

# Research on the Tourism Tendency of Contemporary College Students in the Post-epidemic Era

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**Abstract:** The tourism market is slowly recovering after the epidemic was released about a year ago. As a frontier group, college students occupy an important position in the tourism industry. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to study how college students' tourism tendencies are affected, especially in the post-epidemic era. A total of 1352 questionnaires were collected through questionnaire surveys. Using structural equation modeling analysis, as well as reliability, validity analysis, multiple correspondence analysis, t-test, etc., it was found that after the epidemic, college students' travel time was significantly shortened; their tourism consumption motivation was diverse; they were more inclined to low-cost, economical short-distance tourism; their secondary active consumption tendency was particularly evident; they preferred scenic spots with beautiful scenery and prominent themes; they preferred to obtain information and book travel services through information channels. Our survey results not only provide feasible, appropriate and cost-effective vacation travel options for contemporary college students, but also provide policy suggestions for governments and tourism enterprises on how to allocate tourism resources and provide more comprehensive and comprehensive tourism services in the post-epidemic era.

**Keywords:** Post-epidemic; College Students; Travel Trends; Questionnaire Survey; Policy Recommendations

## 1. Research Background

The tourism industry was one of the first sectors severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and also one of the last to recover. This pandemic not only brought a short-term

heavy blow to the tourism industry itself, but also had two long-term impacts: it triggered a global economic crisis, affecting the recovery of the tourism industry; fundamentally, it changed travelers' values, behavior patterns, and lifestyles. These two long-term effects are crucial in designing future development strategies for the tourism industry [1]. At the outbreak of the pandemic, policies focused on prevention and control, and travel was restricted; as the situation improved, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism timely adjusted policies towards normalization of pandemic prevention and support for the tourism industry's recovery, which to some extent helped the tourism revival. Under the context of the pandemic, the desire for tourism increased among citizens, putting travel at the top of the "post-pandemic most-wanted activities" list [2]. Thus, we conducted surveys and research on cultural and tourism tendencies in the post-pandemic era. In the post-pandemic era, risks and opportunities coexist, and researchers like Zhang Yuxi et al., through analyzing tourism data before and after the pandemic [3], found that development strategies for tourism product consumption in the post-pandemic era need to focus on two aspects: 1. Grasping consumer demand, optimizing service quality, insisting on product and service innovation, and capturing the market recovery pulse in the post-pandemic era. 2. Developing online channels, providing safety guarantees, expanding the sales channels for tourism products, and promoting online sales with the integration of short videos and tourism products. Jiang Yan found that college students prefer natural scenery spots [4], indicating that after experiencing the pandemic, they have a stronger health consciousness, prefer to be closer to nature, breathe fresh air, and experience a more secure, slow-paced tourism lifestyle. As for transportation, they prefer convenient and

efficient ones like high-speed trains and trains at relatively affordable prices, most student travel time is within one week, and they prefer short trips, are sensitive to prices, and favor short-distance trips within the province that require less budget and time. College students, as a specific group, have obvious tendencies and uniqueness in their tourism consumption behavior: diverse consumption motives; preference for low-cost, economical short trips; especially evident secondary active consumption tendencies; preference for scenic spots with beautiful scenery and prominent themes; preference for obtaining information and booking travel services through information channels<sup>[5]</sup>.

## 2. Research Content and Theoretical Basis

Tourism is an important spiritual consumption activity in human life. In 1980, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) published the "Manila Declaration on World Tourism," which stated that tourism is a basic human right, an important way for humans to achieve short-term spiritual liberation. Humans are the practitioners and aesthetic subjects of tourism behavior, with their needs consisting of three core elements: desire to purchase, payment ability, and leisure time. (1) Desire to purchase. How do people find a free world in the inevitable world? The main way is through tourism, which, like labor, constitutes part of the mode of production, to get away from everyday unauthentic, superficial life, people would rather endure the fatigue of travel to experience exotic customs <sup>[6]</sup>. Therefore, tourism is a mode of production of spiritual products, such as the pursuit of freedom and the search for the true self, that has been alienated. (2) Payment ability. Tourism consumption is part of popular life consumption and upgrades synchronously with the rise in consumption. In 1985, China's per capita GDP was 858 yuan, and urban residents' per capita disposable income was 739 yuan; in 2022, China's per capita GDP reached 85,700 yuan, and the national per capita disposable income was 36,883 yuan. The improvement in the standard of living of the masses has driven the upgrade of tourism consumption. (3) Leisure time. Tourism is the consumption of time and space, the full implementation of paid vacations and public holidays in legal, policy, and mechanisms has given the masses more

leisure time, influencing time through the expansion of space or enhancing the value of time through spatial transformation, enabling people to better arrange their leisure time.

Why do people travel? When physiological and psychological needs are not met, psychological anxiety occurs, which guides us to change. Anxiety is an important source of internal drive. College students relieve anxiety through tourism to reduce internal drive. The theoretical basis is derived from the following formula  $sER = D \times K \times sHR$ , where  $sER$  means reaction potential for certain behaviors,  $D$  is internal drive,  $K$  is the incentive, and  $sHR$  is habit strength. The activity of the organism is to reduce or eliminate the internal drive. At the same time, activity is reinforced, hence, it is a fundamental condition for enhancing the probability of learning. Drive theory, also known as drive reduction theory or need satisfaction theory, refers to when the needs of an organism are not met, an internal drive stimulus is produced inside the organism. This internal drive stimulus causes a response, and the ultimate result of the response satisfies the need. When these behaviors eliminate the anxiety, the internal drive no longer exists, and thus, the reaction potential of this behavior also disappears, and the behavior stops. Thus, human behavior itself is a process in which a balance is disrupted and constantly restored. This itself is also an important content of the drive reduction theory<sup>[6]</sup>. Applying this formula to the issue of college student tourism, we need to study which external factors induce and which advantages of tourist attractions attract the internal drive of the college student group. Under the drive of both internal and external factors, combined with the impact of individual tourism consumption intensity, college students will develop a reaction potential for a certain tourism preference. We verify this formula with a group of respondents with the same preferences collected from the survey-  $sER$  (reaction potential for climbing Mount Tai to watch the sunrise) =  $D$  (high pressure from regular studies and a dull life, longing for exciting and beautiful things) \*  $K$  (classmates around have challenged this tourist project and actively shared benefits) \*  $sHR$  (personal

hobby of exercising and appreciating beautiful scenery). The actual production and operation process of tourist attractions is the planning, combination, and configuration of a series of essential resource elements such as tourism resources, attractions, and tourism products<sup>[7]</sup>. For more results, we recommend reader to see <sup>[8-11]</sup>.

### 3. Survey of College Student Tourism Tendencies

The respondents of this survey included 1359 college students from various levels of cities and educational backgrounds across the country. The questionnaire characteristics are as follows: respondents were widely distributed, with 90.99% in first, second, and third-tier cities and 9.01% in county towns and rural areas; educationally, associate and bachelor's degree holders accounted for 78.2% of the total number, while graduate and doctoral students accounted for 21.8%. The analysis found that the Alpha reliability of this questionnaire was greater than 0.7, indicating that the questionnaire was credible, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Reliability Test**

Cronbach's Coefficient	Standardized $\alpha$ Cronbach's Coefficient	Number of Items	Sample Size
0.713	0.712	5	1352

The questionnaire's validity analysis obtained a KMO value greater than 0.6, indicating good validity of the survey questionnaire and valid data. As shown in Table 2:

**Table 2. Validity Test**

KMO Value		0.759
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approximate Chi-Square	175.717
	df	10
	P	0.000***

After analyzing the questionnaire and comparing the surveys on college students' travel tendencies before and after the pandemic, we obtained the following significant results: Before the pandemic, respondents spent more time traveling for 5-7 days, and after the pandemic, they spent 3-5 days traveling, indicating that the pandemic had an impact on the travel time spent by respondents. Before the pandemic, respondents preferred to visit antiquities and memorial halls, accounting for 43.6%, while after the

pandemic, they preferred theme parks, accounting for 44.08%, indicating that the pandemic had a significant impact on the travel destinations of respondents.

## 4. Tourism Development Countermeasures and Suggestions

### 4.1 Enterprise Low-Profit, High-Volume Sales

Whether the pricing of tourism is reasonable directly relates to the competitiveness of tourism products and affects the effect of market development. The college student tourism market is relatively concentrated and large in scale, but the sources of funds for college student travel are relatively single, mostly coming from pocket money and part-time earnings from home. Money has become an important consideration factor for college students when traveling, and they are very sensitive to prices. Therefore, if tourism enterprises want to achieve significant economic benefits, they must use its market characteristics, reduce costs, fully consider the price affordability of college students, gain price advantages, stimulate the enthusiasm of college students to travel, form a scale market, and achieve good economic benefits through "small profits but quick turnover."

### 4.2 Flexible and Honest Merchants

College students are active in thinking and energetic, with diversified travel motives and a pursuit of personalization. Therefore, it is necessary to flexibly launch a combination of tourism products, making travel methods diversified.

### 4.3 Launching a Variety of Theme Tourism Products that Meet Student Needs

Such as sports tourism, adventure tourism and eco-tourism, to attract the attention of university students and enhance the reputation and credibility of tourism enterprises.

### 4.4 Adopt Many Kinds of Tourism Promotion Methods

Such as cooperating with college associations, training students direct selling shops, using network promotion, using flyers and posters, etc.

### 4.5 The Government Should Strengthen

### **Coordination Among Government Departments and Support Tourism Development**

Governments at all levels should make greater efforts to develop tourism as an important element in a balanced and rational manner to speed up development.

#### **4.6 Draw Up Plans Scientifically and Develop Resources Rationally**

Draw up medium-and long-term and short-term development plans for tourism on the basis of existing tourism resources, and rationally lay out tourist attractions and routes, define the characteristics of the tourism sector, project focus and Development Goals. We should introduce advanced tourism culture concept and creativity. At the same time, we should encourage and support local enterprises and farmers to strengthen the development and operation of rural tourism commodities, especially specialty agricultural products such as Jinxiang Tongchun wine, local dried bamboo shoots, mat and grass products, and seafood products, continue to extend the rural tourism industry chain, increase the added value of rural tourism, bring benefits to the people.

### **5. Conclusions and Suggestions**

#### **5.1 Main Characteristics of College Student Travel Tendencies**

College student travel consumption is motivated by multiple factors: they tend to prefer low-cost, economical short trips; secondary active consumption tendencies are particularly evident; they prefer scenic spots with beautiful scenery and prominent themes; they prefer to obtain information and book travel services through information channels.

#### **5.2 Travel Motives Mainly for Relaxation, Seeking Novelty, and Entertainment**

The travel consumption motives of college students are the main factors influencing the formation of the college student travel market. Some college students are busy with their studies and have dull and tedious lives, with pressure not being released; traveling is mainly for relaxation. Some students have a strong desire for knowledge, are very curious about new things, and traveling allows them to experience different customs and new things.

Others love sports and want to use their spare time for travel and fitness.

#### **5.3 Travel Destination Information, Distance, and Consumption Price**

Influenced by leisure time and current pandemic prevention policies, college students generally choose relatively close distances for weekend and fixed holiday travel. At the same time, due to limited funds available to college students, choosing low-cost travel meets the actual situation of college students. Survey results are consistent with this, showing that the travel destination information most concerned by college students before travel is distance and consumption price, accounting for 40.7% and 36%, respectively.

#### **5.4 Strong Desire and Tendency for Secondary Consumption**

Secondary consumption refers to the additional consumption by tourists within the scenic area, apart from the necessary first gate ticket, including internal scenic transportation, facility venue tickets, leisure and entertainment projects, tourist goods, catering, accommodation in the scenic area, etc. Taking a one-day trip of college students as an example, secondary consumption such as leisure and entertainment, dining, and tourism goods accounts for 55.2% of the total consumption of the one-day trip.

#### **5.5 Choice of Tourist Attractions**

Scenic spots with beautiful landscapes and prominent themes have become the preferred destinations for college students. The most popular tourist destinations for college students are natural scenery types, accounting for 62.2%, with theme parks, seasonal experiences, city sightseeing, and exhibit venues also favored by college students, accounting for 53.3%, 48.5%, 40.7%, and 40.0% respectively. The survey results on the most popular types of tourist destinations among college students are consistent with their travel motives.

#### **5.6 Formation of Tourism Models**

College students prefer to obtain information and book travel services through information channels. With the widespread application of information technology, compared with traditional methods, information technology

marketing is more popular among the college student group. The survey shows that the preferred channel for college students to obtain tourist destination and attraction information is mobile social networking platforms, accounting for 80.4%, followed by tourism e-commerce websites and official tourism organization platforms, accounting for 45.6% and 23.8%, respectively, while the traditional channels of recommendations from friends and relatives and traditional media marketing account for 19.1% and 12.5% respectively.

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