest scale of investment in China (CAAC, 2019). In this sense, these cities' positions result from national strategic economic policies and help attracting international firms (Taylor et al., 2015). So even though these cities also attract sizable numbers of tourists from all over the world because of their unique tourist profiles focused on pandas (Chengdu), the Terra Cotta Warriors (Xi'an) and the Three Gorges of the Yangtze River (Chongqing) and thus have a sizable PDI, they proportionally still have slightly higher BEI values in our analysis because of the relatively large number of branches of international hotels and restaurants.

Third, a high internationalization profile can also be explained in terms of specific city tourism plans and mechanisms alongside a specific location. Shenzhen has the highest PDI value among 50 Chinese cities. However, it should be noted that according to the statistics standards set by National Statistics Bureau of China, tourists from all regions except mainland China, and therefore including Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, are regarded as international tourists. Thus, Shenzhen's geographical location close to Hong Kong is clearly a key element when explaining its PDI value. However, this sizable PDI value is not entirely matched in terms of BEI, which is proportionally somewhat lower. According to Zhang (2012), from 1989 onwards, the central government's policy of promoting private investments in service industries in Shenzhen contributed to the birth and development of a large Shenzhen-based tourism group: the Overseas Chinese Town (OCT). Theme parks, hotels and restaurants owned by the OCT Group have played an instrumental role in attracting and serving international visitor – often from Hong Kong – to Shenzhen. Nonetheless, the near-absolute monopoly of the OCT group in the city's tourism industry is to some extent challenged by the entry of international tourism enterprises (Liang & Bao, 2015). This is corroborated by our data: Shenzhen only has 50 international hotels included in our data, which is less than Chengdu and Xi'an.

5.2 Upper left quadrant

There are 7 cities in this quadrant, i.e. cities that have above-average BEI values but below-average PDI values. Of these 7 cities, three are located in the eastern part and the other four are located in the central part of China. One of the main processes underlying this internationalization

profile is the uneven impact of recent city tourism plans and mechanisms. In other words, cities in this category often tend to pursue a path where attracting international firms is a key part of their development trajectory, and this is also visible in the tourism sector. Harbin, the capital city of Heilongjiang Province and located in the northeastern part of China is an example here.² The city is famous for its ice lanterns and ice sculptures in winter, and attracts millions of visitors every year (Kong & Chen, 2019; Xie et al., 2016). However, because the 'ice' tourism has a high seasonal dependence, when assessing the yearly numbers of tourists and days of stay into consideration, Harbin's PDI value is below the average.

Nonetheless, the city's local policy orientation on developing tourism internationalization has played an important role in attracting international tourism enterprises. As one of the cradles of heavy industry in China, many large state-owned enterprises are located in Harbin, and these are under major pressure to transition to become more market oriented. Nowadays, the city is positioned by the central government as a national 'demonstration area' for the smooth transition from heavy manufacturing to a service industry (Xie et al., 2016). Many corresponding policies and measures have been devised by the local government accordingly. Among them, one is to attract service enterprises, especially hospitality companies to strategically revive the city's economic vitality (Xie et al., 2016). Meanwhile, the strategic location viz. adjacent countries such as Russia, Korea, Mongolia, and Japan (Kong & Chen, 2019) makes Harbin internationally connected. The city thus acts as a main gathering place of international commercial activities with the neighboring countries, hosting many international commercial conferences and exhibitions (Xie et al., 2016). All of these make the local market a potential target for international tourism firms. In addition, the development of international commercial events compensates for the loss of business during the low season.

5.3 Lower right quadrant

There are 6 cities in this quadrant, i.e. cities that have above-average PDI values but below-average BEI values. A first reason for this pattern can be found at the intersection of uneven development and specific city tourism plans and mechanisms. For example, Huangshan's main tourist attraction is Huangshan Scenic Park, a world natural and cultural heritage listed by UNESCO (Ma and Hassink, 2013; Xu et al., 2016). Meanwhile, Guilin is a 2200-year-old city in Guangxi that is famous for its beautiful 'mountain-river' natural scenery (Polsa & Xiucheng 2011;

2 In the context of the Chinese state's policy, Heilongjiang Province belongs to the central region.

Sofield et al., 2017). These traditional and natural tourism resources in Huangshan and Guilin have given rise to a high PDI value. However, both cities tend to protect local tourism businesses. Huangshan is located in the less-developed mountain region of Anhui province, where land suitable for agriculture is limited (Xu et al., 2016). Guilin, in turn, is located in the less-developed Guangxi Autonomous Region, which is one of the poorest provinces in China (Polsa & Xiucheng, 2011). Against this background, a key policy dimension of the development of the tourism sector has been poverty alleviation (Polsa & Xiucheng, 2011; Xu et al., 2016). Thus, when attracting international tourists, these cities' strategy has been to develop local, often small and medium-sized tourism firms instead of attracting international tourism firms to participate in the local market. For example, only few preferential policies and incentives for international tourism firms have been introduced, thus leading to a situation where BEI and PDI are not in balance (Ma & Hassink, 2013; Polsa & Fan, 2011; Xu, 1999).

A second pattern can be attributed to specific city tourism plans in conjunction with a specific location. Like Shenzhen, Zhuhai's sizable PDI value partly emanates from its location close to Hong Kong and above all Macao. However, this is not matched by a high BEI value. A first explanation is that international visitors often use Zhuhai as an entry point rather than as a destination (Tieben, 2012). This is shown in our data in that the city combines a large number of international arrivals with a short average stay (i.e., less than 2 days). This in turn has a negative impact on the city's attractiveness to international tourism firms, especially to international hotels and catering enterprises which focus on 'over-night business'. A second possible explanation for Zhuhai's relatively lower BEI value is that, relative to other cities in the Pearl River Delta, economic development is less of dominant policy goal. Although it is one of the earliest National Special Economic Zones (dating back to the year of 1980), it is well known for advancing a 'green' and ecological development strategy (Tieben, 2012). This 'green' strategy has been argued to slow down Zhuhai's economic development because of the cost price associated with local environmental protection requirements (Sheng & Tang, 2013; Xu & Yeh, 2013). These are often much stricter than those in other Chinese cities, and also entail detailed auditing and bureaucratic procedures. Collectively, this works 'against' international firms moving into Zhuhai, and this is also visible in its BEI value.

5.4 Lower left quadrant

There are 20 cities in this quadrant, i.e. cities that have below-average PDI and BEI values. Mirroring the pattern in the upper right quadrant, these cities' internationalization profile can be

understood within the context of the three broad patterns outlined in the literature review. Ten of the 20 cities are located in eastern China, but none of them is a provincial capital; seven of the 20 cities are located in central China, and here four are provincial capitals, the remaining three cities are located in western China, and all of these are provincial capitals. The interaction between the benefits of being a provincial capital and the coastal/western gradient are obvious: according to the data of National Statistics Bureau (2018), the GDP of the provinces where these provincial capitals are located are below the Chinese average. The lower per capita economic output of these cities is often directly related to their local market potential, which – as previously argued and shown in the case of Hangzhou – is one of the main location considerations of international tourism enterprises when seeking out urban markets.

Furthermore, these cities often have no targeted policies in place to attract either international tourists or international tourism firms. For example, when scanning the official tourism websites of all of these cities in April 2019, it was found that they had all set up a platform to promote tourism and attract tourism investments. However, at the same time, only 4 out of 20 (i.e. Sanya, Luoyang, Guiyang and Zhanjiang) had an English-language (or any other language for that matter) version of this website. The poor use of international languages in the city's government official tourism website reflects to some extent the policy orientation of the cities in this quadrant in focusing domestic rather than international tourism.

And finally, there are of course very idiosyncratic patterns, with Lhasa as an obvious example. In spite of its striking world heritage and religious sites (e.g. Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, and Norbulinka) and other aspects of Buddhist culture and the natural surroundings (Wu and Pearce, 2014), both Lhasa's PDI and BEI are very low. Since the early 1980s, Lhasa –literally 'place of gods'– has seen a tourism revival, not only as a major pilgrimage site for Tibetan Buddhists but also as an alluring tourist destination for in light of its unique setting and culture (Murakami, 2008). During the early stages of this development, local tourist agencies and hotels were created to accommodate the growing number of tourists. Infrastructure conducive to accessing Lhasa was also established, for example international flights were introduced in 1987 and the Qinghai-Tibet Railway was established in 2006. Authorities seem to have been successful in establishing Tibet's tourism brand within and outside China during the late 1990s, which contributed to the significant rise of above all domestic tourism in subsequent years. The relative lagging of international tourism can be attributed to ongoing (geo)political tensions, which lead to complex procedures for international tourists to enter Tibet in general and its main entry point Lhasa in particular. According to the regulations by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in China,

in addition to passports and visas, foreigners need to apply for “entry permits” to be able to travel in Tibet. They also have to travel in groups, and can only enter by air or train. These regulations together with the geographical conditions (e.g. being surrounded by mountains and its high altitude) and poor accessibility (Cheng et al., 2018) limit to a large extent the number of international tourists to Lhasa, and this is reflected in its relative low PDI value. Meanwhile, in addition to the common procedures applicable for foreign companies who want to enter the Chinese market, international tourism firms planning to operate in Tibet need to pass through two additional procedures, i.e. they need to apply for the permission for the firm and their staff to entry Lhasa (and Tibet) and acquire special residence permission for them. These cumbersome administrative regulations, together with the specific living conditions for foreign staff (e.g. high altitude) and the broader geopolitical tensions that further complicate this, restrict the possibility to attract foreign firms, and hence the lowest BEI value of Lhasa among all 50 cities.

5 Conclusions

This paper had a methodological, an empirical, and a conceptual objective. The methodological objective was to explore ways to differentiate between, and subsequently compare BEI and PDI in cities’ roles as international tourism hubs. As we specified the former, we paid attention to direct (e.g. hotel chains) and more indirect (e.g. hospitals aimed at an international client base) measures of a city’s tourism BEI. The empirical objective, in turn, was to illustrate the practical implementation of this methodology by focusing on the case of China. More specifically, we elaborated on the degree to which 50 major Chinese cities have developed a tourism BEI and subsequently relate this with the importance of those cities as destinations for international tourists as a measure of PDI. And finally, the conceptual objective was to deepen our understanding of the (uneven) internationalization of the Chinese urban tourism industry by interpreting it in the context of the broader literature on the changing urban-economic geographies of China. Although our analysis obviously does not provide a comprehensive analysis of each of the cities in light of this, the combination of the typology and the interpretative framework helps clarifying how cities are unevenly embedded into networks of international tourists and international tourism businesses. This framework could be adopted or adapted for research in other geographical contexts and/or for international comparative analyses. Our results thus show that, in general, there are broad parallels between BEI and PDI, with a limited number of cities such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, Beijing or Shenzhen acting as key international tourism hubs in both respects. In spite of these general parallels, there are also some notable differences, which we trace back to

processes structuring the Chinese space-economy, its broader politico-administrative system, and often-specific tourism and city development strategies of local governments. These processes unevenly interlock in complex ways, and play out unevenly in the face of specific locations (e.g. the vicinity of Hong Kong and Macau for Shenzhen and Zhuhai).

Our study obviously has limitations, which can be recast as possible avenues for future research. First, the current analytical framework has only looked at eight types of tourism firms, and future analyses could therefore incorporate other types of firms. Furthermore, we could work with disaggregations of both PDI and BEI in terms of typology and geography. Second, rather than discussing specific examples of the uneven embedding of cities in flows of international tourists and firms (such as taxation, hospitality, culture, etc.), these could be systematically mapped and compared with our data. Third, this is a cross-sectional analysis, and an obvious extension of the research would be a longitudinal analysis to gauge how the internationalization the Chinese tourism market changes over time (cf. Derudder & Taylor, 2016). For example, in March 2018, the Development and Reform Commission and the Commerce Bureau of Tibet jointly issued “Several Provisions on Preferential Policies for Attracting Investment in Tibet”, in which the ‘tourism industry’ was specifically listed as one of the seven major categories for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). Such incentives may help attracting international tourism firms to Lhasa. And fourth and finally, another drawback of a cross-sectional analysis is that we have merely looked at co-presence of BEI and PDI. This implies we could engage in informed speculation of how these influence each other, but the actual processes and mechanisms require further research that adopts another methodological framework.

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Appendix I. List of the 205 international tourism firms

Status	Type	Firm
Direct-Related	International Hotel	Ibis, Days Inn, Fairfield by Marriott, Holiday Inn Express, Millennium, Jumeirah, Fraser Residence, Fraser Place, Fraser Suites, Somerset, Citadines, Ascott, Oak wood, Aman, Banyan Tree, Angsana, Grand Park, Pan Pacific, Okura, Nikko, St.Regis, Aloft, The Luxury Collection, Sheraton, Ritz-Carlton, Tribute Portfolio, Marriott, JW Marriott, le meridien, W Hotel, Courtyard, Renaissance, Edition, Autograph Collection, Four Points By Sheraton, Element, Marriott Executive Apartments, Westin, Waldorf Astoria, Hilton, Hampton by Hilton, DoubleTree by Hilton, Conrad, Hilton Garden Inn, Radisson, Disneyland hotel, MGM Grand, InterContinental, Indigo, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn, Barony, Fairmont, Mercure, Grand Mercure, Pullman, Novotel, Swissotel, Sofitel, Raffles, Campanile, Tulip Inn, Club Med, Bulgari, Swisstouches, Melia, Ininside, Hyatt, Andaz, Grand hyatt, Hyatt Place, Park Hyatt, Hyatt House, Encore, Wyndham Grand Plaza, Wyndham, Four Seasons, Kempinski, Argyle Hotel, Mandarin Oriental, Shangri-La, Hotel Jen, Anantara, Shama, Best Western
	International Restaurant	McDonald's, Starbucks, Subway, KFC, Domino's Pizza, Burger King, Pizza Hut, Dunkin' Donuts, Costa Coffee, Taco Bell, Papa John's, Cheesecake Factory, Carl's JR
	International Travel Agency	China Eurobusiness Travel – Leading Travel, KAD International Travel Services Ltd., Erguvan Tourism and Travel Agency INC, Travel Corporation Asia, Silkway Travel and Cruise Inc (DBA TPI Silkway), Europa Holiday Travel, Pan Pacific Enterprises Group Inc, PTC Express Travel, Hawaii Global Holiday Inc, Vimei-Tours s.r.o., Full Mark Tour, S/A International Group Limited, Westrip,S.L., HanaTour, Italybao(ifravel srl), Soaring China S.A, Vosaio Travel Ltd, Anglo Chinese Executive Travel, Cecontact GmbH, H.D.M.C.Destination Management Company Limited, Frayin International Srl, Galaxy Tour,INC (U.S.A.), Voglia D' Italia Tour S.R.L, Lex Travel Pte Ltd, Hunter Intentional Travel & Tourism L.L, Topway International Travel Service Lnc., Hino Travel Limited, Voyage Arc-en-ciel GmbH, A China Travel Ltd., Gartour S.R.L, C.C.T Express Co. Ltd, Great Wall Travel, Oceanwide International Business & Travel Service Centre, Solar Empire Travel, African Century Tours, Australian Tours Management Pty Ltd.
	International Theme Park	Walt Disney Attractions, Melin Entertainments Group
	International Tourism NGOs	International Air Transport Association (IATA), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), World Economic Forum (WEF), World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), International Society for Aeronautical

Status	Type	Firm
		Telecommunications (SITA), Internationale Tourismus Boerse (ITB)
Indirect-related	International Grocery Stores	Wal-Mart Stores, Carrefour, Tesco, Metro, 7-Eleven, Auchan, Lotus Market, Aeon, FamilyMart, Lawson
	International Hospital	Global Doctors, United Family Healthcare, parkwayhealth, Raffles Medical Group, WA Health Care, Bellaire Int'l Healthcare, Towako, EuroEyes, Tokushinkai Dental, Mass Medical International Corp
	International Insurance company	Allianz, AXA, AXA assistance, Assicurazioni Generali, Europ Assistance, Nippon Life Insurance, UnitedHealth Group, Zurich Insurance Group, Munich Re Group, Swiss Re, AETNA, Scor, Willis Towers Watson, AIG Group, AIA Group Limited, Tokio Marine Holdings, Sumitomo Life Insurance, New York Life Insurance, libertymutual, Meiji Yasuda Life Insurance, CHUBB, Samsunganycar, Aioinissaydowa, Fosun BHD, Odysseyre, Mapfrere, Coface, Royal Bank of Canada, Principal Life Insurance Company, General Reinsurance Corporation, Factory Mutual Insurance Company, Lockton, Jardine Lloyd Thompson, STARR, Lloyd's insurance, MSH International, Bupa, Medilink global, Emergency assistance, ERV Travel Insurance, Sampo Japan Nipponkoa, Sampo

Source: authors' calculations based on China's National Tourism Statistics

(2017), <http://www.forbes.com/>, <http://fortune.com/>, www.marketingandtechnology.com/, www.qualitytourism.cn/ and <http://www.teaconnect.org/>