

# Research on the Construction of Incentive Mechanism and Optimization Strategy of Tourists' Low-Carbon Behavior Based on Dual-Carbon Objectives

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**Abstract:** As the global climate change problem becomes more and more serious, governments and organizations are actively responding to it and promoting the realization of environmental protection goals such as "carbon neutrality" and "peak carbon". As a significant component of the national economy, tourism is also subject to the pressures and challenges of transformation and upgrading. On the one hand, the rapid development of the tourism industry is increasing demand for resources and the environment. On the other hand, as a high-carbon emission industry, its role in promoting the realization of the "dual-carbon" goal should not be underestimated. The present paper is based on an exploration and construction of an effective incentive mechanism to promote the low-carbon development of the tourism industry in the context of the dual-carbon goal. A comprehensive examination of the pivotal factors influencing tourists' low-carbon behavior is imperative. This analysis should form the foundation for the conceptualization of an incentive mechanism that has the potential to galvanize the enthusiasm of tourists and tourism enterprises. The objective of this initiative is twofold: firstly, to achieve low-carbon tourism activities, and secondly, to promote the sustainable development of the tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Dual-Carbon Target; Low-Carbon Behavior; Incentive Mechanism; Optimization Strategy

## 1. Introduction

The China Tourism Development Plan delineates a novel paradigm for tourism

development, predicated on the vigorous cultivation of a green and low-carbon industry, the recalibration of the industrial structure, and the attainment of a dual benefit, both economic and environmental, in a concerted effort. These guidelines offer a framework for the advancement of the tourism industry in a manner that is conducive to the reduction of carbon emissions. Given its status as a pivotal industry within the national economy, tourism has become increasingly intertwined with the repercussions of climate change. According to the statistics and analysis of relevant literature, the carbon emissions from leisure and business travel account for a significant proportion of the global total emissions. Moreover, in contrast to conventional heavy industries, although the carbon emissions of tourism are not predominant in general, its share has been increasing annually with the rapid development of global tourism. Consequently, the imperative to devise effective strategies for reducing carbon emissions from the tourism industry, particularly to achieve carbon neutrality in tourism under the overarching "dual-carbon" objective, has emerged as a pressing concern that demands immediate attention.

## 2. Dual Carbon Targets and their Implications for Tourism

### 2.1 Dual Carbon Goals

In the face of severe global climate change, carbon peaking and carbon neutrality are China's solemn commitments to the world [1]. The dual-carbon targets proposed by China are national strategies formulated after the 2015 Paris Climate Conference, based on the requirements of the Paris Agreement and China's national conditions. These strategies were formulated to respond to climate change,

reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote the optimization and upgrading of the economic structure and energy structure, as well as a commitment and contribution to the international community. In this context, the Chinese government has formulated a series of policies and measures to promote energy efficiency, promote renewable energy, optimize industrial structure, and promote new energy vehicles to reduce carbon emissions in order to promote the realization of the dual-carbon goal. As an important source of carbon emissions, the low-carbon development of the tourism industry has a positive impact on the realization of the dual-carbon goals. The low-carbon development of the tourism industry not only helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also promotes the transformation of tourism consumption patterns and the sustainable development of the tourism industry. Therefore, under the leadership of the dual-carbon goal, how to incentivize and guide tourists to adopt low-carbon behaviors has become a key issue for the sustainable development of the tourism industry. By establishing a perfect incentive mechanism for low-carbon tourism, it can effectively mobilize the enthusiasm of all parties and promote the development of tourism consumption patterns in the direction of low-carbon, environmental protection and sustainability, thus contributing to the realization of the dual-carbon goal.

## **2.2 Challenges to the Tourism Industry in Meeting the Dual Carbon Goals**

The realization of the dual-carbon goals poses multiple challenges to the tourism industry, involving technological innovation, economic impacts, and social behavior change. Firstly, the technological challenge is the primary challenge in the implementation of the dual carbon goals. The development of the tourism industry is highly dependent on specific technical support, including clean energy technologies, energy-saving and emission reduction technologies, and resource recycling technologies. At present, the R&D and application of these technologies are still characterized by high costs, lack of technological maturity, and limited application scenarios. Secondly, the economic challenges cannot be ignored. The implementation of the dual-carbon target will

inevitably increase the operating costs of tourism enterprises, which will cause financial pressure on tourism enterprises and affect their competitiveness in the market. The lack of effective incentives and supportive economic policies will also constrain the motivation of tourism enterprises to invest in low-carbon technologies. Third, the challenge of social cognition should not be underestimated. Although public awareness of environmental protection is gradually increasing, the awareness and practice of realizing low-carbon behaviors in tourism consumption have yet to be improved. For example, the awareness of green consumption is weak and the phenomenon of wastefulness is serious [2]. How to lead the public's low-carbon living habits, low-carbon consumption habits and low-carbon values through education and publicity [3]; enhance tourists' awareness of tourism carbon footprint and guide them to adopt low-carbon behaviors in the tourism process is the challenge that tourism development must face under the dual-carbon goal. Fourth, the dual-carbon goal also requires the tourism industry to integrate low-carbon concepts into its planning and development, which requires the tourism industry to continuously innovate its management mode and service mode to achieve the purpose of reducing environmental impacts.

## **2.3 Opportunities for the Tourism Industry under the Dual Carbon Targets**

Led by the dual-carbon target, tourism, as a traditional high-carbon emission industry, faces an important opportunity for green transformation. The core of the dual-carbon goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pursue the harmonious coexistence of economic development and environmental protection. This goal provides new directions and opportunities for the sustainable development of the tourism industry, especially in terms of green tourism product development and low-carbon tourism model innovation. First, the setting of the dual-carbon target directly promotes the development of green tourism products. Tourism product development no longer pursues economic benefits alone, but needs to consider environmental impact and social responsibility comprehensively. This requires

the tourism industry to provide more green tourism products such as eco-tourism, rural tourism, and cultural tourism, which often focus on the protection of the natural environment and the sustainable development of local culture and communities. Second, the implementation of the dual-carbon target provides an opportunity for the tourism industry to innovate low-carbon tourism models. The tourism industry needs to explore new low-carbon tourism models, such as implementing green transportation and travel, providing carbon emission-based tourism product choices, and developing tourism carbon sink projects. Through these innovative modes, not only can the carbon footprint of tourism activities be reduced, but also the environmental awareness of tourists can be raised, realizing the green growth of the tourism industry. Third, the implementation of the dual-carbon target also provides a series of incentives and support for the tourism industry. The government not only incentivizes tourism enterprises to reduce carbon emissions through legislation and tax incentives, but also supports the development of green tourism products and services through financial subsidies and green certification. Fourth, the green transformation of the tourism industry by the dual-carbon target also promotes a change in consumer behavior. As public awareness of environmental protection increases, more and more tourists prioritize green tourism products that have a lower environmental impact when choosing tourism products. This change in consumer preferences provides a strong market impetus for the low-carbon development of the tourism industry.

### **3. Relevant Theoretical Foundations of Low-Carbon Tourism**

Low-carbon tourism has become a new hot issue of tourist behavior, with deeper practical value in the context of dual-carbon [4]. Low-carbon economic theory, green consumption theory, tourism behavior theory and incentive theory are the main theoretical foundations of low-carbon tourism research. Low-carbon economic theory provides theoretical support and practical guidance for the green transformation of the tourism industry, and under its theoretical framework, the development of low-carbon technologies, the

advocacy of green lifestyles, and the realization of sustainable economic growth have become a universal consensus. As a resource-consuming and energy-consuming industry, the tourism industry, under the guidance of the dual-carbon goal, should not only pursue the maximization of economic benefits, but also actively undertake the social responsibility of environmental protection. Green Consumption Theory is a framework for analyzing consumer behavior based on the concepts of environmental protection and sustainable development, and includes aspects such as consumers' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral intentions toward environmentally friendly products, and how these factors affect consumers' purchasing decisions and behaviors. The application of green consumption theory can help understand and stimulate tourists' low-carbon tourism behavior, and has a significant role in promoting the dissemination of environmental protection concepts, guiding consumer behavioral changes, and promoting the sustainable development of the tourism industry. Tourism behavior theories are crucial to understanding tourists' low-carbon behaviors and their influencing factors, and the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and the theory of values-beliefs-norms (VBN) can provide insights into the various factors influencing tourists' low-carbon behaviors. Its TPB model behavioral attitudes can reflect tourists' value judgments and personal preferences for low-carbon tourism, which directly determines their willingness to engage in low-carbon behaviors; subjective norms reflect the influence of the social environment on individual behaviors; and perceived behavioral control reflects tourists' perceptions of their own abilities. And the values of the VBN model add a deeper explanation of behavioral drivers. Values not only influence behavioral attitudes and subjective norms, but also further strengthen or weaken the motivation for behavior by influencing individuals' perceptions of the value of behavioral outcomes. Motivation theory is a theory about how individuals are internally motivated by external factors to facilitate the production of specific behaviors. The core idea of this theory is that an individual's external environment and intrinsic motivation can interact with each other to

jointly influence their behavioral choices. In the context of the dual-carbon goal, constructing a set of effective incentive mechanisms for tourists' low-carbon behaviors can effectively promote the low-carbon development of the tourism industry and make positive contributions to the realization of the dual-carbon goal.

#### **4. Tourist Low-Carbon Behavior Incentive Mechanism Construction**

##### **4.1 Construction of Incentive Mechanism at the Level of Tourism Enterprises**

In the context of the dual-carbon goal, tourism enterprises, as important service providers, should build effective incentive mechanisms to motivate tourists to adopt low-carbon behavior. Tourism enterprises through internal management, product design and service provision, build incentives for tourists to low-carbon behavior of the mechanism, not only can motivate tourists to low-carbon behavior, but also for the enterprise's own sustainable development to win a good social image and competitive advantage. And promote the low-carbon transformation and high-quality development of the tourism industry, contributing to the realization of the dual-carbon goal.

First, based on the perspective of internal management, establish a set of management system including incentive policy, supervision mechanism and staff training. Through internal incentive mechanisms, such as performance bonuses and employee benefits, employees are encouraged to convey the concept of low-carbon life to tourists during the service provision process and to provide suggestions that are in line with low-carbon principles. At the same time, tourism enterprises establish a strict supervision system to ensure the implementation effect of low-carbonization. It also carries out regular training of employees' low-carbon knowledge and skills in order to enhance their ability and level of promoting low-carbon behaviors in the service process.

Second, in terms of product design, tourism enterprises design and develop a series of low-carbon tourism products, including but not limited to eco-tourism products and rural tourism products. These products should adhere to low-carbon principles, such as the

use of environmentally friendly materials for tourism souvenirs, the use of solar energy or other renewable energy vehicles; promote the use of ecological toilets, environmentally friendly garbage cans, the rational design of solid waste and pollution treatment systems, and the construction of low-carbon tourism infrastructure [5]. Tourist attractions should actively apply new energy technologies to reduce fossil energy burning [6]. At the same time, the promotional materials of the products should also reflect the low-carbon concept, such as the use of electronic brochures to replace the traditional paper materials, which not only reduces carbon emissions, but also enhances the green image of the products.

Third, in terms of service provision, tourism enterprises incentivize tourists' low-carbon behaviors in various aspects such as incentive mechanism and carbon footprint sharing. Setting up a green choice incentive mechanism to provide low-carbon options when tourists choose services or products, such as choosing environmentally friendly accommodations, cycling tours, etc., and incentivizing such choices through some form of discounts or rewards; Carrying out a carbon footprint recording and sharing activity, encouraging tourists to record and share their carbon footprints in the course of their tours, and letting tourists visually see their own low-carbon contributions through digital means such as APPs, so as to motivate them to continue to adopt low-carbon behaviors; provide convenient carbon offset services, such as purchasing carbon emission rights or investing in carbon sinks for tourists to offset the carbon emissions generated during their tourism, so as to enhance tourists' motivation to implement low-carbon behaviors; strengthen cooperation with local environmental protection organizations or NGOs to jointly carry out environmental protection projects, such as planting trees, cleaning beaches, etc., so as to allow tourists to participate and also to experience the actual low-carbon effect.

##### **4.2 Construction of Incentive Mechanisms at the Government Level**

With the intensification of global climate change, carbon neutrality has become a global goal. In the tourism industry, as an important

source of carbon emissions, incentivizing tourists to adopt low-carbon behaviors is an important part of achieving the dual-carbon goal. The government is the advocate of low-carbon value and the leader of tourism value co-creation, and tourism enterprises and tourists are the practitioners of tourism low-carbon transformation and low-carbon society construction [7]. As a guide and regulator, the government plays a crucial role in promoting tourists' low-carbon behavior. By formulating policies, setting up incentives, and providing platforms, it can work closely with other stakeholders in the tourism industry to effectively promote the low-carbon development and sustainable development of the tourism industry and contribute to the realization of the dual-carbon goal.

First, formulate a clear policy on low-carbon tourism and conduct publicity and education through various channels to enhance tourists' awareness of environmental protection. By formulating carbon emission standards for the tourism industry, require tourism enterprises to implement and promote them. Through policy guidance, encourage tourism enterprises to develop more low-carbon and environmentally friendly tourism products and services, such as providing electric vehicle rentals and promoting green accommodations, so as to reduce carbon emissions from tourism activities. At the same time, through media publicity and public welfare activities, enhance public awareness of low-carbon tourism and encourage them to practice low-carbon behaviors in tourism.

Second, establish incentive mechanisms to encourage tourists and tourism enterprises to implement low-carbon behaviors by economic means. For example, through the establishment of a special fund for low-carbon tourism, incentives will be given to tourism enterprises and tourists who adopt carbon reduction measures such as tax incentives and green tourism points rewards.

Third, build a platform to strengthen the supervision of tourism enterprises. Establish an information platform to provide tourists with suggestions for calculating and reducing the carbon footprints of tourism activities, and at the same time provide tourism enterprises with a platform for exchanging low-carbon technologies and management. At the same time, strengthen the supervision of tourism

enterprises' compliance with policies related to low-carbon development, and penalize those enterprises that fail to implement them effectively, so as to serve as a warning and a push. Government departments can implement systematic supportive policies and supervisory measures by establishing a regular reward and punishment mechanism [8].

### **4.3 Construction of Incentive Mechanisms at the Social Level**

With the advancement of the dual-carbon target, the tourism industry, as one of the important carbon-emitting industries, has received widespread attention for its low-carbon development. The low-carbon transformation of tourism is not only a contribution to environmental protection, but also a requirement for high-quality development of the industry. In order to promote tourists' low-carbon behavior, it is particularly important to construct reasonable and effective incentive mechanisms.

First, recognize the role of social forces in promoting tourists' low-carbon behavior. Social forces include the government, non-governmental organizations, industry associations, enterprises and the public, which have an irreplaceable role in the promotion and practice of low-carbon tourism. The government can incentivize and guide the low-carbon behaviors of enterprises and individuals through legislative guidance, financial subsidies, tax concessions, etc.; NGOs and industry associations can raise the public's low-carbon awareness through publicity, education and organizing activities, etc.; enterprises can attract and satisfy consumer demand by providing low-carbon tourism products and services; and the public is the direct beneficiary and important promoter of low-carbon tourism.

Second, the social level incentive mechanism is a systematic project. In terms of government guidance, it is important to set up green labels for tourism, certify those enterprises that implement low-carbon operations, and encourage tourism enterprises to take positive actions through policy incentives and honorary certifications. At the same time, simplify the certification process for low-carbon tourism products and reduce compliance costs for enterprises. In terms of

publicity and education, raise public awareness of low-carbon tourism through multi-channel and multi-form publicity and education activities. For example, producing public service advertisements, organizing public service activities, and launching low-carbon tourism challenges on social media can effectively increase public participation and awareness. In terms of incentives, provide a series of incentives for tourists, for example, incentivize tourists to choose low-carbon tourism services and earn tourism points to offset the consumption generated during the trip through point rewards, discounts and special experiences [9]. In terms of multi-sectoral cooperation, a multi-party platform including the government, tourism associations, enterprises and NGOs should be established to collaborate in promoting low-carbon actions in the tourism industry. Through this platform, resources from all parties can be coordinated to jointly contribute to the development of low-carbon tourism. In terms of long-term planning and technical support, formulate clear plans and targets for the development of low-carbon tourism, and set up a sustainable monitoring and evaluation system to ensure the effectiveness of the implementation of measures and the realization of targets; encourage and support the adoption of new technologies and new energy sources, e.g. the use of new-energy vehicles, solar energy, wind energy and other clean energy sources, in order to reduce carbon emissions in the tourism sector.

## **5. Optimization Strategies for Tourists' Low-Carbon Behavior Incentive Mechanism**

### **5.1 Optimization Strategies at the Level of Tourism Enterprises**

In the context of promoting the realization of the dual-carbon goal, the low-carbon development of tourism, as an important source of carbon emissions, is particularly important. As an important part of the industry, tourism enterprises play a key role in enhancing the incentive effect of tourists' low-carbon behavior. Under the deployment of the carbon neutral strategy, the development of low-carbon tourism will usher in a new phase [10]. Based on this, tourism enterprises can

make comprehensive efforts from multiple dimensions by establishing and improving strategies such as policy standards, product innovation, technical cooperation, incentive mechanisms, and education and publicity, in order to further enhance the incentive effect of tourists' low-carbon behaviors and contribute to the realization of the dual-carbon goal.

First, formulate and improve corporate policies and standards that are consistent with the dual-carbon goal. Through the development of policies including, but not limited to, carbon emissions measurement, reporting and emissions reduction target setting, companies can establish a clear direction for low-carbon development and use it to guide the behavior of employees and tourists. For example, hotels can set operational standards for energy saving and emission reduction, monitor energy savings, and set incentives to encourage the practice.

Second, attract environmentally conscious tourists through product innovation. For example, developing tourism products with environmental protection as the theme, such as eco-tourism routes and low-carbon tourism activities, can directly stimulate tourists' desire for low-carbon tourism. At the same time, by providing tourists with low-carbon tourism products, companies can also shape their corporate image and enhance the green attributes of their brands.

Third, establish a good cooperative relationship with other stakeholders, such as the government and scientific research institutions, to jointly develop technologies and products that support low-carbon tourism. For example, cooperating with scientific research institutions to develop alternative energy sources and clean energy utilization for tourism not only reduces carbon emissions from business operations, but also attracts more tourists who focus on sustainable tourism experiences through the use of new technologies.

Fourth, promote low-carbon behaviors among tourists through incentives and strengthen education and awareness-raising on low-carbon tourism for tourists. This includes, but is not limited to, rewarding tourists for their eco-friendly behavior, such as giving back through points, coupons, and small gifts. For example, hotels can provide points rewards

for tourists who repeatedly choose environmentally friendly options, and these points can be used to obtain services such as food and beverage discounts and room upgrades as an incentive for repeated low-carbon behaviors. Popularize the knowledge of low-carbon tourism through various channels, such as tourism promotional materials, online platforms, and on-site signage, to raise tourists' awareness of environmental protection. At the same time, educational activities, such as pre-tourism workshops on low-carbon tourism, allow tourists to build awareness of green tourism before traveling.

## **5.2 Optimization Strategies at the Government Level**

In the context of the dual-carbon goal, the government has an indispensable role in optimizing the incentive mechanism for tourists' low-carbon behavior. By formulating reasonable policies, providing economic incentives, guiding public awareness and other multifaceted measures, it can effectively promote the low-carbon development of the tourism industry and realize the goal of sustainable development.

First, formulate a clear policy framework for low-carbon tourism, including but not limited to carbon emission limits, carbon footprint standards and a low-carbon tourism certification system. Through policy guidance, it provides tourism enterprises with guidelines to follow in implementing low-carbon behaviors, and at the same time provides tourists with standard references for low-carbon tourism behaviors. For example, we can learn from international successful cases, such as carbon footprint certification and low carbon tourism destination certification, and make localized adaptation and promotion in combination with the actual domestic situation.

Second, incentivize tourism enterprises to invest in low-carbon technologies and projects through financial subsidies, tax incentives, financial loans and other economic means. For example, tourism enterprises investing in renewable energy, waste recycling, energy-saving and emission reduction technologies are given a certain percentage of tax breaks or subsidies to encourage them to reduce carbon emissions in

the production and operation process.

Third, explore the establishment of incentive mechanisms to enhance public awareness and participation in environmental protection. For example, the "Carbon Neutral Points Reward Program" encourages tourists to accumulate points by purchasing carbon offsets and participating in low-carbon tourism activities, which can be used to exchange for tourism discounts and souvenirs. In this way, tourists will be motivated to take low-carbon actions during their travels. Strengthen publicity and education on low-carbon tourism. Popularize the knowledge of low-carbon tourism through media campaigns, education courses and public welfare activities, so that tourists can understand the impact of their travel actions on the environment and provide practical and feasible suggestions on low-carbon tourism, such as reducing the carbon emissions of transportation, choosing low-carbon means of transport, and using sustainable energy.

Fourthly, cross-sectoral cooperation should be strengthened, resources and information should be integrated, and an information-sharing platform should be set up to provide tourism enterprises and tourists with information on the latest developments, technical support and services in low-carbon tourism, so as to ensure effective implementation of policies and transparent sharing of information.

## **5.3 Optimization Strategies at the Social Level**

In the context of realizing the dual-carbon goal, tourism, as an important service industry, its low-carbon development is not only a need for the transformation and upgrading of the industry itself, but also a promotion of the overall high-quality development of society. Optimization strategies at the social level are an important part of incentivizing tourists' low-carbon behaviors. Through the participation and promotion of social forces, we can build a low-carbon tourism incentive mechanism with the participation of the whole society and efficient operation, and then effectively promote the green, healthy and sustainable development of the tourism industry.

First, strengthen low-carbon publicity and education in society, and enhance low-carbon tourism education and training. Through

multi-channel publicity and education, improve the public's environmental awareness and recognition of low-carbon life. For example, the importance, practicality and urgency of low-carbon tourism, as well as specific low-carbon behavioral initiatives, such as reducing the use of disposable items and choosing green travel, can be popularized through social media, public service announcements and community lectures. Train practitioners in the tourism industry in low-carbon concepts and operational skills, and improve their environmental awareness and operational capabilities so that they can actively publicize and promote low-carbon tourism behaviors to tourists in the course of their services.

Secondly, establish a perfect evaluation and incentive mechanism for low-carbon tourism and improve relevant laws and regulations to provide legal protection for low-carbon tourism. Carry out low-carbon tourism evaluation through a third-party organization, make the evaluation results transparent and open, and give rewards and recognition to well-performing tourism enterprises and tourists, such as providing tourism points and green channel services. At the same time, implement appropriate punitive measures for tourism enterprises that fail to meet the standards in order to create a sharp incentive contrast. Improve relevant laws and regulations to provide legal protection for low-carbon tourism. Formulate and improve relevant laws and regulations on environmental protection and energy conservation and emission reduction in the tourism industry to ensure that the implementation of low-carbon tourism is legally enforceable, and at the same time supervise and manage the environmental protection behavior of tourism enterprises through legal means.

Third, promote the participation of social forces in the research and development and promotion of low-carbon tourism products. Encourage and support NGOs, social enterprises, volunteer organizations and other social forces to develop new low-carbon tourism products and service modes, such as providing low-carbon tourism brochures and green transportation leasing services, so as to satisfy tourists' needs for low-carbon travel and experience.

## 6. Conclusion

The study shows that subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral attitudes are important and sufficient conditions to promote the implementation of low-carbon tourism behaviors among tourists. While low carbon values, ethical norms, behavioral attitudes, and perceived behavioral control are necessary conditions for implementing low carbon tourism behaviors. Improving tourists' low carbon tourism cognitive level and their correct perception of the impact of low carbon behavior is the key to promoting their low carbon behavior. Guiding tourists to establish correct low-carbon values and enhancing their low-carbon tourism cognition through education and behavioral training will in turn influence their behavioral attitudes and actual behaviors. At the same time, tourists' low-carbon tourism behaviors are motivated by enhancing ethical norms, improving subjective norms and increasing perceived behavioral control. Future research should strengthen the combination of theoretical models and actual cases, and explore the low-carbon development path of tourism in depth through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research. Meanwhile, the summarization and promotion of successful cases should be strengthened to provide the industry with feasible low-carbon development models and experiences.

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