

Urban–rural income disparity and inbound tourism: Spatial evidence from China

Abstract

The challenging concern regarding how the benefits of inbound tourism can be evenly distributed, especially among urban and rural individuals, has received considerable attention in China. To address this concern, a spatial econometrics approach is used to estimate the spillover effects of inbound tourism on urban–rural income disparity (URID). An empirical analysis using the spatial Durbin model was conducted for 31 Chinese provinces covering the period from 2003 to 2017. Our findings suggest that at the national level, local inbound tourism significantly reduces the local URID, while neighboring inbound tourism significantly increases the local URID. At the regional level, the role of inbound tourism in reducing the local URID is only detected in the western region. The spillover effects of inbound tourism are positive and significant in the eastern/northeastern region but negative in the western region. In general, these findings provide insights into the importance of interregional tourism policies and strategies for inbound tourism development in China.