Study on Factors Influencing Tourist Behavior Intentions in Sports Tourism in Ganzi Prefecture

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Abstract: *Sports tourism, as a vital vehicle for integrating culture and tourism, plays a pivotal role in the sustainable development of ethnic regions. Taking Ganzi Prefecture as the research subject, this study employs the Theory of Planned Behavior. Through questionnaire surveys, 488 valid samples were collected. Structural equation modeling was applied to empirically analyze the factors influencing sports tourism visitors' behavioral intentions. This provides theoretical foundations and practical insights for optimizing sports tourism products and implementing targeted marketing strategies in Ganzi Prefecture. The findings reveal that the attractiveness of destination sports resources, the integration of ethnic culture, and the completeness of infrastructure positively influence visitors' behavioral intentions.*

Keywords: *Sports Tourism, Behavioral Intentions, Influencing Factors, Theory of Planned Behavior*

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Problem Statement

In recent years, the national government has successively issued the "14th Five-Year Plan for Sports Development" and the "Implementation Opinions on Promoting Consumption Expansion and Quality Improvement to Accelerate the Formation of a Strong Domestic Market," driving the deep integration of sports and tourism. In 2024, Ganzi Prefecture welcomed 43.8509 million tourist visits, a 5.95% year-on-year increase, with tourism revenue reaching 48.15 billion yuan, up 6.26% year-on-year, demonstrating robust growth momentum in the tourism sector [1]. Endowed with unique natural features like snow-capped mountains and grasslands, as well as ethnic sports resources such as horse racing festivals and Guozhuang dances, Ganzi Prefecture has positioned sports tourism as a new engine for regional economic growth. However, the current sports tourism sector in Ganzi faces the challenge of "overemphasizing resource development while neglecting behavioral guidance." Findings from this survey indicate that the repeat visitor rate remains below 20%, and the willingness to recommend the destination is relatively low.

Ethnic sports tourism serves as a vital vehicle for industrial integration. Lan Jiangying (2025) notes that the ethnic sports tourism market represents a comprehensive development model integrating sports, culture, and tourism. Given its broad scope, it requires in-depth exploration to attract potential consumers, showcase ethnic and regional identities, and establish a holistic tourism framework. This "sports + culture + tourism" integration model not only drives tourism economic growth but also promotes the inheritance and development of traditional culture, demonstrating the dual economic and social value potential of sports tourism [2]. The "sports+" model further expands the industrial boundaries of sports tourism. Wang Sulan (2023), using Taizhou City as a case study, analyzed the new momentum large-scale sporting events bring to tourism industry planning under the "Sports+" model. She emphasized that sports tourism has become a new growth point in the tourism market, requiring scientific development through innovative operational models, capital infusion, and talent cultivation. This reflects the trend of deep integration between sports tourism, urban development, and industrial planning [3].

However, research on the "resource-behavior" transmission mechanism in sports tourism scenarios within ethnic regions remains incomplete, particularly in its insufficient consideration of the interactive effects between plateau environments and ethnic cultures. Based on this, the core question of this paper is: What are the key factors influencing the behavioral intentions of sports tourism visitors in Ganzi

Prefecture?

1.2 Literature Review and Research Positioning

1.2.1 Research Progress on Sports Tourism Behavioral Intentions

Mountain adventure tourism, characterized by high challenge and experiential value, has seen behavioral intention studies focusing on the interaction between destination image, risk perception, and emotions. Song Hengyi and Ma Teng (2024) conducted field research at Siguniang Mountain in Xiaoqin County, Sichuan Province. Based on affective evaluation theory, they constructed a "destination image-risk perception-affect-behavioral intention" model. Empirical analysis revealed that the destination image of high-altitude adventure tourism exerts a significant positive direct effect on behavioral intention and indirectly influences it through two pathways. Risk perception and affect play dual mediating roles within the model. This study first clarifies the negative moderation mechanism of risk perception in high-altitude adventure scenarios, offering new insights for safety management and emotional guidance in high-risk sports tourism destinations [4].

Gong Jian et al. (2022) used Heizhugou Scenic Area as a case study, examining mountain adventure tourism satisfaction from a visitor perspective. They categorized satisfaction into five dimensions: transportation, price perception, tourism resources, scenic area facilities, and tourism services. Using structural equation modeling, they tested the relationship between these dimensions and post-trip behavioral intentions. Findings revealed that tourism services and scenic area facilities exerted significant positive effects on post-trip behavioral intentions, while transportation and tourism resources showed no significant direct impact. This study illuminated the "functional experience-psychological perception-behavioral decision" transmission logic in mountain adventure tourism, highlighting that infrastructure completeness and service professionalism are key to enhancing visitor revisit and recommendation intentions [5].

Li Jinglu et al. (2023) segmented ski tourists based on lifestyle dimensions, categorizing samples into four types through cluster analysis: Exploration-Experience Seekers, Independent and Calm, Affluent Elites, and Ambitious Strivers. Significant differences were observed in behavioral intention scores across these sports tourism segments, with the Ambitious Strivers scoring highest and the Independent and Cool-Headed scoring lowest. Based on these findings, the study proposes recommendations including differentiated product design, tiered pricing structures, and establishing heterogeneous outreach channels. This research provides a segmentation basis for differentiated product design and targeted marketing in ski tourism destinations [6].

Yang Yuzhe (2024) examined 12 domestic sports towns to explore the relationship between visitor perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. Findings revealed that emotional value exerted the strongest influence on satisfaction, which positively impacted behavioral intentions. Perceived value partially mediated this relationship through satisfaction [7]. Zhao Yang (2024) examined the impact of sports tourism service quality on visitor experience quality and behavioral intentions. Results indicate that the "reliability" and "responsiveness" dimensions of service quality significantly and positively influence experience quality, which in turn positively drives behavioral intentions [8].

1.2.2 Unique Characteristics of Sports Tourism in Ethnic Regions

Sports tourism resources in ethnic regions are not merely singular sports elements but rather a deeply integrated "trinity" of sports activities, ethnic culture, and ecological environments, forming a distinctive resource system. These resources often possess irreplicable regional and cultural attributes:

First, the mutual integration of sports activities and ethnic culture. The core resource is "ethnic traditional sports," which often originate from ethnic production and daily life (e.g., Horse racing, Wrestling) or religious rituals (e.g., Guozhuang dance). Their rules, attire, and equipment all carry ethnic historical memory, rather than being simple transplants of universal sports events.

Second, the mandatory reliance on the ecological environment. Ethnic regions are predominantly located in ecologically sensitive zones like plateaus, mountains, and grasslands (e.g., Ganzi Prefecture, Qiandongnan Prefecture). Sports tourism activities (e.g., high-altitude trekking, grassland cycling, mountain exploration) exhibit extreme dependence on natural environments: landscapes serve both as activity backdrops and experiential cores. Without ecological foundations like "high-altitude snow-capped mountains" or "karst topography," these sports experiences lose their distinctiveness.

In summary, this paper constructs a destination attribute index encompassing the three dimensions

of "nature-culture-facilities." By integrating sports tourism resources in ethnic regions, it conducts an in-depth study on the influencing factors and their respective magnitudes affecting sports tourism behavioral intentions. This research provides a theoretical basis for the development of sports tourism and the stable economic growth of Ganzi Prefecture.

2. Theoretical Framework and Research Hypotheses

2.1 Core Conceptual Definitions

Sports Tourism: Refers to a form of tourism where travelers participate in or spectate sports activities as the core experience, combined with natural sightseeing and cultural immersion (e.g., snow mountain trekking in Ganzi Prefecture, sightseeing at the Litang Horse Racing Festival).

In economics, "behavioral intention" denotes the action patterns and intentions exhibited by customers after purchasing a specific product or service. Zhao Luo (2019), studying Hohhot City, found that ethnic cultural imagery and tourism service quality positively influence tourists' emotional imagery, overall city imagery, and behavioral intention [9]. Zhao Yao (2024) employed quantitative statistical models to examine the relationship between border tourism motivation, perceived value, and behavioral intention, proposing development recommendations such as improving service facilities and innovating products to provide strategic references for border tourism development [10]. Lu Li (2020) employed factor analysis and structural equation modeling to systematically explore visitor behavior at Wudang Mountain, revealing relatively high levels of repeat visit intention and recommendation intention among tourists [11].

In summary, research on tourism behavioral intentions spans a broad scope and finds extensive application within the tourism industry. The vast majority of academic studies indicate that visitors' willingness to revisit a destination and their inclination to recommend it to others are core determinants of their behavioral intentions. This project proposes to evaluate visitors' willingness to participate in tourism activities based on sports tourism in Ganzi Prefecture, with "willingness to revisit" and "willingness to recommend" as the primary evaluation criteria.

2.2 Research Hypotheses

Sports Resource Attractiveness: The more distinctive Ganzi Prefecture's specialty offerings—such as skiing and high-altitude cycling—the stronger visitors' sports tourism behavioral intentions (H1).

Ethnic Cultural Integration: The closer the integration between sports activities and ethnic culture, the stronger visitors' behavioral intentions (H2).

Infrastructure Development: The more convenient transportation, medical services, and accommodation facilities, the stronger visitors' behavioral intentions (H3).

3. Research Design

3.1 Data Sources and Sample Selection

This study selected three representative scenic areas within Ganzi Prefecture—Daocheng Yading Scenic Area, Mugecuo Scenic Area, and Hailuogou Scenic Area—as case sites. Questionnaires were primarily distributed to visitors who had visited these three scenic areas. Data collection was conducted through on-site questionnaire distribution, with a total of 600 questionnaires distributed and 546 returned. Among these, 488 were valid questionnaires, yielding a validity rate of 81.3%. Sample Characteristics: Ages ranged from 18 to 55 years old (92% of respondents), predominantly young and middle-aged adults.

3.2 Variable Measurement

All scales were adapted from established questionnaires and tailored to the specific context of Ganzi Prefecture, employing a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

3.3 Analytical Methods

SPSS 23.0 was used for reliability and validity testing along with descriptive statistics. AMOS 26.0 was employed to construct structural equation models (SEM) for hypothesis testing.

4. Empirical Results Analysis

4.1 Reliability and Validity Testing

Reliability: Cronbach's α coefficients for all variables exceeded 0.7, indicating good reliability. As shown in Table 1:

Table 1 Clonbach's coefficients for each variable

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of item	Total Cronbach's Alpha
Attractiveness	0.872	3	
Ethnic Cultures	0.861	3	0.832
Infrastructure Completeness	0.842	3	
Behavioral Intention	0.872	3	

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for Attractiveness is 0.872, exceeding 0.7. With a total of 3 items, this indicates high consistency within this section of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for Ethnic Cultures is 0.861 > 0.7, with a total of 3 items, indicating high consistency in this section of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for Infrastructure Completeness is 0.842 > 0.7, with a total of 3 items, indicating high consistency in this section of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for Behavioral Intention is 0.872 > 0.7, with a total of 3 items, indicating high consistency within this section of the questionnaire. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for all variables is 0.832 > 0.7, demonstrating satisfactory overall reliability.

Validity: A model was constructed based on the correlations among variables, yielding model fit metrics. The results show:

Table 2 Fit index of model

Reference Indicator	x2/df	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	NFI	IFI
statistical value	1.364	0.978	0.964	0.027	0.978	0.994
Reference value	<3	>0.9	>0.9	<0.08	>0.9	>0.9
Conclusion	Qualified	Qualified	Qualified	Qualified	Qualified	Qualified

As shown in Table 2, the x^2/df value is 1.364, which meets the fit criteria when compared to the reference value. The GIF value is 0.978, which meets the fit criteria when compared to the reference value. The AGFI value is 0.964 > 0.9, meeting the fit criteria. The RMSEA value is 0.027 < 0.08, meeting the fit criteria. The NFI value is 0.978 > 0.9, meeting the fit criterion. The IFI value is 0.994 > 0.9, meeting the fit criterion. Thus, the model fit for behavioral intention is good, demonstrating strong construct validity.

Table 3 Convergence validity of each variable

Path relationship			Estimate	CR	AVE
AT3	<---	Attractiveness	0.851		
AT2	<---	Attractiveness	0.801	0.872	0.695
AT1	<---	Attractiveness	0.848		
EC3	<---	Ethnic Cultures	0.803		
EC2	<---	Ethnic Cultures	0.825	0.862	0.675
EC1	<---	Ethnic Cultures	0.836		
IC3	<---	Infrastructure Completeness	0.833		
IC2	<---	Infrastructure Completeness	0.788	0.843	0.641
IC1	<---	Infrastructure Completeness	0.780		
BI1	<---	Behavioral Intention	0.811		
BI2	<---	Behavioral Intention	0.818	0.872	0.695
BI3	<---	Behavioral Intention	0.871		

As shown in Table 3, the first-order model for Attractiveness exhibits a CR value of 0.872 > 0.7 and an AVE value of 0.695 > 0.5, indicating strong convergent validity. Similarly, the first-order model for Ethnic Cultures demonstrates a CR value of 0.862 > 0.7 and an AVE value of 0.675 > 0.5, confirming

robust convergent validity. The first-order model for Infrastructure Completeness exhibits a CR value of 0.843 > 0.7 and an AVE value of 0.641 > 0.5, indicating good convergent validity. Similarly, the first-order model for Behavioral Intention shows a CR value of 0.872 > 0.7 and an AVE value of 0.695 > 0.5, demonstrating good convergent validity.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing Results

The SEM model fits well (χ^2/df=2.89, CFI=0.95, AGFI=0.924, RMSEA=0.062, NFI=0.951, IFI=0.967). As shown in Figure 1:
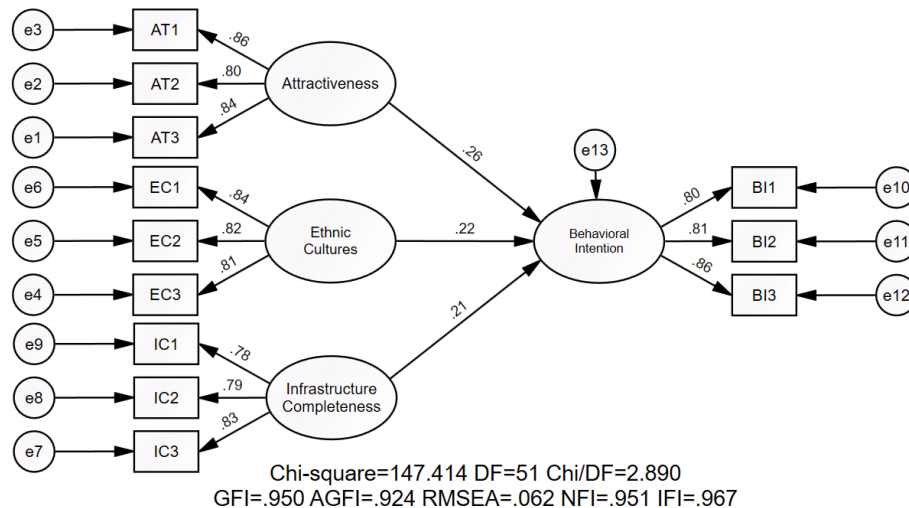

Chi-square=147.414 DF=51 Chi/DF=2.890
GFI=.950 AGFI=.924 RMSEA=.062 NFI=.951 IFI=.967

Figure 1 Structural equation model

The attractiveness of sports resources (β=0.26, p<0.001), the integration of ethnic cultures (β=0.22, p<0.001), and the completeness of infrastructure (β=0.21, p<0.001) all positively influence sports tourists' behavioral intentions, confirming H1, H2, and H3.

5. Conclusions and Implications

5.1 Conclusions

The appeal of sports resources exerted the strongest influence on sports tourists' behavioral intentions (β=0.26), validating the reality that "unique natural endowments constitute the core competitiveness of sports tourism in Ganzi Prefecture." The significant impact of ethnic cultural integration (β=0.22) indicates that incorporating distinctive ethnic sports elements into tourism experiences can effectively enhance visitors' emotional identification, further demonstrating that "cultural empowerment" in ethnic regions can promote the development of sports tourism in Ganzi Prefecture. The completeness of infrastructure (β=0.21) significantly influences sports tourists' behavioral intentions, indicating that transportation, medical services, and accommodation also play crucial roles in developing sports tourism in Ganzi Prefecture.

5.2 Practical Implications

5.2.1 Product Development: Strengthen "Sports + Culture" Integration

The government designs differentiated sports routes (such as beginner hiking trails and professional mountaineering routes) to highlight the uniqueness of resources. It creates "competition + folk culture" products, such as adding Tibetan opera performances and thangka painting experiences during horse racing festivals to enhance cultural integration. For winter tourism development, the government should build a comprehensive product system centered on "snow sports + folk culture + wellness tourism" to activate the off-season market. The government integrates Ganzi Prefecture's snow and ice resources to develop winter sports like skiing, ice climbing, and snow trekking, while improving supporting facilities including ski lifts, magic carpets, snowmaking equipment, and professional rescue systems. Combining these with folk festivals like Tibetan New Year and pilgrimage gatherings, the

government offers package tours featuring "winter sports + hot spring wellness + cultural experiences + stargazing photography."

5.2.2 Facility Optimization: Enhancing Travel and Safety Experiences

The government will accelerate the expansion of expressway coverage throughout Garze Prefecture and actively advance the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway. By establishing a convenient "fast-access" system through expressways and railways, it will enhance transportation infrastructure to better support sports tourism.This will provide a solid foundation for visitors to deeply engage in sports tourism activities, empowering the development of sports tourism in Ganzi Prefecture.

The government has established a three-tier medical emergency network spanning scenic areas, townships, and county seats, equipped with specialized high-altitude sickness treatment devices. Additional emergency stations have been deployed in popular sports tourism zones, complemented by dedicated emergency drills. In collaboration with insurance providers, tailored sports tourism insurance products have been introduced. Public awareness campaigns on high-altitude health precautions are being rolled out to visitors. These comprehensive measures fortify medical safety defenses, ensuring robust safeguards for the development of sports tourism. This comprehensive medical safety framework safeguards sports tourism development.

The government must strengthen market oversight, particularly in the accommodation sector, focusing on three objectives—stabilizing prices, increasing supply, and improving quality—to resolve summer accommodation challenges. During peak seasons, the government implements a dual-control mechanism of "government-guided pricing plus maximum price caps," requiring all accommodation providers to display prices clearly. The government has established an abnormal price alert mechanism and a blacklist system to strictly investigate malicious price gouging. The government should repurpose idle properties owned by government agencies, enterprises, and institutions to create short-term emergency accommodations. It must encourage compliant homestays and budget hotel chains to expand their operations to increase lodging supply. Simultaneously, businesses should leverage digital platforms to publish real-time "accommodation and parking availability charts," guiding tourists to book off-peak and in alternative areas.

Acknowledgement

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