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XI'S VISION | HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

Policies boost consumption of services

Upgrading and expansion of the sector fuel momentum for economic growth

By JI HAISHENG
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For the over 230,000 fans who flocked to Shanghai in mid-March for the 2026 Formula One Chinese Grand Prix — 80 percent of whom traveled from other provinces or overseas — their event ticket delivered a double thrill. It was not only a pass to the high-speed spectacle at the Shanghai International Circuit, but also a key to a wider array of consumption experiences in the metropolis.

By presenting their ticket stub, fans could unlock dining discounts, hotel upgrades and other perks at nearly 500 local merchants, transforming the sporting event into a vibrant economic catalyst.

Official data showed that during the three days of the race, nearby hotel bookings surged over 125 percent, and surrounding commercial complexes generated 132 million yuan (\$19.2 million) in revenue.

Describing the ticket stub as a “passport” to various urban consumption opportunities, Lu Shan, vice-mayor of Shanghai, pointed out that today’s consumers are no longer just buying goods — they are increasingly seeking experiences, cultural values and meaningful interactions.

“The synergy of sports, culture, tourism, commerce and exhibition is now unlocking imagination for Shanghai’s consumption opportunities,” Lu said.

The “ticket-stub economy” exemplifies an emerging trend nationwide: Services consumption is no longer about isolated transactions, but about integrated, experiential ecosystems. This shift is at the heart of China’s latest economic strategy.

In January, the State Council, China’s Cabinet, issued a work plan to guide efforts in optimizing and expanding the supply of servi-

ces, cultivating new growth drivers in services consumption, and promoting its quality upgrade and public benefit.

The document has identified high-potential fields such as sporting events, performances and experiential services, alongside key areas such as tourism and inbound consumption, outlining targeted policy measures to expand the high-quality supply of services and enhance public satisfaction.

This policy drive is firmly anchored in the strategic vision of the Chinese leadership, as President Xi Jinping has consistently highlighted the pivotal role of the services sector.

At the Central Economic Work Conference in December, Xi called for action plans to expand and upgrade services, stressing the need to adapt to shifts in consumption patterns, expand the supply of high-quality goods and services, and unlock the potential of services consumption.

This emphasis is underpinned by solid economic performance. China’s value-added service output went up 5.4 percent year-on-year to 80.89 trillion yuan in 2025, with the sector contributing 61.4 percent to the country’s overall economic growth, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed.

Xi’s vision of promoting the high-quality, efficient development of the services sector and deepening integration between modern services and other sectors has been formally incorporated into the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for socio-economic development and the annual Government Work Report. The two key national policy documents both explicitly advocate expanding and improving the services sector, translating the vision into concrete, actionable national goals.

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Holiday rush



Visitors watch the Aoyu parade — a traditional folk performance featuring a mythical fish-dragon creature in Chinese folklore — in Xiangyang, Hubei province, on Sunday. It was part of a nationwide travel boom during the Qingming Festival holiday, which ran from Saturday to Monday, with double-digit growth in both visitor numbers and revenue. YANG DONG / FOR CHINA DAILY **See story, page 3**

China surpasses US in approval of leadership

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
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China has surpassed the United States in global leadership approval ratings for the third time, with the gap between the two nations widening to its largest margin in nearly two decades, according to a new report by US advisory company Gallup.

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The survey, which was conducted last year across more than 130 countries and regions, found that a median of 36 percent of respondents approved of China’s leadership, compared with 31 percent for the US. Gallup said that the 5-percentage-point advantage represented the widest it has recorded in China’s favor in nearly 20 years.

The report shows that US approval fell sharply from 39 percent in 2024 to 31 percent in 2025, while China’s ratings rose from 32 percent to 36 percent over the same period.

This marks the third time Gallup has recorded China leading the US in global approval, with the previous two instances occurring during

the George W. Bush administration (Jan 20, 2001 to Jan 20, 2009) and Donald Trump’s first term (Jan 20, 2017 to Jan 20, 2021).

Researchers used “net approval”, which is measured by the percentage of approving minus that of disapproving, to provide a more complete view of global sentiment toward the rated countries.

The median net approval for the US was negative 15 in 2025, the lowest figure Gallup has ever recorded for the country.

The decline in US standing has exposed fissures in the US-led alliance system, with European partners criticizing Washington for a lack of consultation and Gulf countries facing direct economic threats from Iranian retaliation.

“Depending on the outcome of this conflict, some Gulf countries may develop concerns about US reliability as an economic and security partner,” wrote Abram Paley, a nonresident senior fellow with the Atlantic Council, in an analysis in late March. “If this happens, some GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries might then choose to reinforce their partnership options beyond the United

States by strengthening ties with

Russia and China — perhaps economically at first, but potentially also strategically.”

Gallup also said the approval of US leadership has varied considerably across presidential administrations. The lowest rating of 30 percent was registered in the first and last years of Trump’s first term and the highest rating of 49 percent was recorded in 2009 under president Barack Obama.

Researchers behind the survey described the trend as reflecting a fundamental transformation in international relations. “The shifting perceptions of US leadership over the past two decades reflect a world that has moved toward a more multipolar order,” the report concluded. “Many countries, particularly US allies, may be more open to balancing relationships across major powers than aligning clearly with one.”

Zhu from Bucknell University agreed. “The latest Gallup poll is further evidence that the world has become multipolar now, and the era of the US dominance in global affairs is over.”

STORIED HISTORY AT THE HEART OF BEIJING HUTONG

Dajixiang witnesses past and present, continuing a centuries-old legacy

By CHEN NAN
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The morning sun gently bathes the gray-walled courtyards of Dajixiang, a new multifunctional complex nestled in the heart of Beijing’s historic Xuannan area, a place steeped in centuries of the city’s cultural evolution.

One of the courtyards belongs to the restored former residence of Kang Youwei, a late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) reformer who, along with other similarly minded officials, launched what became known as the Hundred Days’ Reform. The house stands in stark contrast to the modern office buildings surrounding it, yet remains a visual reminder of the area’s storied past. Once a cultural hub for scholars, intellectuals and revolutionaries, this part of Beijing has carried its rich history for-

ward into the present, reminding both locals and visitors of the profound historical transformations that shaped modern China.

Gu Zhong, 66, a local resident, said: “People think this area (Dajixiang) is new, but it’s really the soul of the neighborhood. We’ve seen it change, but it still holds the spirit of the past.”

Gu, who has lived in the nearby hutong for over 60 years, fondly recalled his childhood days spent watching Peking Opera and acrobatics in the old neighborhood.

Once a quiet corner of Caishikou in Beijing’s Xicheng district, Dajixiang is now a must-visit spot for both locals and tourists, symbolizing the revitalization of Xuannan — an area where history and modern life harmoniously coexist.

Unveiled in May, Dajixiang is just a short walk from Beijing’s Central Axis, the city’s historic backbone lined



People enjoy leisure time at Dajixiang in Beijing on March 19. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

with imperial buildings and grand public spaces. The neighborhood once teemed with guildhalls, scholars’ residences and vibrant street markets, creating a unique atmosphere known as *yan huo qi* — the warmth and energy of everyday life.

Visitors can explore the bustling hutong, sample Muslim cuisine in the nearby Niujie, and visit ancient landmarks such as Fayuan Temple, a Tang Dynasty (618-907) landmark, and Huguang Huiguan, or Huguang Guild Hall.

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Chinese AI models lead in global token usage

By CHENG YU
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Chinese artificial intelligence models have outpaced AI models made by the United States in terms of global usage for a fifth straight week, underscoring a growing token economy in China that is defined by scale, pricing and computing infrastructure.

A token is the fundamental unit of data processed by an AI model. The momentum for the growth of the token economy comes as China ramps up efforts to expand its AI infrastructure.

Last week, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said the nation will pilot “computing banks” and “computing supermarkets” to turn computing power into a tradeable, financially linked resource.

According to data recently released by OpenRouter, a platform widely used by overseas developers to access AI models, from March 30 to Sunday, global weekly usage of Chinese AI models reached 12.96 trillion tokens, up 31.5 percent week-on-week, while AI models made by the US logged 3.03 trillion tokens, rising only 0.76 percent.

The expanded usage of Chinese AI models outpaced that of their US counterparts for the fifth consecutive week, data from OpenRouter showed. It highlighted that last week, all the six most-used AI models worldwide were made in China, and that two AI models from Alibaba Group’s Qwen ranked among the top three.

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Travel tips

How to get there:
Dajixiang: Take subway Line 4 or 7 to Caishikou Station (Exit C).
Beijing Xuannan Cultural Museum: Take subway Line 19 to Niujie Station (Exit B).



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