Golden Week Tourism and Beijing City

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Abstract: Tourist Industry plays an important role in Beijing’s national economy and social development. After the Beijing Olympic Games, the urban space of Beijing has turned into a new development stage, and the city’s tourist attractiveness has been further improved. Beijing has been the hottest tourist city nationwide in National Day Golden Week for years running, and the new characteristics and problems of its urban space are concentratedly shown during the holiday. Through a brief summary of the tourist status and related urban spaces of Beijing, which is examined along the Golden Week tours, the new development stage of Beijing urban space will be discussed.

Keywords: Beijing, Golden Week, Tourism, Urban Space
The 7-day holiday of National Day, since set up in 1999, has rapidly become the most popular time for travel in China, both in terms of number and amassing of tourists. The main scenic spots and regions in Beijing are continuously facing with “blowouts”, and the record of the city’s tourist income has been constantly broken. The National Day holiday is the true “GOLDEN WEEK” of tourism in Beijing. After the 2008 Olympic Games, the city’s tourist attractiveness has been further improved. Beijing has been the hottest destination city nationwide in Golden Week from 2008 to 2010 (Figure 1); Tian An Men, the Forbidden City and the Great Wall stood on the top list of scenic spots concerned (Figure 2).

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Again in 2011, Beijing was crowned as the No.1 destination city nationwide in Golden Week, and the city experienced another tourism peak. Data shows, 177 tourism regions surveyed received more than 13 million tourists in 7 days, which has an increase of 16%; the general tourist income is 6800 million CNY, 12.8% more than that in 2010. The flow volumes of transportation junctions, main spots and hotels reached a new record, thus Beijing’s Golden Week tourism in 2011, accordingly, is described as the most crowded, ever.

Tourist Industry plays an important role in Beijing’s national economy and social development. And with the roll up of residents’ jaunts and entertainments, Beijing’s tourist activities have been expanded in recent years. Tourism has increasingly shown its various impacts on urban spaces of Beijing. The tourism status in National Day Golden Week, in one respect, concentatedly visualized the new characteristics and problems of Beijing’s urban space, which could also provide an opportunity for the discussion and exploration of the.

city’s new development stage.

1. Capital City Tour

As the capital city, Beijing is undoubtedly the most important destination in National Day holiday for domestic tourists; meanwhile, Beijing’s Golden Week tourism, for its particular standing, also draws many foreign visitors’ and media’s interest. During the 2011 Golden Week, a large number of populaces and tourists, as always, participated the huge celebration in Tian An Men Square; the city’s image, as an epitome of the national identity, was concentratedly demonstrated through two international sports events, namely the China Open and the Professional Cycling Tour of Beijing.

1.1 One Square

At 6:10 am, 1st Oct, the grand flag-raising ceremony was held in Tian An Men Square, in which 120,000 people participated and celebrated the 62th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (Figure 3).

Tian An Men Square is the central public space of Beijing, which is almost a must-see place for every tourist and has built the core memory of national heart and capital identity (Figure 4). China National Centre for the Performing Arts and National Museum of China have been completed and opened, by which the urban functions are promoted, tourism activities are enriched and the urban spaces around are integrated.
In 2010 Golden Week, the square received 875,000 visitors daily\(^4\), which kept the same status this year. Metro Line 1 and Line 2 are the main transportation means for the square. New tubes and advanced technologies have improved the quality and efficiency of the track operation. Large-scale LCD screens have been settled as fixed facilities after the 60th anniversary in 2009, renewing the vitality of this central public space of Beijing.

Furthermore, as another large public space of Beijing, the Olympic Park has been entirely open after the Olympic Games, which is also very popular in Golden Week. Venues characterized by the Water Cube, are offering more participating and experiencing activities for visitors; the Olympic flame torch has been moved to ground for exhibition; the completions of China Science and Technology Museum and the National Tennis Centre further enriched the activities and functions of the park. The Olympic Park has become another major centre of public activity and tourism, accordingly the “Central Axis” theme tour is improved. Chang’an Street is the most important east-west artery, which became a new route for National Day tours after the grand parade in the 60th anniversary of 2009. In addition, the Master Centre\(^5\) and the CBD area have expanded and integrated the west and east spaces along the street line (Figure 5).

![Figure 5: Tian An Men Square, Central Axis and Chang’an Street in Golden Week, 2011](image)

1.2 Two Games

**China Open** The tennis game celebrated its 8th birthday this year. More high level players were attracted by the competition’s improvement; some came in advance with their families for the fascinating Beijing tour\(^6\). As the game started, the new central court came to stage. Although the spotlight Chinese player Li Na was eliminated in the second day, a series of activities, aimed at communication and popularity, still drew many fans’ and tourists’ interest and participation. The game, in some sense, activated the north-west space of the Olympic Park, and the nick name of “Diamond Arena” was cognized (Figure 6).


\(^5\) Master Centre is the former Wukesong Olympic Basketball Gymnasium.

Tour of Beijing The 1st Professional Cycling Tour of Beijing started at 5th Oct, which had 5 stages with an overall race length of 600km. In view of the impact on the urban transportation, the game time did not coincide with the Golden Week completely. The race routes were meticulously designed, including the Olympic Park, Tian An Men Square, Chang’an Street, Great Wall and some beautiful suburb areas. 33 foreign media were involved and their reports have illuminated Beijing’s urban image and the games identity (Figure 7).

1.3 National Identity Showed

As the capital city, Beijing represents, in many terms, the whole identity of China. In the National Day, eyes throughout the country and even from the entire world keep watching Beijing. The core public spaces and the international events, therefore to a great extend, shape and spread the identity of the whole country. In 2009, the 60th anniversary celebration parade received worldwide attention; in 2011, Beijing showed again a strong, united, open, and comprehensive country. Beijing’s urban space, as a representative of that of China, is experiencing the communication and blending with the rest of the world. The city is undertaking the leading role of cities in China, with opportunities as well as challenges.
2. Cultural City Tour

World Cultural Heritages, historic buildings and districts are always hot spots of Beijing tourism, especially in the Golden Week. After the Olympic Games, Beijing’s historic conservation level improved on. The art stage is unceasingly enriched at the same time. Beijing’s cultural and art activities in Golden Week tended to be more diversified and international, through which the cultural elements of the urban space got linked and promoted.

2.1 Two Heritages

At 11 am, 2nd Oct, the Forbidden City’s visitors’ one-day limitation of 80,000 was broken through. By 3 pm, it had received nearly 130,000 people\(^{10}\) (Figure 8). The most crowed area was the Meridian Gate square, of which the daily functions as exhibitions and commercials were almost completely replaced by tourists’ massing and waiting (Figure 9). For scattering people, south to north “one-way visit” was adopted. About 500 security personnel were needed every day to maintain the visiting order\(^{11}\). Even so, the Forbidden City’s attractiveness did not reduce at all; more than 10 people were “pushed lost” daily\(^{12}\).

![Figure 8: 130,000 People Flew into the Forbidden City in One Day](image1)

![Figure 9: The Analysis of the Meridian Gate Square](image2)

Left: ordinary streams of people; middle: the square on 2nd Oct 2011; right: streams of people in Golden Week

The Badaling Great wall area was also a sea of faces. The scenic spot received 83,400 visitors on 4th Oct, which was a 36% increase\(^{13}\) (Figure 10). To alleviate pressure, the ticket sale started from 6 am and extended to 9 pm\(^{14}\). In addition, 1km-long night scene was open in the Golden Week, the landscape of which was illuminated by more than 2,000 floodlights, with no damage to the historic bricks through the

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\(^{10}\) Ding Zhaowen. 130,000 People Flew into the Forbidden City Yesterday [N]. Beijing Evening News, 2011-10-03: 01, 02

\(^{11}\) Hou Shasha. 500 Security Personnel in the Forbidden City [N]. Beijing Daily, 2011-10-06: 01

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\(^{13}\) Harmonious Holiday, Healthy Tourism [N]. Beijing Daily, 2011-10-09: special page

\(^{14}\) Fu Yang, Meng Huan, Shao Zehui. Open Time Extended by Scenic Spots [N]. Beijing Evening News, 2011-10-04: 04
renewal and the adjustment of the lamps.\footnote{In 1995, Badaling area started the night scene visit. Tourists needed to make appointments in Golden Week. Li Tianji, Zhang Min. \textit{Badaling Night Scene Opens} [N]. Beijing Youth Daily, 2011-10-02: 01, 02}

No matter in the Golden week or at ordinary times, the Forbidden City and the Great Wall are undoubtedly two signboards of Beijing tourism. Different from other traditional scenic spots, the tourist receptions of them still met a big rise on the former huge base. As the landmarks of Beijing’s ancient capital culture, the world cultural heritages’ charm is irreplaceable. Beijing has six world cultural heritages, the attractions of which were not balanced from the Golden Week tourism situation, especially the cold Zhoukoudian Beijing Ape-man Site. In terms of public transportation, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace and the Temple of Heaven have already been connected to the metro lines; two new lines under construction will reach the Ming Tombs and the Zhoukoudian site. Due to the coverage and geological reasons, the Great Wall’s connection primarily bases on highways. For the improvement of track transportation, a fast public network and the entire demonstration of Beijing’s six world cultural heritages could be expected (Figure 11).

2.2 Multiple Events

During the National Day Golden Week, a number of cultural and art activities were held in Beijing, enriching the capital culture stage, activating the historic districts at the same time, and forming the space links of the cultural elements of the city.

Walking at the Dashilan area in the holiday, you would have found that many tourists, blue maps in hand, were looking for galleries scattered in the old hutongs. This was one section of the Beijing International Design Week, which had the most extensive coverage in Golden Week. The exhibitions opened before the
National day, organizing more than 130 activities in 6 themes, covering 90 areas in the city, including the National Museum, Sanlitun Village, 798 Art District, some historic blocks, etc. A unique cultural innovation map of Beijing was presented (Figure 12). Many foreign media reported the Design Week, including the New York Times, the Financial Times, “China designs” displacing “made in China” focused on.

![Figure 12: Map of Beijing International Design Week](image)

upper left: National Museum; middle left: West Area of Dashilan; down left: China Millennium Monument;
upper right: 751 Fashion Design Plaza; middle right: Ullens Center for Contemporary Art; down right: Sanlitun Cross Centre.

![Figure 13: Extensive Art Performances held in Golden Week, 2011](image)

upper left: Beijing International Music Festival in Poly Theatre; down left: Beijing Opera Show in Mei Lanfang Theatre;
upper middle: Traditional Concert in Beizhan Theatre; down middle: 2011 Modern Sky Music Festival in Huairou District;
upper right: Yanni Performed in Master Centre; Vitas Performed in Great Hall of the People.

448 shows in 92 series were held in the 2011 Golden Week, including Chinese traditional performance, classical music, contemporary art, etc, receiving 210,000 people (Figure 13). In addition, the Animation & Games City of China, transformed from the Shougang factory, officially opened in Golden Week, which is expected to be another flagship of Beijing industrial theme tourism besides 798 Art District. Furthermore, through the education theme tourism routes, the National Library, numerous museums, universities like Tsinghua University and Peking University, has constructed another beautiful scene of the cultural city.

### 2.3 Culture Brand Promoted

The Golden Week tourism of Beijing does not only have the ancient capital culture contents, like the

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Forbidden City and the Great Wall, but also new design, fashion and art elements. Many new activities and new formats of tourism industry have connected the original urban resources and built good combinations of the urban spaces, by which Beijing’s culture brand is promoted further. Beijing needs development, but more protection and conservation. It should be seen that, the development of the tourism industry could promote the economic value and the environmental protection of Beijing historic city, while the urban pressure and contradictions were also highlighted in the Golden Week. For example, the Forbidden City had to fix more barriers to protect the historic architecture; the Confucian Temple chose the golden week to refurbish the ancient stone tablets, which is hard to say not out of the consideration of protection. In the twelfth five-year plans, the concept of historic-cultural city protection and conservation will expand to the whole Beijing city. We are looking forward to more positive attempts combining new activities with the urban characteristics and traditional culture, through which the historic and cultural resources of Beijing could achieve more effective protection, excavating, inheriting and use.

3. Beijing Feature Tour

Difference experience is one of the important tourism demands. Besides the capital and culture theme tours, Beijing local features tours are also very popular in the National Day Golden Week. After the Olympic Games, Beijing’s city functions are further improved and the traditional foods and retails have got more extensive attention; At the same time, new types of tourism develop fast, especially a group of suburb scenic spots, which have expanded the characteristics of Beijing tourism.

3.1 One Feast

Tasting delicious Beijing food and purchasing specific goods are important tourism consumptions in National Day Golden Week, including which the old shops and traditional brands must be mentioned. Reports showed, in the holiday, the old restaurants had hot busy from the breakfast of 1st Oct (Figure 14). Take Quanjude roast duck Hepingmen restaurant for example, people lining up outside reached the number of 500 to 600; lobbies and parking lots were all occupied; this store sold more than 15,000 roast ducks in seven days18. In addition, the location and the landscape dominance many of the old stores a lot. For example, the Shichahai area is a combination of lakes scene, traditional Hutong- Courtyard, celebrities’ houses, tricycle and many other Beijing characteristic contents, where hundreds of restaurants and bars were extremely popular in the Golden Week (Figure 15). Some lake-scene seats were even booked half a year in advance19. Data showed that, within the 7-day holiday, 121 main retail-service enterprises got accumulative total income of 5.93 billion CNY20. Golden Week is a substantial feast for both tourists and Beijing enterprises.

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20 Wang Feiyun. 121 Commercial Enterprises, 13.1% up [N]. Beijing Daily, 2011-10-08: 05
3.2 Numerous Regions

October is the most beautiful season in Beijing. The traditional double ninth festival this year was just inside the National Day Golden Week. Outdoor sightseeing was another kind of tourism hot spot. According to statistics, the city's 339 parks and 27 scenic spots received more than 12 million tourists within 7 days, 20.7% up. The suburb spots’ visitors increased 71%, far beyond that of the downtown parks’ 6-7%21 (Figure 16). The development of suburbs spots closely relates to the rapid increase of vehicles and the Beijing residences’ avoid-peak travel. In the Golden week, suburb scenic areas further strengthened their characteristics of multiple experiences. The Trout Valley located in Huairou District, for example, surrounded by landscape sites like Mutianyu Great Wall, Hongluo Temple and ShenTangyu Valley, has hundreds of farmer's houses gathered with dining, accommodation and entertainment functions, forming a 10 km circle of comprehensive recreational area. It has been not only an important option for many Beijing families’ holiday tour, but also attracted a large number of foreign tourists (Figure 17). In order to enrich the tourist activities, Beijing’s suburb scenic areas are mainly focusing on regional coordination, which has promoted the integration of suburb spaces.

It should be noticed that, the suburb tourist development transferred the transportation pressure to the

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21 *Beijing Business Report*. Beijing TV, 2011-10-09
outside of the city, which has brought a new issue for the construction of Beijing’s satellite towns.

Figure 16: Beijing Suburb Scenic Areas in Golden Week, 2011
Left: Yongding River Area; middle: The Grand Canal in Tongzhou; right: Beijing Photography Enthusiast

Figure 17: The Analysis of the Trout Valley Area

3.3 Beijing Feature Expanded

Adhering to the Beijing features, is the foundation of Beijing tourism development, but also the root of the city’s charm modeling, which has shown its significance in the Golden Week Tourism status. Meanwhile, the Beijing features are keeping pace with the time. In the Golden Week, many new formats of tourism activities became new hot spots. Chaoyang Park, Happy Valley, Honglingjin Park were more popular for new activities held; as a combination of fashion and tradition, Shichahai received 2.8 times more tourists. The new tourism formats’ rapid increase is a successful attempt of Beijing’s urban update, which has from one aspect shown the city’s vitality, and expanded the perspectives of Beijing features of urban spaces.

4. Some Thoughts

4.1 Golden Week Urban Structure

Seen from the theme tourism routes and new hot spots, the urban structure of National Day Golden Week tourism in Beijing shows “ONE CORE + HALF CITY”. Theme tourism destinations mainly focused on the old city and the Chang’an Street’s north side (Figure 18, left); the new popular sites, the mainstream media reported, shows expansion and a trend of uniform distribution, but still focusing on the central, north and northwest areas (Figure 18, middle); the main roads connecting these spots thus keeps the same situation (Figure 18, right).

The National Day Golden Week tourism is a concentrated illumination of Beijing urban spaces, including both the large number of tourism destinations and the large-scale public buildings on the way, which has built the tourists’ overall impression of Beijing and, from one side, reflected the urban space development status of the whole city (Figure 19, 20).

From the entire city territory scale, the urban layout of Golden Week tourism has a certain distance away from that proposed by the Beijing Twelfth Five-year Plans, namely “ONE CORE, ONE AXIS, TWO BELTS, SIX CORRIDORS”. Among them, the core of Beijing old city and tourism axis are very clear; the Great Wall tourism belt and the two highway corridors in the north have also been visualized. On the other
hand, the western and southern regions’ tourism attraction still falls behind. Yongding River ecological tourism belt and the four corridors in the south are not clear (Figure 21). The urban structure of National Day Golden Week tourism in Beijing is not balanced.

Figure 18: The Analysis of Tourism Hot Spots Layout in Golden Week, 2011
Left: Theme Tourism Destinations; middle: New Hot Spots Reported; right: Main Roads.

Figure 19: Images of Some Tourism Hot Spots in Golden Week, 2011

Figure 20: Images of Some Large-scale Buildings on the Golden Week Tourism Routes, 2011
In some sense, Beijing city could be thought as a large, profound and open scenic area, which is keeping updated. This could provide for the research on urban space a new perspective. It should also be seen that, the real meaning of “tourism city” or even “tourism capital” is by no means simply destination resource, but relies on civilization improvement, attractiveness modeling and urban identity achievement, which is on the same way of urban construction.

4.2 Golden Week City Pressure

The National Day Golden Week tourism every year is a kind of examination for Beijing, in which almost every part of the city will be tested under extreme pressure, especially accommodation and transportation. These are also the most fundamental concerns of tourists.

During the 7-day holiday this year, the hotel occupancy rate Beijing kept high all the way, and reached the top on 4th Oct. More than 90%, even to 100% rooms in some downtown hotels were occupied; the number of suburb was also close to 60%\(^22\). Millions of visitors have brought with significant economic interests to Beijing, as well as the higher request for the city’s service and supply.

In the aspect of transportation, Beijing’s overall volume of passenger reached unimaginable 150 million in 10 days\(^23\), but the general situation kept smooth. In the National Day Golden Week tourism, Beijing is not only the leading domestic destination, but also an important guest source and transit city. In the 10 days time, the main transportation junctions experienced four peaks of egression, arrival, leave and return, in which the city pressure could be imagined. In the Golden Week of 2011, the Capital International Airport bore 2.35 million passengers in total, increased by 7.15% than the same period of 2010\(^24\). The passenger flow of the four railway stations was more than 750,000 on 1st Oct\(^25\), and the number of 10 days reached nearly 3.5 million\(^26\) (Figure 22). For the northern scenic areas’ popularity, the two highways of G6 and G45 were bearing enormous pressure of two peaks every day (Figure 23). Within the city, track and other public transportation volumes grew obviously; traffic controls for holiday events, to a certain extent, influenced the residence's daily transportation.

\(^{22}\) Fu Yang, Meng Huan, Shao Zehui. Open Time Extended by Scenic Spots [N]. Beijing Evening News, 2011-10-04: 04
\(^{23}\) Hundred Commercial Enterprises absorbed 5.93 Billion in Golden Week [N]. Beijing News, 2011-10-08: A04
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\(^{26}\) Xuan Yanlong. 150 Million Passengers [N]. Beijing Evening News, 2011-10-08: 03
4.3 Golden Week Environmental Impact

The Impact of Golden Week tourism on Beijing is comprehensive, including great economic benefits and cultural exchanges. Besides, the environmental impact needs to be highlighted. On one hand, the development of tourism could improve the protection and conservation of the sites of interest, and promote the urban functions and natural landscapes; while on the other hand, massive tourists may bring many negative effects at the same time, such as air and noise pollution, natural resources pressure, landscape damage, and so on. These situations have been improved this year. For example, the trash in Tian An Men Square has declined 58% from the same period last year (Figure 24). But we have still seen that, the facilities in Forbidden City were destroyed, and the zoo was “robbed” in the holiday (Figure 25).

As can be seen, tourism is not an industry that fixes easily with the sustainable principle. This contradiction appears extremely acute in the short-term and highly-profitable Golden Week. Sustainable tourism of Beijing is an important aspect for the whole city’s urban space promotion. It is still a long way to go.
In the National Day Golden Week, Beijing has experienced the “Era of Entire Tourism” in advance\(^{27}\). After that, the overall tourist flow met a decline, but Beijing’s various tourism activities and events are still in full swing. For example, by 6th Nov, the 26-day Red Leaf Festival on Fragrance Hill had received 1.36 million tourists, in which 70% were guest visitors\(^{28}\). In one month time after the Golden Week, multiple events had came one after another, such as the “Chinese Three Tenors” concert, 798 Art Festival, Beijing International Marathon, Songzhuang Art Festival, and so on. Main tourism spots like the Forbidden City are still full of faces. Some new tourism projects like the Capital Core Area of Performing Arts and the Qiansanmen pedestrian street have started up.

Tourism activity has become an ordinary state of Beijing. In such a city abundant in tourism resources, the comprehensive influences and driving effects of tourism on the urban space will be more obvious, which has reserved continuous research.

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List of Illustrations

Figure 1: 2008-2010 National Day Holiday Tourism Report by Baidu.com. Redrawn by author

Figure 2: 2008-2010 National Day Holiday Tourism Report by Baidu.com. Redrawn by author

Figure 3: Zhao Hang, Luo Xiaoguang. *120,000 People Participated the Grand Flag-raising Ceremony* [N]. Beijing News, 2011-10-02: A01, A06. Photo by Luo Xiaoguang

Figure 4: Wang Jialin. *500 Old Photos, Tian An Men and Me* [N]. Beijing News, 2011-10-02: A06

The Xinhua News Agency. *8 Huge Lanterns on Tain An Men* [N]. Beijing Morning Post, 2011-10-01: A01, redrawn by author

Figure 5: Based on the Tourism Status of National Day Golden Week in Beijing and Baidu Map, by author


Down left: Based on Baidu Map, by author


Figure 7: Middle: Baidu Map and the Competition Routes Published by Beijing Traffic Management Bureau. Redrawn by author


Middle left: Li Xin. To Professional [N]. Beijing Morning Post, 2011-10-08: A20. Photo by Cai Daizheng


Upper right: Cai Daizheng. Tour of Beijing Started [N]. Beijing Morning Post, 2011-10-06: A01. Photo by Cai Daizheng


Figure 8: Liu Mian. *130 Thousand People Flew into the Forbidden City, Tourist Limitation Cancelled* [N]. Beijing Daily, 2011-10-03: 02. Photo by Dai Bing

Figure 9: Middle: Wang Jialin. *130 Thousand People Flew into the Forbidden City, Tourist Limitation Cancelled* [N]. Beijing News, 2011-10-03: A06. Photo by Yang Jie

The rest are based on the Tourism Status of National Day Golden Week in Beijing and Baidu Map, drawn by author.

Figure 10: Harmonious Holiday, Healthy Tourism [N]. Beijing Daily, 2011-10-09: special page

Figure 11: Based on the Tourism Status of National Day Golden Week in Beijing and Baidu Map, drawn by author

Figure 12: Middle: Based on the “Tour of Design” Map of Beijing International Design Week Website, http://www.bjdw.org/uploads/soft/111001/2-111001114324.jpg. Redrawn by author

Figure 13: Upper left: Li Cheng. Mahler Concerts Started by Thousand Artists [N]. Beijing Morning Post, 2011-10-07: A12. Photo by Wang Wei

Figure 14: Down right: Endless Stream in Beijing Shichahai Area. Xianhuanet.com, http://news.xinhuanet.com/photo/2009-10/06/content_12186317.htm. Photo by Li Hui
Other photos by author

Figure 15: Based on the Tourism Status of National Day Golden Week in Beijing and Baidu Map, by author. Photos by author
Figure 16: Left: Ye Xiaoyan. 70 Thousand Tourists on Yongding Riverside [N]. Beijing Evening News, 2011-10-05: 03. Photo by Li Wenming
Middle, right: Harmonious Holiday, Healthy Tourism [N]. Beijing Daily, 2011-10-09: special page

Figure 17: Based on the Tourism Status of National Day Golden Week in Beijing and Baidu Map, by author. Photos by author
Figure 18: Based on the Tourism Status of National Day Golden Week in Beijing and Baidu Map, by author
Figure 19: Based on the Tourism Status of National Day Golden Week in Beijing, Baidu Map and Photos from Beijing Daily, Beijing Evening News, Beijing News, Beijing Youth Daily, Beijing Morning Post, by author
Figure 20: Based on the Tourism Status of National Day Golden Week in Beijing, Baidu Map and Photos from A Guide to New Buildings in Beijing (Architecture Creation, 2008), by author
Figure 21: Based on the Tourism Status of National Day Golden Week in Beijing and Information from “Beijing Twelfth Five-year Plans of Tourism”, by author

Figure 22: Return Peak Yesterday. Beijing Youth Daily, 2011-10-08: A1
Figure 24: Emergency Cleaner Team of Tian An Men Square [N]. Beijing News, 2011-10-04: A10. Photo by Chen Xiaogen
Figure 25: Long Lu. Zoo Was “Robbed” in Holiday [N]. Beijing Evening News, 2011-10-07: 04. Photo by Ye Mingxia