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The Globalization Path of the Deep Inland Cities Dominated by the International Festivals Based on the Power in Western China: The Comparison between Xining Sports Festival and Yinchuan Cultural Festival

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Abstract: Since reform and opening-up, China's eastern coastal cities have taken the lead in integrating into the global production network and city network based on neoliberalism and economic globalization. Entering the 21st-Century, the deep inland cities in Western China (DICWC), which are underdeveloped at the national scale, are keeping with the Belt and Road Initiative and high-quality development strategy and exploring the localization path of urban globalization. Among them, Xining and Yinchuan, the two provincial capitals, have adopted the urban globalization process driven by the sports festival and cultural festival of the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" and the "China-Arab States Expo", respectively. Based on the field research data, this paper summarizes and compares the globalization paths and effects of Xining and Yinchuan driven by international festivals. The main conclusions include: Firstly, the international festivals are (central/provincial/autonomous region/city) power-led, that is, the government tries to promote the integration of inland areas into globalization, and they are powerful tools and strategies to promote the process of urban globalization and local social and economic development. International festivals can enhance the city's political and cultural influence and effectively promote the city's integration into the global system. In contrast, the "China-Arab States Expo" as a political, cultural, and economic exchange platform can promote the economic globalization of the cities more than the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" as a sports festival. Secondly, the actor-network in international festivals in inland cities is very distinct, with the government as the leader (initiator, organizer, and executor), enterprises as the specific participants, the media as the booster of news reports and the public as the indirect and passive participant. Thirdly, from the perspective of urban globalization, the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" is only a sports festival, however, the political intervention and economical guidance of the "China-Arab States Expo" is more obvious and direct. Fourthly, international festivals in inland cities established a new global image by promoting the modernization drive of city facilities, especially creating a new international urban space. However, the model of the international festival-driven globalization of DICWC is still in the primary stage. Moreover, after the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019, the globalization of Xining and Yinchuan, driven by the sports event and cultural festival, has been impacted to varying degrees. The city urgently needs to seek a more stable driving model to promote its own globalization development. The "economical marginal effect" of international festivals in inland cities is declining. Therefore, the urban globalization of DICWC needs the related further innovations in organization and the improvement of the stability of international festivals.

Keywords: international festivals; urban globalization path; power dominance; the deep inland cities in Western China (DICWC); sports globalization; cultural globalization

1. Introduction

Since the 1970s, globalization has been the main feature of economic, social, political, and cultural fields of the modern world [1]. Economic globalization is the fundamental power of urban globalization [2], which has promoted global social transformation [3], rearranging the global social-political order. Western developed countries have accelerated the process of economic globalization with the help of economic policies of neoliberalism and post-Fordism, increasingly developed transportation and communication networks, and the rise of the hi-tech industry and productive service industry [3]. A new round of capital accumulation promotes the decentralization of economic production and services on a global scale. Cities of various countries survive and develop in the competition of various transnational flows such as technology, capital, and information [4], which led to the rise of global cities and the construction of the global city network [5], and gradually embedded in the increasingly close and complex global political, economic, social, and cultural network, becoming global or globalizing cities with corresponding functions within global or transnational regions, nations, and countries [6]. Since reform and opening-up, eastern China has been in line with the tide of globalization, taking the lead in opening up to the outside world, accepting multinational companies, becoming a “world factory”, rapidly integrating into the process of economic globalization and taking the lead in rising. The Global Production Network (GPNs) provides opportunities for cities in developed regions such as eastern China to integrate into the global economic system, achieve technological progress and industrial upgrading [7,8], and promotes urban reconstruction and transformation [9], which is also a process of urban transformation based on the background of international market and international trade. Entering the 21st century, underdeveloped Western China has promoted the process of “reform and opening-up” with the help of the China’s western development strategy. Especially since the Belt and Road Initiative was put forward, the DICWC have actively integrated into the “Silk Road Economic Belt”, which is opening to the world, and the provincial and municipal governments have actively promoted the process of urban globalization. However, under the dominant and vertical GPNs constructed in these developed countries [6,10,11] and the global value scenario of a new international division of labor based on Global Value Chains (GVCs) [3] and the cognitive framework of gradient or verticality, being located in the “disadvantage” of Western China and underdeveloped position in China, the DICWC have been unable to quickly “copy” the “globalization miracle” in Eastern China. Therefore, it is important to explore how the DICWC (this paper mainly refers to the inland areas of the Western China of the Hu Huanyong Line) achieve globalization at the national scale and even the global scale.

In fact, the process of globalization in the DICWC is accelerating. It is the hub region connecting China with Europe, Central Asia, and the Indian Ocean and it is also a marginal area where the country’s social economy needs to be revitalized. Since 2013, the economic globalization level of cities in Western China has fluctuated and increased year by year. The overall spatial pattern of provincial capitals/municipalities > border cities > ordinary inland cities [12] and the three cities of Xian, Chengdu, and Chongqing in the western cities are obviously the core cities participating in global competition [13], and their cross-border city network presents a multi-center structure [14]. In the past 20 years, the DICWC have been trying the following globalization paths: firstly, trade globalization, which mainly refers to the globalization path that integrates into the international trade network through the production and export services of raw materials, semi-finished products or finished products, such as Urumqi; secondly, manufacturing globalization, which mainly refers to the globalization path that engages in the production of raw materials, medium-/low-end products and their trade into the global network, such as the five cities in the Hexi Corridor of the Gansu Province [15]; the third is the globalization of the service industry, mainly including logistics transit services, producer services, tourism, and leisure services, sports internationalization, international cultural exchange platforms, etc., such as Dunhuang, Yinchuan, and other cities [16]. Among them, the two provincial capital cities of Yinchuan

and Xining have adopted the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” and “China-Arab States Expo” sports and cultural event to drive the urban globalization process, trying to develop the city through the globalization process to promote urban transformation, respectively [17]. The research on “Festival and Special Events” arose in the West in the 1960s [18]. Boorstin put forward the concept of the “Pseudo-Event”, which is the earliest definition in the West [19]. In view of the significant institutional and cultural differences between Chinese and Western countries and different stages of economic development, especially the DICWC located at the end of China’s development level and degree of openness, though the in-depth implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative has prompted DICWC, these cities have gradually moved to the “frontier” of China’s opening. These city governments try to establish a localized globalization mechanism through international festivals. For example, the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” provides significant opportunities and motivation for Xining’s tourism globalization and social and economic transformation, enhances economic, social, and cultural effects, enhances Xining’s popularity and reputation, and brings significant tangible and intangible effects [20]; the “China-Arab States Expo” held in Yinchuan has promoted the process of urban globalization, by not only serving the local social and economic development and assisting Yinchuan to “the Belt and Road”, but also especially promoting the “win-win” between the Arab countries and China by better cooperation. Therefore, the globalization paths of DICWC driven by festivals are mainly discussed from the aspects of economy, trade, tourism, service, and urban space, in order to explore how the cities in the backward areas on the global/national scale can promote their own globalization process and their differences by the way of two international festival activities. This paper takes the characteristic festivals of Xining and Yinchuan of the DICWC as the research object for analyzing their globalization path. Then, we will provide the research progress of event-driven urban globalization and the conceptual theoretical framework of how international festivals in the DICWC promote urban globalization and carry out the empirical study from the actor network of international festivals and the political and economic impacts caused by festivals, as well as analyze the comparison of the urban globalization paths of Xining and Yinchuan. Finally, the paper provides the conclusion.

2. Progress Review and a Conceptual Theoretical Framework

2.1. Brief Progress of Related Research

Globalization is a complex process with multiple dimensions [21]. Urban globalization driven by international events belongs to the category of inward internationalization [22]. Among them, large-scale sports events drive the city globalization process and make positive contributions to globalization. It is considered to be a milestone in the process of urban globalization [23]. Most studies have focused on the relationship between sports events and urban development. On the one hand, in terms of economic and social and cultural influence, hosting sports events is considered an effective method of urban marketing and creating urban brands. It can help cities to attract talent and investment. Many cities have improved the international visibility of cities by seeking through major sports events. This will undoubtedly promote urban development [24]; on the other hand, in the construction of urban space, holding sports events can stimulate the urban transformation of existing urban public facilities and perform urban renewal, which can improve the life of residents [25]. In addition, the spectacular international competition and cultural activities have also enhanced the international attention of holding cities and gradually became a means to attracting global attention. It is an important way for cities to evolve from global space [26]. Festival activities such as sports events held in cities have also led to the development of urban tourism, increasing consumption based on festival activities and the social capital of local residents, and it brings economic, cultural and global identity to the host city. When analyzing the urban development strategies of four major cities in the Asia-Pacific region, Silk describes the extent to which sporting events have been identified and promoted as a strategy to rapidly integrate the city, primarily economically, culturally and politically, into the world [27]. Some political intermediaries also promote

urban globalization by hosting sports events, and try to establish a global-local relationship, which not only promotes urban modernization and improves the urban landscape, but also enhances the city's global image [28].

Countries around the world pay more attention to the holding of international festivals, because international festivals have a positive impact on the economy, society, culture and other aspects of the venue [29,30]. The inland city of Indianapolis, for example, has been successfully established as a leisure and sports destination for white-collar in the United States through the development of racing and related industries. Sheffield, an industrial city, has successfully transformed from a typical heavy-industry city into a world sports and leisure city by hosting large-scale football events such as the UEFA Champions League [31]. Scholars mainly use index measurement or factor analysis, social network and other methods to analyze, such as tourism foreign exchange revenue and the number of international tourists received due to tourism international festivals and activities [32].

The positive economic impacts of international festivals on the venue are mainly reflected in economic benefits, social costs, and social incentives [33], specifically promoting the economic and industrial development of the venue [34], stimulating investment demand and increasing employment opportunities, promoting economic restructuring and transformation of economic development mode [35], and improving urban economic effects [36]. In addition, the integrated development of international festivals and tourism is conducive to improving tourism attractiveness, reducing tourism seasonality, promoting tourism consumption, and stimulating economic growth [37–39]; International Festivals have a wide range of social impacts on the venue, mainly on the image of the city [40], tourists and local residents [41–43] and the environment [44] and so on. Sports globalization is a process of spreading and mutating from the West to all parts of the world. Tourism internationalization is manifested in the internationalization of the source market, the internationalization of tourism products, the internationalization of tourism services, and the internationalization of tourism legal environment, modernization of transportation information, modernization of tourist destinations, and international popularity of tourist destinations; the cultural impact of international festivals and events on the venue is mainly reflected in the enhancement of the protection of cultural heritage, local culture and traditional culture awareness [29,45], and strengthening the communication between different cultures. International festivals endow the physical space of the venue with unique cultural soft assets by connecting the festival activities with the local history [46]. In addition, through the display of festival activities, it can enhance the cultural pride and sense of identity of the residents of the venue, which is beneficial to increase tourists' understanding of the culture of the venue, reduce negative perceptions, and enhance the culture perception and cultural identity of the host and guests of the festival.

Regarding the internal mechanism of international festivals, it is necessary to comprehensively consider festival development from the perspectives of organizers, tourists and community residents [47]. For example, the globalization of sports takes economic globalization and technological progress as the driving force, national politics and the flow of sports culture as the pulling force, and the external pressure of international sports organizations and the ideal represented by the Olympics as the internal vitality. The case study of Haw Par Villa in Singapore shows [48] that the development of tourism globalization is not only determined by "top-down" external forces, but the local characteristics of cities also generate a "bottom-up" internal power to create a unique tourist city. In general, the successful operation of China's international festivals requires the government's guidance, market-oriented, characteristic, public participation, and standardized operation, that is, the government guides the international festival in terms of policies and organizations, the festival activities should be market-oriented, and combine with the unique resources of the host to create a festival brand, attract exhibitors, local residents, tourists, news media and other groups participated extensively, and to ensure a higher level of organization and service, so as to be able to play a variety of functions of international festivals. For example, sports globalization can be divided into the starting phase of material communication,

the rapid development stage of sports system and cultural communication, and a comprehensive deepening stage of sports conceptual communication; Chinese participation in sports globalization can be divided into three stages: passive participation, starting active participation, comprehensive creation and development [49]. Most Chinese scholars analyze the development, operation and management of specific festivals through the method of case studies. For example, international festivals should highlight local culture and locality, actively play the leading role of the government, and continuously improve the enthusiasm of the public to participate in festivals; the inheritance and operation of Ditan Temple Fair, pointing out that the effective grasp of early analysis, detailed planning, specific implementation and later performance evaluation is the reason for its success; China (Qufu) International Confucius Culture Festival successfully integrates the localized cultural heritage with the international management vision, service level and development goals, and theme innovation is the key. It is conducive to the sustainable development of local tourism [50].

2.2. A Conceptual Model of Urban Globalization Driven by International Festivals in DICWC

Economic globalization mainly includes trade globalization, enterprise globalization, cultural globalization and service globalization. It is a long and complicated process. In the 21-st century, financial capital has become the dominant force in economic globalization, and service globalization has become the most distinctive stage feature of globalization. Service globalization is a process in which the production, consumption and factor allocation of service activities are gradually integrated into the global network [51], including 12 categories such as transportation, tourism and financial services. Among them, tourism has always accounted for a relatively high proportion in service trade, and has now become the global transformation of most urban service activities and the largest foreign exchange earning industry in cities [52], and is a key force in the formation of globalization. Based on Western Centralism and pilot strategy of eastern China and unique national conditions/system, and the unique local resources and conditions, especially the combination of national power and local power, some DICWC have tried to explore exclusion after entering the 21-st century. Urban globalization path with “reflective” in developed areas. Most of the development of foreign urban areas is based on the spontaneous evolution of market connections and corporate cooperation. The urban development of China has the characteristics of “top-down” government-led and “bottom-up” market evolution characteristics. Almost all of the DICWC lack multinational companies and foreign investment, which determines that the globalization path of DICWC will be different from the ones of Western China and Eastern China. According to the tolerance and flat global thinking, a new globalization phenomenon may occur in the inland areas in the new era. In fact, the driving model based on trade globalization and production globalization has made some progress in DICWC. Coastal cities, adopting international events, trying to promote urban economic development and the globalization process through global activities such as culture, sports, this is a “Reverse” to culture, sports events-oriented, localized urban globalization model of DICWC (Figure 1).

Because of the fragile ecological environment and the policy of ecological protection, the economy of Western China is relatively backward, and it is roughly in the middle stage of industrialization. The proportion of output value of private enterprises is relatively low compared with that of the East, it is less open to the outside world (international multinationals or investment are rare) and has stronger government control. At the same time, the dual governance model of the central and local government under the tax-sharing system since the reform and opening-up, especially the economic growth at a certain rate, remains the top priority of all levels of government, the globalization orientation under the opening-up is one of the core driving forces pursued by DICWC’s governments. For the local urban growth alliance, taking into account the unique resources of localization, such as tourism (ethnic) culture, sports, ecology and other resources, to organize corresponding service-oriented international festivals and events, for example, trade festivals

(such as Kashi International Commodities Fair), cultural festivals (such as Dunhuang Arts Festival and China-Arab States Expo), sports festivals (such as Tour of Qinghai Lake), with corresponding activities or facilities, to establish global socio-economic links, to promote economic growth, to try to build international space, to achieve the goal of globalization of the city (the government). Generally, because of the polarized development of the provinces and China's traditional orientation of forced administration, the host cities of international festivals and events are often provincial capitals or non-provincial cities with international prestige and cultural (tourism) characteristics. To promote exchanges between domestic and foreign enterprises by organizing international festivals, city governments to clean up their cities and to build the necessary facilities, and to hold trade fairs/expositions on commodities or investments at the same time whenever possible, to attract investment and international tourists, high-intensity publicity, and so on, to promote the international transformation of the social economy. In fact, such international festivals are often supported, approved and even led by provincial governments (even more so by the central government), implemented by cities and specifically organized by the relevant agencies at the provincial/municipal levels (the relevant departments of the government), participation of relevant enterprises, media publicity, public cooperation. Thus, it is a political and cultural activity initiated, organized and implemented by the government with the main aim of promoting the economic development of the city while at the same time providing limited impetus to the process of globalization of DICWC.

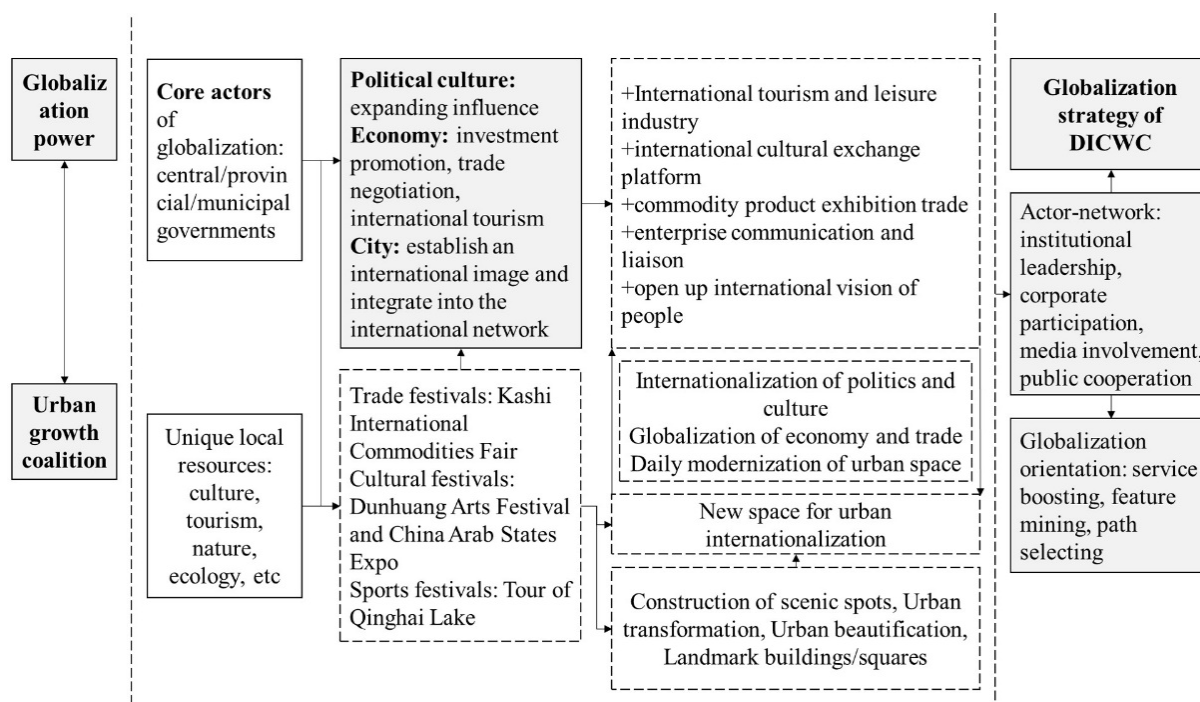


Figure 1. A conceptual model of urban globalization driven by international festivals in DICWC.

3. Research Scope, Data Sources and Methods

3.1. Research Scope

This study selected Xining city—the capital of Qinghai Province and Yinchuan city—the capital of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region as the research scope. The sports festival—the “Tour of Qinghai Lake”—in Xining City and the cultural festival—the “China-Arab States Expo”—in Yinchuan City are selected as the research subjects. In 2021, Xining has a total area of 7660 square kilometers, a permanent population of 2.4756 million, and a GDP of CNY 154.88 billion; Yinchuan has a total area of 9025.38 square kilometers, a permanent population of 2.882 million, and a GDP of CNY 226.295 billion. The “Tour of Qinghai Lake” held in the Qinghai Province has been held since 2002 and is held between June and August

every year. It was held in the Qinghai Lake area of Qinghai Province firstly and then extended to the adjacent Gansu Province and the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. The starting point and organization center are Xining, the capital city of the province, and the “Xia Capital” of the Huangshui River Valley Basin. The China-Arab Economic and Trade Forum, which has been successfully held for three sessions in Yinchuan, was upgraded to the China-Arab States Expo in 2013, becoming a national and international comprehensive exposition. As one of the international festivals with local characteristics in inland minority areas of China, the China-Arab States Expo has had an important impact at home and abroad, effectively promoting the process of urban globalization in Yinchuan.

3.2. Data Sources

The data sources used in this paper can be divided into three categories: firstly, all kinds of relevant statistical data. The main sources are the statistical yearbook (2000–2020), the official website of the bureau of statistics of Qinghai Province/Xining, the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region/Yinchuan, the EPS Global Statistics Platform, and the China Knowledge Network, including foreign direct investment contract foreign capital, import and export trade, GDP, and other statistical data; the import and export trade data are mainly from the China customs trade database, including enterprise name, enterprise location, product name, country of origin/country of shipment, HS code, quantity, amount, etc. The relevant enterprise data mainly come from the basic information of the subsidiary company of the enterprise registration information line of the administration for industry and commerce, the industry types of enterprises are classified according to the national standard of the People’s Republic of China-national economic industry classification (GB/T 4754-2017) statistics on the registered addresses, main business, import and export, and enterprise relations of the local enterprises participating in the exhibition in Yinchuan, mainly including the enterprise address, enterprise nature, date of establishment, industry, import and export situation, enterprise relations, personnel size, and so on. At the same time, the journal of China-Arab States Expo of 2017 and 2019 was obtained, which mainly collected the names of the exhibitors, their countries of ownership, and products and services. Thirdly, the actual survey information and interview data. It should be noted here that due to COVID-19, Xining did not hold the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” in 2020 and mainly mainland teams participated in the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” in 2021 and 2022, so there was no analysis of the situation in these three years. Similarly, Yinchuan, affected by COVID-19, chose to hold the fifth “China-Arab States Expo” in 2021 in a combination of cloud and offline.

3.3. Methods

(1) Methods of data collection. ① Literature review. We used “International Festivals”, “Less Developed Inland Areas”, and “Urban Globalization” as the search words for subject retrieval and obtained and referred to the Chinese and foreign literature. At the same time, we collected and sorted out the relevant data and work summary of the Xining and Yinchuan Municipal Government, Sports Bureau, Statistics Bureau, etc. ② Qualitative research. We mainly used field observation, a questionnaire, and face-to-face interviews. This research effectively combined the project resources to design the questionnaire. We conducted a pre-survey in November 2019, then revised the pre-survey questionnaire and conducted a formal survey from December 2019 to March 2020. Among them, a total of 50 questionnaires were distributed (accounting for 40% of the total number of local exhibitors in 2019) and 41 effective questionnaires were recovered, with an effective questionnaire recovery rate of 82%. The main research subjects of face-to-face interviews include government departments, some business leaders, the public, and other groups. In the early stage, the researchers visited the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region Department of Commerce, the Expo Bureau, the Yinchuan Municipal Bureau of Commerce, the Statistics Bureau, and the Investment Promotion Bureau and conducted at least 10 interviews to understand the China-Arab States Expo, related policies, and its impact on local enterprises.

At the same time, we conducted a questionnaire survey and interview with local enterprises in Yinchuan who participated in Expo in 2019, including three parts: the general situation of enterprises, the situation of enterprises participating in globalization, and the impact of the China-Arab States Expo on enterprises, the part of the questionnaire about the motivation, benefit, and the impact of the China-Arab States Expo on the globalization of Chinese enterprises was quantified by Likert's five-level scale. Moreover, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with some business leaders. In a later phase, the team conducted field research in Xining from 20 July to 15 August 2020 and July 2021. Because Xining did not hold related economic activities such as fairs and trade fairs during the period of sports festivals, the research group mainly conducted more than 12 interviews, the interviewees were mainly divided into relevant government departments (including Tourism Department, Statistics Department, Planning Department, Investment Attraction Department, Propaganda Department, and others). In addition, corresponding interviews were conducted with urban residents. Among them, the semi-structured interviews were mainly aimed at citizen groups and the in-depth interviews were mainly aimed at the government and enterprises.

(2) Data analysis methods. In this study, descriptive statistics, GIS analysis, and comparative analysis methods were used to compare the two research international festivals.

4. Results

We compared and analyzed the globalization driven by the international festivals in Xining and Yinchuan from four aspects.

4.1. Actor Network for International Festivals

Based on the existing data and field research results, the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" and "China-Arab States Expo" have the basic purpose of promoting social and economic development, transformation, and promoting globalization. The actors include the government, enterprises, and media and indirect participants for the public (such as residents, tourists, etc.). Among them, the government is the initiator, organizer, and executor, the enterprise is the specific executor and participant, and the media is the booster of news reports. The public is not a direct active participant, but an indirect, passive participant or affected party. The most significant difference is that the "China-Arab States Expo" has a stronger political and economic bias, while the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" is only a sports event after all, so the political intervention and economic orientation of the former are more obvious and direct.

Firstly, the government is the core actor of the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" and "China-Arab States Expo". Most of the leaders interviewed agreed that "the (local) government is the first responsible body for local development, including urban globalization", that is, the role of the government in the local economic growth alliance is often dominant in backward regions. Therefore, with the theme of "green, humanistic and harmonious" and the direction of "adhering to internationalization, specialization and marketization", the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" is an important role for the Qinghai provincial party committee and government to promote Qinghai and promote the strategy of "establishing an ecological province". The initiative is called "the golden business card for promoting Qinghai"! Similarly, the China-Arab States Expo is a national and international comprehensive exposition approved by the State Council and co-sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce of China, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, and the government of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. It focuses on the relationship between China and Arab countries and even the openness to the world. The "China-Arab States Expo" adheres to the tenet of "inheriting friendship, deepening cooperation, and developing together", adhering to "serving national strategies and focusing on economic and trade cooperation", integrating high-level dialogue, economic and trade promotion, exhibition negotiation, and other functions. The cooperation between countries/regions along the Belt and Road Initiative is a strategic platform for the Ningxia Autonomous Region Party Committee and District Government to promote political dialogue, economic and trade cooperation, and

cultural exchanges between the two parties with the support of the central government, as well as an important platform for China and Arab countries to jointly build the Belt and Road Initiative. Regarding the executive department, the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” is organized and implemented by the Sports Bureau of the Qinghai Provincial Government, the Department of Culture and Tourism, and co-organized by the People’s Government of Xining Municipality, the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), the General Administration of Sport, the Chinese Cycling Association, and other relevant departments. The “China-Arab States Expo” is mainly organized and implemented by the relevant departments of the provincial government and the Yinchuan Municipal People’s Government. In addition, the “China-Arab States Expo” conference mechanism has been continuously improved and the exchange forms have become more diverse, such as the establishment of the Arab League Secretariat and other institutions, the introduction of professional exhibition service agencies, and the strengthening of “China-Arab co-organization, ministry and district joint offices, and non-governmental co-organization” mechanism. This contributes more attention to exhibitions, simplifies conference and forum activities, increases cooperation and negotiation activities, etc.; each expo will invite an Arab country to “co-host” exhibitions with China. For example, the guests of honor in 2013, 2015, and 2017 were Kuwait, Jordan, and Egypt.

Secondly, business is another important actor. The participating companies of the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” are mainly the tourism, transportation, and other departments involved in the festival. This is because the “Tour of Qinghai Lake”, a major international sports event, did not coincide with the annual “Tulip Festival”, “China Qinghai Structural Adjustment and Investment and Trade Fair (Qinghai Fair)”, “Sanjiangyuan International Photography Festival”, and other events. There is no linkage or synergy effect and other related companies at least cannot be directly related to the “Tour of Qinghai Lake”, directly promoted) urban globalization (purpose)”. On the contrary, one interviewee said that the China-Arab States Expo “is a comprehensive cultural and economic exchange platform built by the government to give DICWC the opportunity to integrate into the world”, that is, on the basis of the (cultural) forum, mainly for exhibitions and investment and trade promotion activities, which of course involve the direct participation of many domestic and foreign enterprises—local enterprises have become important actors.

In the end, the media is a very important reputation booster and effect amplifier. Among them, the publicity and promotion of the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” has the characteristic of closely combining commercial operation with government resources and media advantages. During the annual competition, many domestic and foreign media such as the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television and CCTV actively participate, such as the CCTV’s 5th, 2nd, 3rd, and 12th programs and major media in the Qinghai Province, by continuing to broadcast the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” in high density during prime time. More than 50 reporters from the Xinhua News Agency, CCTV, China National Radio, Phoenix Satellite TV, China News Service, People’s Daily, China Sports News, Hong Kong Ta Kung Pao, Sina.com, and other national media on the road to track the entire race report. Different from the “Tour of Qinghai Lake”, the “China-Arab States Expo” not only attracted many domestic media, but also attracted more international media reports, especially mainstream media from Arab countries. For example, on a regional scale, North Africa, East Asia, and West Asia have more news reports and all news reports from East Asian countries come from Chinese domestic media. From the perspective of cyberspace characteristics, the global news reports of the China-Arab States Expo are concentrated in North Africa, East Asia, and West Asia and news networks are concentrated in core countries such as China, Jordan, and Egypt; from the perspective of industrial chains and news topics, foreign cooperation industries and the related news topics are more diversified, which confirms that the China-Arab States Expo has enriched the internationalization of Yinchuan’s industries. For example, the fields of industrial cooperation mentioned are more abundant, from traditional industries such as agricultural planting, light industry food, energy, and chemical industry. Traditional industries are combined with emerging industries

such as new materials, new energy, and new technologies. News topics have also expanded from the economic field to the political field and further extended to tourism, science and technology, medical and health care, and other fields; news reports from Arab countries focus on energy, chemical industry, etc. In traditional fields, European and American news media pay more attention to new fields such as science and technology, information, and communication.

4.2. Enhance the Political and Cultural Influence of the City

Both the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” and the “China-Arab States Expo” have certain political influence. The two host cities of Xining and Yinchuan have improved their domestic political status and international influence. China is a big political country and the government holds a lot of resources. Most of the leaders interviewed agreed that the government is the first actor or responsible party for local development, including urban globalization, and receiving attention and support from top leaders is the basic condition or guarantee for urban globalization, especially to get more economic resources. At the same time, an interviewed leader said that “the deep integration of international festivals with ecological civilization and cultural tourism will release the function, value and linkage effect of festivals”, such as building a city brand with sports brands and cultural characteristics, “expand the city’s international reputation, promote the city’s international reputation”, and boost economic growth. Among them, the “China-Arab States Expo” has greater political influence.

In fact, the theatrical performances at the opening ceremony of the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” are full of national flavor and regional characteristics. The national leaders who attended the first three grand events included Timur Dawamat, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, and Cheng Siwei, State Councilor Chen Zhili. Moreover, the ever-expanding international team has made the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” attract wide attention from all over the world since its inception, such as countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, North America, South America, and Oceania participating in the competition, including the Italian Bar Intercontinental Professional Team, Spain Burgo Team, and many other UCI Intercontinental Teams, UCI Professional Teams, UCI Continental Professional Teams, etc. Judging from the countries/regions of the participating teams in the “Tour of Qinghai Lake”, the overall level of the participating teams is relatively high and most of them originate from developed countries. The competition only accepts the registration of professional teams of the UCI, which greatly increases the competitiveness and viewing of the competition. As of 2019, teams from 51 countries/regions including Germany, France, and the Netherlands participated in the competition. Moreover, the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” has been recognized by the UCI and participating teams around the world. At the same time, satellite TV and the Internet have transformed the original “non-tradable goods” into “tradable goods”, such as Live Road sport, cycling news, Eurosport (Asia), and many other online overseas media to broadcast and publicize the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” in real time. While increasing the broadcast revenue, the influence of the event in the mainstream media and the coverage of the reach area have been enhanced, which has made the international influence of the competition and Xining city stronger year by year. More importantly, Xining has strengthened its urban diplomacy based on the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” to serve the country’s overall diplomatic strategy. Xining is open to the outside world (an interviewed leader said), including the Central District of Daejeon Metropolitan City in South Korea, Izhevsk City in Russia, Jeonju City in South Korea, Patan City in Nepal, and Preston City in the United Kingdom as eight international sister cities, and gradually formed a representative “Xining phenomenon” in China’s urban diplomacy. As a staff member of a relevant government department knows, “The “Tour of Qinghai Lake” has now become a grand festival for Xining people and it is also a competitive feast for the world’s cyclists. By holding the “Tour of Qinghai Lake”, more and more people got to know Qinghai and Xining. Therefore, we must insist on running this competition with high quality, ensure multi-faceted coordination, and cannot be sloppy at all”.

However, the “China-Arab States Expo” has stronger political influence. As the political mutual trust between China and Arab countries continues to grow, the China-Arab Expo has become a high-level exchange and cooperation platform between China and Arab countries. For example, General Secretary Xi Jinping sent congratulatory letters to the China-Arab States Expo in September 2013 and September 2015, respectively. King Abdullah II of Jordan, President Aziz of Mauritania, and Vice President Muhaji of Comoros and other foreign leaders and representatives of relevant international organizations participated in the “China-Arab States Expo” in September 2015. Judging from the news reports of the news media, the political influence of the “China-Arab States Expo” is still increasing. For example, in 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019, the proportion of media coverage of the China-Arab States Expo in the countries/regions along the Belt and Road accounted for 88.46%, 84.83%, 52.82%, and 81.10%, respectively (Table 1). The news and publicity effect of the Expo in this region has been greatly improved and the “Belt and Road” Initiative has expanded its international influence in the countries/regions along the “Belt and Road”.

Table 1. News coverage of the China-Arab States Expo in the countries along the Belt and Road and other countries in the world.

Region	2013		2015		2017		2019	
	Number of News (Article)	Proportion (%)	Number of News (Article)	Proportion (%)	Number of News (Article)	Proportion (%)	Number of News (Article)	Proportion (%)
Along the Belt and Road	138	88.46	263	84.83	150	52.82	133	81.10
Other countries	18	11.54	47	15.17	134	47.18	31	18.9
total	156	100	310	100	284	100	164	100

4.3. Facilitating the Integration of Cities into the Global Economic System

The “Tour of Qinghai Lake” and the “China-Arab States Expo” promoted the gradual integration of Xining and Yinchuan’s urban economy into the global economic system and improved the globalization level of the urban economy. One interviewee frankly said, “The “Tour of Qinghai Lake” can stimulate the tourism industry and sports industry (growth or direct consumption) in cities and even Qinghai Province, establish (buildings) a unique event brand, and a city brand, so that we (Xining City) can enter the global level (division and cooperation of the sports industry)”, and enable the tourism industry to be one of the leading industries, by driving consumption, effective marketing, accelerating integration into the global economy, and promoting the construction of an open inland economy. Through global sports events and media reports, media advertising, and public relations activities, as well as continuous events, the event viewing, audience loyalty, and citizen recognition have been continuously improved. The Xining City proposed the “Xiadu Xining” tourism brand (2001), “Cool City in the World” (Cool City, Clean City, “Cool City”) (2014). The internationalized, humanized, and modernized international city brand image has improved the city’s tourism appeal. Therefore, the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” can bring a consumption-pulling effect to Xining City, that is, it is not limited to the consumption of on-site audiences during the event, but also affects the consumption of citizens’ sports and, at the same time, modern and diversified overseas media broadcasts. Participating with international athletes can increase foreign exchange earnings from tourism and further deepen the dissemination of Xining’s scenery and culture abroad, providing sports fans at home and abroad, as well as future athletes, tourists, and business travelers, through the chain effect for the city. Globalization creates more possibilities. However, the results of interviews with government personnel and enterprises showed that the vast majority did not perceive or agree that the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” had brought or obviously led to an increase in imports and exports or an increase in corporate trade, but clearly believed that it had promoted the internationalization of tourism.

In fact, the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” directly led to the obvious globalization of urban sports activities. The study constructed a resource map of Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas tourist sources in Xining in 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2019 (Figure 2). Since 2000, the number of tourists from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas in Xining has been increasing and under the influence of factors such as geographical proximity and cultural similarity, the source of tourists is mainly from Asian countries/regions. For example, Japanese and South Korean tourists have always been in Xining. The city is the main source of tourists for inbound tourism and the number of tourists has been increasing with the growth of the year. The combined market share of tourists from the two countries is relatively stable, at about 20%. However, although tourists from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan are still the main force, their proportion has dropped significantly year by year, from 70% in 2000 to about 11% in 2019. However, the number of tourists from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan has not decreased in absolute numbers. This is mainly due to the gradual increase in the total number of tourists from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas in Xining City, especially the significant increase in the number of tourists from outside Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, which leads to a decrease in its proportion. The market share of tourists from the Americas and European countries has increased year by year. For example, in 2000, the number of tourists from European countries was less than 1000 and, in 2005 and 2019, the number of tourists increased to 2209 and 8183, respectively, except for developed countries with relatively high economic levels such as France, Singapore, and Australia. In addition, the proportion of tourists from other European countries is increasing, accounting for about one-fifth of the total number of tourists from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas in Xining in 2019. This is related to the fact that the participating teams are mainly from European countries and the athletes and their teams or relatives come to Xining City, which promotes business travel and foreign exchange income, forming a positive promotion effect [53]. From the perspective of the market structure of Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas tourists (Table 2), the development of tourism globalization in Xining shows a trend of decentralized development, that is, the first source of tourists from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas tourists in Xining is less and less the phenomenon of the top agglomeration. For example, the largest market in 2000, 2005, and 2010 was Taiwan, in 2015 the United States, and in 2019 South Korea; although the first source countries/regions of Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas tourists are constantly changing, except in 2000, Xining. The ratio of the first country/region as the source of tourists from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas tourists to the number of tourists in the second country/region remains at around 1.5, which is a low first place distribution; since 2000, the number of tourists from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas tourists in Xining. The source market fragmentation index is growing higher and higher.

Table 2. Market characteristics of Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas tourist source countries in Xining.

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019
Dependence of the first tourist source country/region R	0.494	0.271	0.235	0.150	0.142
First place of tourist source countries/regions P	4.322	1.267	1.705	1.392	1.515
Diversification degree of tourist source countries/regions D	0.724	0.840	0.884	0.922	0.927

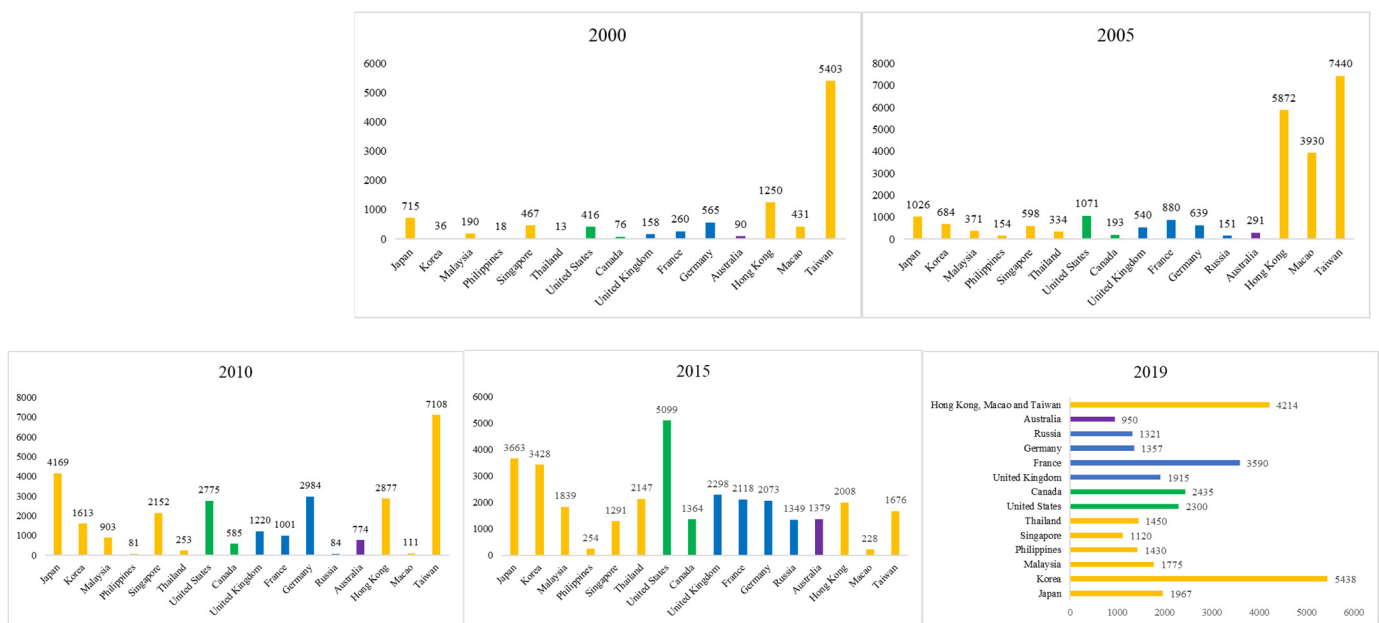


Figure 2. Resource map of Xining's reception of Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas overnight tourists. Note: the number of tourists from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan could not be checked in 2019, so it is expressed as a whole. Different colors represent different continents.

Different from the “Tour of Qinghai Lake”, the “China-Arab States Expo” focuses on the country’s comprehensive opening-up strategy, supports the “Belt and Road”, promotes cooperation between China and Arab countries, and promotes the inland open economy experiment in Yinchuan in an orderly manner. District construction and the all-round opening strategy of Ningxia. The “China-Arab States Expo” was upgraded from the China (Ningxia) International Investment and Trade Fair and China-Arab Economic and Trade Forum (referred to as Ningxia Fair and China-Arab Economic and Trade Forum) (2010–2012) to the China-Arab Expo (2013–present). The important purpose is to promote economic cooperation and trade exchanges with the help of the “Belt and Road” Initiative, expand economic and trade cooperation with other countries, build an Islamic business and trade circle, actively build tourism and leisure and cultural industries, and better integrate into the global production network. According to statistics from the official website of the China-Arab States Expo, since 2013, the four China-Arab States Expos (2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019) have accumulated a total of more than 80 countries, regions, and international institutions, more than 140 large business associations, more than 7000 representatives of large- and medium-sized enterprises, and more than 60,000 exhibitors participated in the exhibition. It focused on investment cooperation successively, commodity trade, service trade, tourism cooperation, technical cooperation, and other topics and a total of 164 conferences, forums, and exhibitions have been held and more than 1100 agreements of various types have been signed. It has promoted cooperation in energy, agriculture, tourism, science and technology, finance, health, and other fields. So far, the economic and trade exchanges between China and Arab countries have continued to deepen. For example, the two sides are committed to building an “energy cooperation” as the main axis, with infrastructure construction and trade and investment facilitation as the two wings and the three high-tech fields of nuclear energy, aerospace satellites, and new energy as the breakthrough point. The “1 + 2 + 3” cooperation pattern and technology lead to mutual benefits and win-win results, a number of Sino-Arab multi-bilateral cooperation institutions such as the China-Arab Technology Transfer Center and China-Arab Agricultural Technology Transfer Center have settled in Cyprus, the Arab League, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Oman, and Egypt. Eight bilateral technology transfer centers have been established successively; scientific and technological cooperation projects in the fields of satellite navigation, agricultural Internet of Things,

green intelligent control, and water saving have been carried out smoothly; the China-Saudi (Jizan) Industrial Park, China-Oman (Duqm) Industrial Park, China-Egypt (Mankai) Textile Park has successively landed, and the construction of the park projects has started one after another, involving petrochemicals, building materials, textiles, and other fields. From the perspective of foreign orders and customers, most of the new foreign orders of most local enterprises through the China-Arab States Expo are less than CNY 100,000 and the proportion of new foreign customers is mostly less than 30%.

The important activities of the “China-Arab States Expo” are the exhibition and sales activities. In fact, the number of foreign companies participating in the China-Arab States Expo has increased, from regions such as West Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia to Africa, Europe, and South America, and the number of exhibitors from countries along the Belt and Road has increased significantly. The exhibiting foreign companies belong to a wider range of industries, from energy, chemistry, metallurgy, and minerals to medical and health care, light industry, food, clothing and textiles, science and technology, and other fields. At the same time, the number and scale of local Yinchuan enterprises participating in the “China-Arab States Expo” have increased and the enterprise value chain is in the process of transforming from general product production to high-end product manufacturing and a few enterprises have participated in high value-added service links. The purpose includes expanding the sales market, attracting investment, and enhancing the corporate reputation. At the same time, the China-Arab States Expo has provided new impetus for the transformation and upgrading of Yinchuan’s industrial structure. For example, some participating foreign companies not only brought resources such as capital, technology, and information to the development of local companies, but also provided opportunities for local companies to participate in the global division of labor. It is conducive to the high-quality development of local enterprises and promotes the practice of Yinchuan’s green development concept, such as eliminating a number of enterprises with high energy consumption, high pollution, and high emissions and promoting the development of the industry in a high-end, intelligent, and green direction.

On the one hand, compared with 2017, the number of foreign companies participating in the exhibition increased significantly in 2019. In 2017, foreign companies participating in the exhibition mainly came from West Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. In 2019, they will further expand to Africa, Europe, and South America (Figure 3). The number of exhibitors from countries/regions along the Belt and Road has increased significantly. According to the company profile in the “China-Arab States Expo Catalogue”, combined with the information on the company’s website, the industry fields of participating foreign companies are analyzed, and the development level of the participating companies in the China-Arab States Expo is reflected from the perspective of the industry chain. According to the industry classification standards, the industry fields of the participating foreign companies in 2017 and 2019 are divided, respectively. It can be seen that the industry fields of the participating foreign companies have undergone certain changes, of which the proportion of medical and health care and light industry food have increased significantly, while clothing and textiles, science and technology, the proportion of financial services, energy, and chemical industries, metallurgy and minerals, and other industries has dropped significantly.

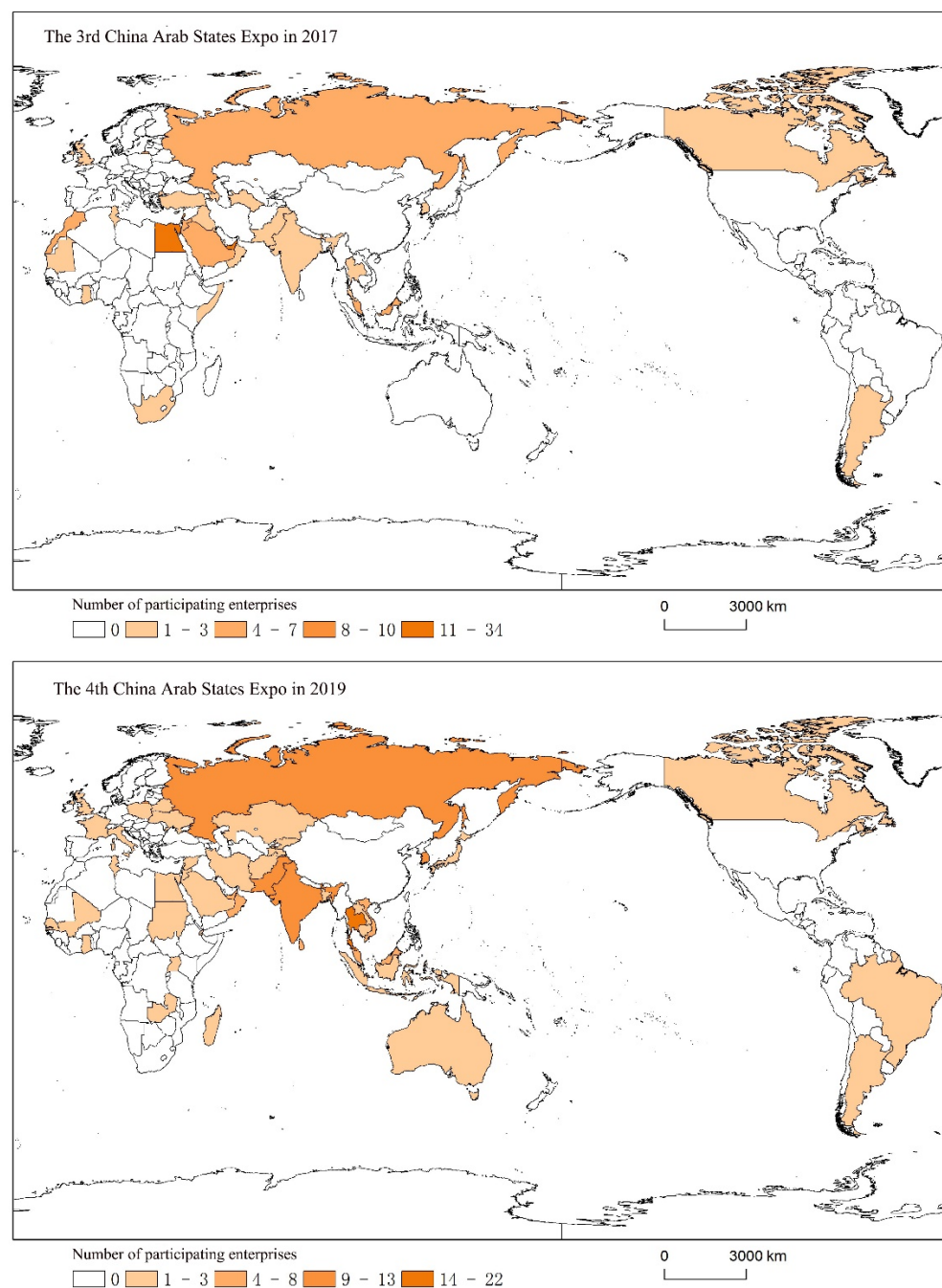


Figure 3. Spatial distribution of foreign companies participating in the 2017 and 2019 China-Arab States Expo.

On the other hand, the number of local enterprises in Yinchuan that participated in the 2017 China-Arab States Expo was 88 and the number increased to 125 in 2019. From the perspective of enterprise scale, the proportion of micro, small, medium and large enterprises participating in 2017 was 42.05%, 31.82%, 19.32%, and 6.82%, respectively, and the proportion in 2019 was 30.40%, 32.00%, 27.20%, and 10.40%. When talking about the impact of the China-Arab Expo on local enterprises, a person in charge of a halal food production and processing enterprise (senior leader) said: “The China-Arab Expo provides our enterprises with an opportunity to contact the international market, through exhibition sales, cooperation and negotiation, etc. More and more companies attach importance to the China-Arab States Expo and hope that the China-Arab States Expo will be better and better”. However, the local enterprises in Yinchuan are mainly engaged in the manufacture of gen-

eral products. The low-end link of the value chain, that is, the production and processing links with low added value in the smile curve of the value chain, such as the production and processing of agricultural and sideline products, food production, machinery and equipment manufacturing, chemical product production, etc. Technology-based enterprises are cultivated and the number and scale of high-tech enterprises, technology-based small- and medium-sized enterprises and various enterprise R&D platforms have increased. Therefore, some Yinchuan enterprises participating in the China-Arab States Expo are high-end products with relatively high added value in the value chain. Manufacturing links include Ningxia Rong Optoelectronics Energy-saving Technology Industrial Co., Ltd., Ningxia Yuhang Zhike Technology Co., Ltd., Huashenglong Environmental Protection Technology (Ningxia) Co., Ltd., etc. In addition, a small number of local exhibitors participated in higher value-added services, such as Ningxia Liudeyuan Technology and Culture Co., Ltd., which provides information technology services for the government, enterprises, groups, and organizations, and provides information for Ningxia medical, medical insurance, and other business fields. There is also the Yinchuan Fangda Electronic System Engineering Co., Ltd., which provides technical services, and Ningxia Jinhai Ruicheng Automobile Sales Service Co., Ltd., which has a modern after-sales service center, etc.

The purpose of Yinchuan enterprises participating in the China-Arab States Expo can be divided into three levels (Figure 4): ① Main purpose. It mainly includes expanding the sales market, attracting investment, and enhancing their corporate reputation. It can be seen that Yinchuan enterprises hope to attract investment and enhance the corporate reputation through the China-Arab Expo and at the same time they want to use this international platform to develop domestic and foreign sales markets. ② Secondary purpose. It mainly includes information exchange, corporate brand building, and technical cooperation, which reflects that the China-Arab States Expo is a platform for gathering information and technology. Enterprises hope to enhance their core competitiveness through information and technology exchanges and cooperation, so as to build an influential corporate brand. ③ Less important purpose. It mainly includes increasing foreign investment, attracting talents, acquiring raw materials, financial cooperation, and others. On the one hand, the development of the enterprise itself is limited, such as less foreign business, low demand for raw materials, and a low level of financial cooperation. There are still deficiencies in promoting local enterprises to “go global”, attracting talents and financial cooperation. A platform to go global, but due to the poor development of the companies themselves, some companies still have little contact with foreign countries. Our companies have very little foreign investment, their competitive advantages are not obvious, and the benefits of foreign investment are relatively poor. Originally in the West, the attractiveness of talents in the region was relatively low, which cannot be changed by an exposition. Islamic finance in Arab countries is influenced by Islamic teachings and there are many difficulties in financial cooperation with other countries, which will affect the foreign cooperation of enterprises.

Regarding questions related to “the impact of the China-Arab States Expo on your company’s participation in the global division of labor”, the average score for all options is lower than 4 (1—strongly disagree, 2—somewhat disagree, 3—average, 4—somewhat agree, 5—strongly agree), most of the options have an average score of between 2–3, that is, corporate respondents disagree with most of the options, and only a few options have an average score of more than 3. Specifically, the options with an average score of more than 3 are “promoting external information exchange”, “improving international reputation”, “building an international brand”, “expanding foreign markets”, etc. It plays an important role in promoting international reputation, building international brands, and expanding the international market. A manager of a dairy production enterprise (questionnaire No. 19, grassroots leader) said: “Through the China-Arab Expo, we can learn about the world’s dairy industry and the preferences of consumers in other countries. Occupying more markets is of course beneficial to enhancing the brand of the company, and it is good publicity to let more consumers know about our brand through exhibitions at the China-Arab States Expo”. The impact of corporate globalization: 30 of the 41 local companies in

Yinchuan (accounting for 73.17%) participated in the global division of labor, among which only 1 company carried out foreign business before 2008 and it was newly added from 2008 to 2012. Additionally, 8 companies (accounting for 26.67%) and another 11 companies (accounting for 36.67%) from 2013 to 2017 participated. After 2017, 10 companies began to participate in the global division of labor. From the perspective of foreign sales of enterprises, there are 16 companies with foreign sales accounting for less than 20% of the total sales (accounting for 53.34%) and 10 companies with a proportion 20–40% (accounting for 33.33%), only 4 companies' foreign sales accounted for more than 40% of total sales. These data are from the perspective of foreign business forms, mainly export products, followed by importing raw materials from abroad, with the least number of enterprises setting up branches abroad and contracting projects abroad.

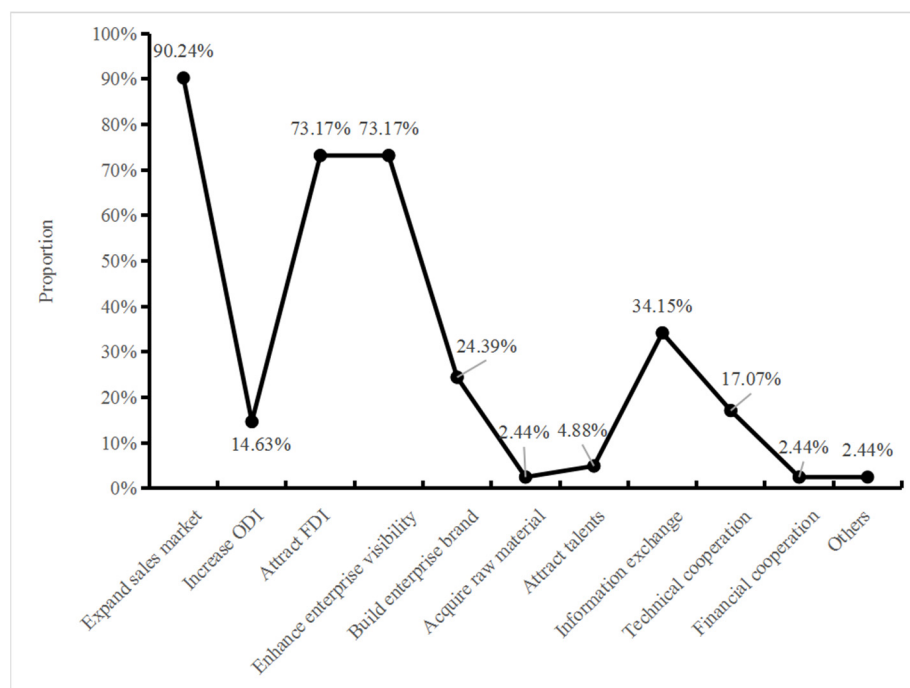


Figure 4. The purpose of local enterprises participating in the China-Arab States Expo.

Further analysis of the globalization characteristics of local exhibitors from the perspective of foreign branch networks and import and export product networks shows that the level of local exhibitors participating in the global production network is relatively low: from the perspective of foreign branches, the spatial distribution of branches is relatively scattered and the types are mainly midstream enterprises (providing services such as production, processing, and assembly, and the added value of products is low), accounting for 42.86%. From the perspective of product exports, the product export market of Yinchuan enterprises is mainly in West Asia and Southeast Asia and the product types are mainly resource-intensive products, accounting for 55.81%. In terms of product imports, the product import markets of Yinchuan enterprises are scattered across Asia, Europe, Oceania, and North America. The proportion of technology-intensive and all-type products is 43.75%, 31.25%, and 25.00%, respectively, and imported products are still mainly resource-intensive.

The Likert scale was used to quantify the motivations and benefits of local exhibitors' participation in the global division of labor, in order to explore the driving force of enterprises' participation in globalization. The results show that (Figure 5), except for "expanding foreign markets", the average scores of the other options are all lower than 3 (1—very unimportant, 2—somewhat unimportant, 3—average, 4—somewhat important, 5—very important). This shows that the driving force of Yinchuan enterprises to participate in globalization is relatively simple: it is mainly to expand foreign markets. The return

on foreign investment and the profit rate of foreign sales are low and the globalization efficiency of enterprises are poor. For a long time and for various reasons such as geography, history, politics, economy, ideology, etc., the ability of enterprises in the DICWC to participate in the global division of labor was always weak and the ability of enterprises to attract external resources was poor, which in turn led to the ability to participate in the global division of labor. Further weakening produces the Matthew effect of “the weak get weaker”. A person in charge of a steel casting manufacturing enterprise in Yinchuan City (questionnaire No. 38, middle-level leader) said: “Everyone still wants to make enterprise bigger, especially in recent years, the problem of overcapacity in China is serious, and it is certainly a good solution to open up foreign markets. Our company, of course, also wants to obtain foreign technology and funds, but people are unwilling to come. Our market, technology, management, and talents are not as good as those in the eastern region. We can only rely on our own resource advantages to open up foreign markets, now the environmental protection requirements are high, and enterprises have to transform, and they need advanced technology, equipment and financial support”.

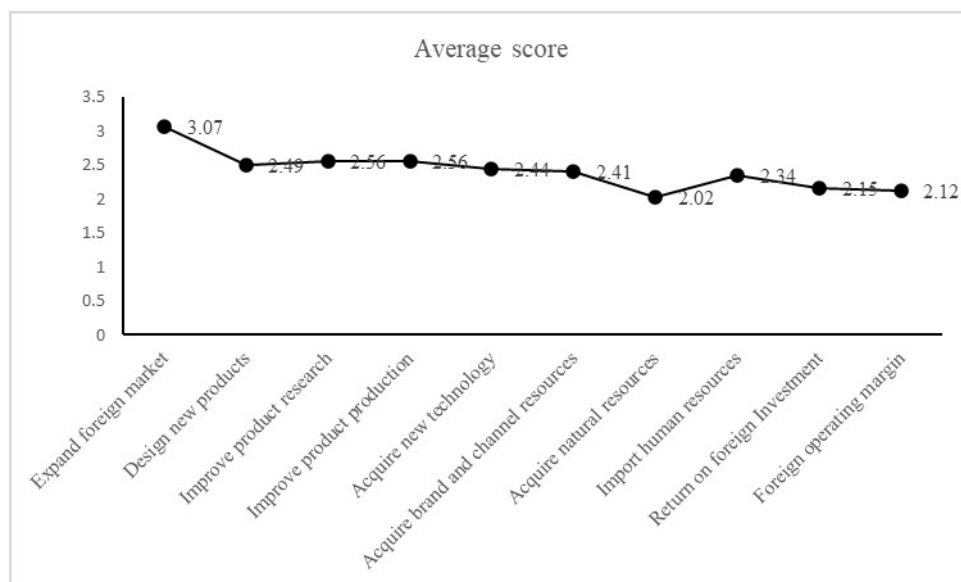


Figure 5. The motivation and benefits of local exhibitors participating in the global division of labor.

4.4. Building a New International Space in the City

The “Tour of Qinghai Lake” and “China-Arab States Expo” have continuously promoted the modernization of urban facilities and established a new image of urban space by promoting the construction of urban globalization facilities, especially the new international urban space.

The holding of the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” international sports event has indeed promoted the modernization of urban infrastructure and the continuously improved and improved infrastructure supports the globalization process of Xining City. The continuous improvement of aviation, railway, highway, and communication networks has significantly reduced the cost of international trade and improved regional technological innovation capabilities. A taxi driver explained, “Since the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” was held, the city has become better and better, roads have become wider and wider, parks have become more and more, the air has become better and better, and every year many foreigners are seen. Friends, I also took the initiative to learn English, so that I could communicate with them easily”. A woman citizen said proudly, “We citizens are so proud to mention the “Tour of Qinghai Lake”! It is held every year in the most beautiful season in Xining, the players can not only feel the fierce competition atmosphere, but also enjoy the beautiful scenery here. At the same time, the competition has also been brought to the development of the scenic spot. In the past, there was nothing in the scenic spot, and it was troublesome

to go there to play in the toilet. Toilets, as well as a series of services such as tourism consultation and bus guidance, travel and play are both comfortable and reassuring". It is worth noting that the Qinghai Province, especially Xining City's "ecological priority, cultural characteristics" strategy is the ecological culture-oriented strategy and has strong support for the "Tour of Qinghai Lake". Although Xining City has not clearly constructed or formed a new international space for the "Tour of Qinghai Lake", such as the central square of Xining City, for the starting point of the event, there are corresponding publicity and so on along the way of the event.

Different from the "Tour of Qinghai Lake", the "China-Arab States Expo" not only promotes the modernization of urban infrastructure but also builds new urban spaces with prominent Islamic culture. In order to implement the "Belt and Road" Initiative and the provincial government's goal of an inland open economic pilot zone, especially to establish a "China Center" for "China-Arab World" communication—an exchange center for Sino-Arab cooperation, the entire city of Yinchuan "Transformation" has been carried out to support the events and activities of the "China-Arab States Expo", such as the modernization of urban facilities and the establishment of the urban characteristics of "Stop the Lake City and return to the hometown", as well as the Islamization of urban architectural landscapes and spatial patterns. Turning to the increase in obvious and Islamic-style public works, in particular, the construction of the new international space, the "China-Arab Axis", expresses the long history and culture of Arab countries and the long-standing friendship between China and Arab countries.

5. Discussion

Different from the impacts of festivals and events such as the Canton Fair [54], the Olympic Games [55], and the Asian Games [56] on urban tourism service facilities, urban news influence, and cultural identity of urban residents, we found a notable phenomenon, which is that the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" and "China-Arab States Expo" international festivals have expanded the political and cultural influence of the DICWC. However, the "economic marginal effect" of international festivals is declining. This means that international events need further innovation to enhance the global impact of economic activity. In contrast, the "China-Arab States Expo" political and economic exchange platform can promote urban economic globalization more than the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" sports events.

The surveyed government officials and businesses acknowledged that the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" had a very limited effect on Xining's economic growth and globalization. Because the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" is not held at the same time as other economic and trade activities and sports activities have a direct impact on the tourism and leisure industry, other economic and trade activities have a weak or indirect impact on their "perception". The proportion of foreign exchange income from tourism in Xining City to the total tourism income is low—less than 4% except in 2002—has been in a trend of small fluctuation and decline and the overall level is far lower than the national average. In addition, from 2002 to 2019, the proportion of Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas tourists in Xining City accounted for less than 1% of the total number of tourists, which also showed a fluctuating downward trend. The global development of its tourism activities is still in its infancy. Moreover, from 2000 to 2019, Xining's import trade volume generally showed an irregular inverted "V"-shaped distribution and the level of import trade in 2019 was actually lower than that in 2010. Specifically, from 2000 to 2004, there was a steady upward trend as a whole. Although there was a slight decrease at the beginning of 2005, the overall increase was greatly increased in 2014 (from CNY 703.99 million in 2005 to CNY 1563.73 million in 2014, with an average annual growth rate of 24.68%), a sharp decline in 2015, a small recovery after 2016, and a gradual leveling off. In fact, the major changes after 2015 are related to the financial crisis, the sharp drop in international commodity prices, the Belt and Road Initiative and the "New Western Development", and other related policies.

Compared with the "Tour of Qinghai Lake", the "China-Arab States Expo" is directly related to economic and trade activities. The number and scale of local Yinchuan enterprises

participating in the China-Arab Expo have increased, mainly expanding the import and export network of Yinchuan enterprises in Arab countries. However, local enterprises started late to participate in global production and their overseas sales share is small, which is the main driving force. The purpose is to expand the foreign market. For example, it mainly focuses on importing and exporting raw materials and products. There are few companies that set up branches abroad and contract foreign projects. The types of import and export products are mainly resource intensive. Therefore, the China-Arab Expo is less effective in promoting foreign investment of enterprises, expanding the supply of foreign raw materials, attracting international talents, promoting financial and labor cooperation, promoting the establishment of foreign branches, and promoting cross-border mergers, acquisitions, and overseas listings. The China-Arab States Expo has improved its own level of globalization, reflecting that the economic function and international influence of the China-Arab States Expo need to be further improved. Most corporate respondents believe that local companies have poor development themselves and their ability to participate in the global division of labor is weak. Although the China-Arab States Expo can improve this situation to a certain extent, it cannot fundamentally solve the problem in a short period of time. In this way, the China-Arab States Expo provides a platform for local enterprises to connect with the international market, but the final cooperation effect depends to a large extent on the development level of the enterprise itself, such as enterprise scale, profitability, business strategy, management level, technology investment, product structure, etc., as a person in charge of a new material technology company said: "The China-Arab States Expo can only be an 'icing on the cake', not a 'sweet spot'. There are many difficulties, so enterprises should also cherish the opportunities provided by the China-Arab States Expo".

Of course, the China-Arab Expo mainly expands the import and export network of Yinchuan enterprises in Arab countries and plays a weak role in expanding import and export destinations in other regions. Enterprises in Yinchuan have expanded their import and export destinations through the China-Arab Expo and they are mainly from Arab countries. For example, 16 of the 41 interviewed companies have increased their product export destinations through the China-Arab Expo and the largest number of companies with new export destinations are Jordan and Saudi Arabia; 13 companies have increased their raw material import destinations, with the largest number of newly imported companies in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

At the end of 2019, COVID-19 broke out and quickly swept the world. Faced with this sudden attack, Xining and Yinchuan, constrained by the different nature of international festivals, adopted different organizational methods to hold the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" and the "China-Arab States Expo". As for the "Tour of Qinghai Lake", because of the limitations of the competition venue, foreign teams cannot successfully come to China to participate in the event. Therefore, no international team participated in the "Tour of Qinghai Lake" held by Xining in 2020 and 2021. The international influence of Xining's globalization driven by sports events has been greatly weakened. For Yinchuan, affected by the COVID-19, the number of participating countries in the "China-Arab States Expo" held in 2021 decreased significantly. However, in 2020, under the influence of COVID-19, the China-Arab trade volume still achieved a year-on-year growth of 2.2%. Yinchuan actively adopted various measures to ensure smooth trade activities between Yinchuan and other countries, especially those countries along the Belt and Road. Because cultural festivals can also be held in the cloud, Yinchuan has adopted a combination of online and offline ways to hold the "China-Arab States Expo", which has conditionally promoted urban globalization. Therefore, comparison from this perspective, the resilience of sports events affected by COVID-19 is worse. Additionally, the globalization of Xining is more affected by COVID-19.

6. Conclusions and Limitations

6.1. Conclusions

The results show that:

- (1) The actor network in international festivals in the DICWC is very clear, that is, the government is the leader (initiator, organizer, and executor), the enterprise is the specific participant, the media is the booster of news reports, and the public is the indirect and passive participant.
- (2) Both the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” and the “China-Arab States Expo” increased the political influence of Xining and Yinchuan and drove the process of urban globalization. However, the “China-Arab States Expo” has a stronger political influence.
- (3) The “Tour of Qinghai Lake” and the “China-Arab States Expo” established a platform for cultural, sports, and other exchange platforms and built an economic and trade platform as much as possible, which promoted the gradual integration of Xining and Yinchuan’s urban economy into the global economic system and improved the globalization level of the urban economy through the globalization of service industries such as cultural tourism and other manufacturing industries.
- (4) The “Tour of Qinghai Lake” and “China-Arab States Expo” have continuously promoted the modernization of urban facilities and established a new image of urban space by promoting the construction of urban globalization facilities, especially the new international urban space.

6.2. Limitations

The globalization model of the DICWC driven by international festivals obviously has the following limitations or drawbacks: First, it is currently in its infancy, that is, it cannot directly attract foreign direct investment or FDI by enterprises and it is more about product trade, local cultural promotion, and some kind of international connection. Generally speaking, the internationalization effect of the globalization path “driven” by the international festival activities under the dominance of power in the DICWC is indeed limited, that is, it requires endogenous economic growth and structural adjustment in cities and the strong support of social transformation, but also the guarantee of peaceful and cooperative international relations. The “economic marginal effect” of international festivals in the DICWC is declining and further innovations in organizational methods are needed. For example, the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” should be held in parallel with other international economic activities for better results. Second, international events such as the “China-Arab States Expo” are obviously more likely to comprehensively promote urban globalization than international sports events such as the “Tour of Qinghai Lake”. The political and economic bias of the “China-Arab States Expo” is stronger, while the “Tour of Qinghai Lake” is only a sports event, so the political intervention and economic orientation of the former are more obvious and direct, that is, the political, cultural, and economic exchange platform of the “China-Arab States Expo” is better than the “China-Arab States Expo”. The “Tour of Qinghai Lake” sports events can further promote the globalization of the urban economy.

Since it is difficult to obtain data after COVID-19 and for cities to find a way to quickly improve international festivals and events to adapt to the new situation in the short term, this study lacks accurate comparative analysis before and after COVID-19. In the future, we will strive to obtain relevant research data and be committed to analyzing the resilience of international festivals held by cities under the attack of public health security represented by COVID-19.

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