

Study on the Characteristics and Influencing Factors Sports Tourism Consumption Behavior among College Students

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Abstract: With the rapid development of the sports tourism market, college students, as a significant consumer group, have attracted increasing attention in the study of consumption behavior. Through questionnaire surveys and interviews, this study systematically analyzes the characteristics and influencing factors of sports tourism consumption behavior among Chinese college students. The study finds that college students' motivation for sports tourism consumption is mainly driven by health and social needs, with consumption patterns showing a preference for team activities and cost-effective sports tourism projects. Information search and recommendations significantly impact their decision-making process. Moreover, satisfaction and loyalty analysis reveals that the quality of experience is the key factor determining their repeat purchase behavior. This study explores the comprehensive influence of personal background, social culture, economic conditions, psychological characteristics, and educational experience on consumption behavior, providing targeted marketing and educational strategies for sports tourism operators and higher education institutions.

Keywords: College Students; Sports Tourism; Consumption Behavior; Consumption Motivation; Influencing Factors

1. Introduction

Sports tourism, as an emerging form of tourism, has seen rapid development globally in recent years, showing strong growth particularly among young consumers. College students, who have a high level of participation in sports activities and significant tourism consumption potential, are an important segment of the sports tourism market. Given this, in-depth research into college students' sports tourism consumption behavior can provide valuable insights for market segmentation and help higher education institutions better cultivate students' awareness and abilities in sports tourism. This study aims to explore the characteristics and influencing factors of college students' sports tourism consumption behavior to provide strategic recommendations for relevant stakeholders.

2. Characteristics of College Students' Sports Tourism Consumption Behavior

2.1 Analysis of Consumption Motivation

College students' motivations for participating in sports tourism are diverse and complex, typically divided into several main types: curiosity, health awareness, social needs, and a spirit of adventure, each deeply influencing their consumption behavior.

Firstly, sports tourism offers rich learning opportunities, allowing college students to acquire new skills and broaden their knowledge. For example, participating in activities such as diving, mountain climbing, and skiing not only helps them learn specific sports skills but also increases their understanding of related natural and cultural environments. This accumulation of experience satisfies college students' desire for new knowledge while promoting comprehensive personal development.

Secondly, with the widespread increase in health awareness, sports tourism has become an important way for college students to pursue a healthy lifestyle. Participating in physically demanding travel activities helps improve physical fitness and strength, thereby promoting physical and mental health. These activities not only challenge their physical limits but also provide opportunities to relieve daily stress and restore mental vitality.

Additionally, sports tourism often involves team collaboration and group activities, meeting college students' social needs. By participating in sports activities with peers, college students can build and deepen interpersonal relationships in a relaxed and enjoyable environment, enhancing their teamwork abilities. These social interactions are crucial to the socialization process of young students.

Finally, the adventurous nature of sports tourism is particularly attractive to college students seeking excitement and challenges. Adventure activities such as rock climbing and white-water rafting provide opportunities to overcome personal challenges and obstacles, making the travel experience more thrilling and satisfying their psychological needs for exploring the unknown and experiencing extremes.^[1]

2.2 Description of Consumption Patterns

College students' consumption patterns in sports tourism have distinct characteristics, primarily reflected in their preference for small group activities, short trips, and cost-effective consumption methods. These features highlight their dual constraints in terms of time and financial resources, as well as their high regard for flexibility and cost-efficiency.

Firstly, college students prefer to form small groups with friends or classmates for sports tourism. This small-scale group mode not only facilitates organization and coordination but also enhances interaction and enjoyment during the trip. This socially rich travel method aligns with college students' social needs for making friends and participating in group activities, reflecting their preference for personalized and customized experiences.

Secondly, due to academic and part-time work constraints, college students are more inclined to schedule short sports trips during weekends or school holidays. These trips typically choose nearby destinations, such as local or adjacent natural parks and mountains, for activities like hiking, mountain biking, or short-distance skiing. This short-trip model not only saves time and travel costs but also satisfies their needs for exploring nature and engaging in physical exercise.

In terms of consumption habits, college students are particularly focused on cost-effectiveness, often opting for reasonably priced and high-experience-value travel packages. Given their limited budgets, they frequently use various online resources to compare prices and look for discounts and promotions to minimize costs. Moreover, college students favor self-guided or semi-self-guided travel formats, which allow them to arrange itineraries freely according to personal preferences and interests, while also controlling travel expenses to some extent, enhancing the flexibility and personalization of their travels.^[2]

2.3 Consumption Decision-Making Process

The sports tourism consumption decision-making process of college students is a multi-level, dynamic interaction process, significantly influenced by personal interests, peer influence, and online reviews. This process can be broken down into several key stages, each involving different decision factors and information sources.

In the initial stage of decision-making, information gathering is crucial. Most college students use online search engines and social media platforms to obtain information about sports tourism destinations and activities. They focus on the popularity of destinations, the attractiveness of activities, and the evaluations of participation experiences. During this stage, online resources such as travel blogs, social media posts, and online travel forums provide abundant reference information, helping students form preliminary travel plans.

Subsequently, peer influence becomes increasingly important. College students' choices in sports tourism are often significantly influenced by friends and classmates. Recommendations from peers and their previous travel experiences can greatly impact individual travel choices. During this stage, discussions and opinion exchanges within the group often play a decisive role, with sports tourism decisions often being the result of collective discussion and consensus.

Moreover, economic factors cannot be overlooked in the decision-making process. Budget constraints are critical for college students, who typically compare different travel options while maintaining cost-effectiveness. Price sensitivity drives them to seek value-for-money travel products, such as affordable travel packages, student discounts, or budget travel services. In the final decision-making stage, cost, convenience, and overall value are often key considerations.

Finally, the expected outcomes of the travel experience influence the final decision. College students tend to choose sports tourism activities that provide unique experiences, enhance personal skills, or

improve health. They prefer travel services that offer these added values.^[3]

2.4 Consumption Satisfaction and Loyalty

First, the quality of the travel experience is the most direct factor affecting satisfaction. This involves not only the enjoyment and engagement of the activities themselves but also the quality of service, safety of the environment, and professionalism of the guides. For example, a well-structured, content-rich sports activity can greatly enhance college students' satisfaction with the experience, making them feel the value of the trip.

Secondly, organizational efficiency is crucial for ensuring a smooth travel experience. Timely scheduling of activities, clear processes, and prompt resolution of issues are important indicators of organizational efficiency. Good organization can reduce unnecessary troubles during the trip, increasing the overall comfort and satisfaction of the journey.

Lastly, reputation and social influence are particularly significant among college students. A successful travel experience can not only increase personal satisfaction but also influence other potential customers through word-of-mouth. Conversely, a negative experience can quickly spread through social networks, affecting the brand's image and reputation.

3. Key Factors Influencing College Students' Sports Tourism Consumption Behavior

3.1 Personal Factors

College students' sports tourism consumption behavior is deeply influenced by a range of personal factors, including age, gender, health status, personal interests, and sports abilities. These elements collectively shape their choice and participation in sports tourism activities.

Firstly, age is a significant factor. Younger college students typically exhibit higher enthusiasm and desire for stimulating and adventurous sports activities. For example, extreme sports like rock climbing and white-water rafting, known for their excitement and challenges, often attract young individuals seeking high energy and dynamic experiences. Gender differences are also prominent; males are generally more inclined to engage in competitive and strength-demanding activities, while females might prefer endurance and flexibility-oriented activities.

Furthermore, personal health status and sports skill levels directly determine the feasibility of participating in physically demanding sports activities. Students with good physical fitness and specific skills might choose technically demanding activities like skiing, mountaineering, or diving. Conversely, health issues or physical limitations might lead some students to opt for milder or lower-risk tourism projects.^[4]

Personal interests play a crucial role. Interests may be shaped by family background, previous experiences, or peer influence, significantly impacting their tourism choices. Passion for specific sports activities can drive students to seek destinations and projects that offer these experiences.

3.2 Socio-Cultural Factors

Societal recognition and cultural values play decisive roles in individual choices of sports tourism activities. Students growing up in communities where sports activities are highly prevalent and culturally valued generally exhibit a more positive attitude toward sports tourism and are more likely to participate regularly. Such socio-cultural environments not only encourage active sports participation but also often celebrate sports-related achievements, enhancing the appeal of sports tourism.

Family support and influence are also key factors. The attitudes and participation levels of family members, particularly parents, towards sports activities can significantly impact college students' willingness to participate. For instance, students with parents or siblings who actively engage in sports activities are more likely to inherit this positive sports tourism behavior.

Lastly, media representation and advertising of sports tourism also influence college students' consumption behavior. Positive media coverage and attractive advertisements can shape a favorable image of sports tourism, increasing students' acceptance and willingness to try new sports activities.

3.3 Economic Factors

Economic factors play a critical role in college students' sports tourism consumption behavior. Personal and family financial situations directly affect the choice of tourism destinations, types of activities participated in, and the frequency of travel.

Firstly, personal financial freedom is a key determinant of sports tourism consumption capacity. Students with better economic conditions have more funds to invest in tourism activities, tending to choose distant and high-cost destinations, participating in high-cost sports activities such as skiing and diving. These students can enjoy a broader range of sports tourism experiences, including various domestic and international adventures and explorations.

Conversely, students with limited economic conditions must consider cost factors more when planning sports tourism. They may prefer low-cost local or nearby short trips and seek economical sports activities. To further reduce expenses, these students might participate in group activities organized by universities, clubs, or local governments, often providing subsidies or discounts, making sports tourism more accessible.

Additionally, family financial support significantly influences college students' sports tourism consumption behavior. Students from affluent families may receive financial support for travel, increasing their chances of participating in high-cost sports activities. In contrast, families with limited financial resources may not provide such support, restricting students' travel choices and frequency.^[5]

3.4 Psychological Factors

Psychological factors play a central role in shaping college students' sports tourism consumption behavior. These factors include motivation, perceived risk, and self-efficacy, influencing whether students choose to participate in sports tourism and determining the type and extent of their involvement.

Motivation is a key driver of college students' participation in sports tourism. These motivations can be intrinsic, such as improving health levels, or extrinsic, such as social needs or gaining recognition from others. For example, some students might be driven by the desire to challenge themselves and push their limits, while others might be influenced by friends or to expand their social circle.

Additionally, perceived risk plays an important role in sports tourism. Many sports tourism activities involve certain risks and uncertainties, such as safety concerns and fear of failure. Students' risk tolerance varies; those with lower perceived risks might be more willing to try exciting activities, while risk-sensitive students might choose relatively safe or familiar activities.

3.5 Educational Influence

Educational background, especially the extent of exposure to and participation in physical education, significantly impacts college students' sports tourism consumption behavior. Comprehensive physical education not only enhances students' sports skills and knowledge but also greatly increases their interest and willingness to participate in sports tourism.

Firstly, the prevalence of physical education directly relates to students' basic understanding of and skill in sports activities. In higher education institutions, offering diverse physical education courses and activities provides students opportunities to engage in various sports, from traditional ball games to modern extreme sports. For example, through school-organized courses in rock climbing or kayaking, students can learn foundational skills in a safe environment, laying a solid foundation for future participation in related sports tourism activities.

Moreover, school sports clubs and group activities offer students a platform to practice and experience sports tourism. These activities not only enhance students' sports skills but also promote teamwork and social capabilities. Group participation allows students to experience the joy of teamwork and establish lasting friendships, often increasing their ongoing interest in sports tourism.

4. Strategies for Sports Tourism Businesses and Higher Education Institutions

4.1 Strategies for Sports Tourism Businesses

For sports tourism businesses, understanding the consumption behavior characteristics of college

students and their influencing factors is key to developing effective market strategies. To attract this young and active market segment, businesses need to carefully design sports tourism products that align with college students' financial capabilities and interests.

Firstly, considering that college students typically face budget constraints, sports tourism businesses should offer affordable travel packages. These packages can include special deals for students, discounts, or value-added services, especially during school holidays, to significantly increase student participation. For example, providing regular early bird discounts or group discounts can encourage students to plan and book in advance, ensuring higher booking rates and participation.^[6]

Secondly, sports tourism projects should enhance social elements to meet the social needs of college students. By designing team challenges, competitive events, or social activities such as outdoor music festivals or beach volleyball tournaments, businesses can effectively utilize college students' social networks. Additionally, by incentivizing students to share their travel experiences on social media, such as through photo contests or sharing sweepstakes, businesses can leverage word-of-mouth effects to attract more students' attention and participation.

Furthermore, sports tourism businesses should actively employ digital marketing strategies to directly connect with the college student demographic through social media advertising and online promotional activities. Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are ideal channels to reach college students. Businesses can post highly interactive content on these platforms, such as user-generated content, behind-the-scenes stories, real-time updates, and Q&A sessions, to increase students' interest and participation in sports tourism projects. Through these platforms, businesses can not only showcase the appeal of travel destinations and activities but also collect real-time feedback to optimize services and products.

4.2 Strategies for Higher Education Institutions

For higher education institutions, integrating sports tourism into education and activities not only enriches educational resources but also provides students with valuable opportunities for personal growth and career development.

Colleges should incorporate more content related to sports tourism into their curriculum. This can include sports tourism management, wilderness survival skills training, environmental protection education, and related health and safety training. For example, offering specialized courses on how to plan and manage sports tourism activities, as well as how to assess and mitigate environmental impacts associated with these activities, can provide students with both theoretical knowledge and industry best practices and case studies, laying a solid foundation for their future careers.

Higher education institutions can also establish partnerships with sports tourism companies to jointly develop internships and practical projects. This collaboration not only provides students with opportunities to apply their learning outcomes in real-world environments but also helps them build industry connections and enhance their employment prospects. For instance, through internship programs, students can directly participate in the planning and execution of tourism projects, gaining practical experience and understanding of industry operations, while also fostering their enthusiasm and interest in sports tourism.

5. Conclusion

This study conducted a comprehensive analysis of college students' sports tourism consumption behavior, identifying key characteristics such as consumption motivation, patterns, decision-making processes, and satisfaction and loyalty. The research systematically revealed various factors influencing these behaviors. The findings suggest that to effectively enhance college students' participation in sports tourism, businesses must develop products that align more closely with students' expectations and values, and strengthen market promotion through social media and other channels. Additionally, higher education institutions should enhance sports tourism-related courses to improve students' knowledge and skills in this area. Future research could further explore the differences in sports tourism consumption behavior among college students from diverse cultural backgrounds and investigate the impact of external factors on their consumption behavior. These insights would provide valuable information for the global sports tourism market, facilitating more targeted and effective strategies for engaging this important consumer segment.

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