A Study on College Students' Motivation of Searching for "Travel Partners" to Travel Together

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Abstract. The rise of the Internet has made the forms of youth tourism more diverse, and child travel is a new type of companion travel in recent years. This paper studies the composition and characteristics of college students' group companion travel motivation through in-depth interviews, and summarizes their travel behavior and psychological motivation driven by different needs. This study reviews the previous research on the motivation of Internet-based self-help travel, and finds that there are differences in the ways of obtaining travel companions between child travel and Internet-based self-help travel. At last, the study points out the "emotional hidden trouble" behind the child-friendly tourism, and looks forward to the innovation that the tourism virtual community platform can make to meet the trend of child-friendly tourism, so as to ensure the safety and convenience of child-friendly tourism.

Keywords: Socialization, travel, motivation.

1. Research background

Since 2023, the word "partner" has gradually become popular on the Internet. This social way of pursuing freshness and accuracy and efficiency has been welcomed and sought after by young people. Based on this, as an online hot word, the retrieval popularity of the partner in social media platforms continues to climb. At present, the number of related topics in Tik Tok has exceeded 10 billion times. Xiaohongshu's topic about "a new social relationship partner" has been read by 19.84 million people. At present, partner socialization has covered many types, such as study promotion, bodybuilding and self-discipline, sharing campus life, and watching dramas in idolize. At the same time, the survey of DT Research Institute shows that more than half of contemporary young people have at least one "partner". As a new social relationship, partners have played an important role in the lives of young people.

In this study, we will position the perspective of college students' tourism. The tourism market potential of college students is huge. At present, China's tourism industry is in a period of high-quality development, and the tourism data of the first three quarters of 2023 released by the government work report have increased significantly compared with last year. The scale and usage rate of online travel booking users released by CNNIC in 2023 have also increased significantly compared with previous years. According to Analysys data, free travellers account for more than 50% of the tourism forms in China, and free travel has become the mainstream of the current tourism forms. According to Alipay data, 71.6% of the 30 million students in the country have a strong desire to travel, and college students' travel has become the norm, and the student party has great travel potential.

Under the background of "internet plus Tourism", it is convenient for college students to travel. CNNIC shows that college students are the largest user groups in online search and social networking. Moreover, students have more free time, rich off-campus life and high degree of freedom in consumption decision-making, which further promotes the tourism boom of college students.

At present, college students' social interaction is gradually turning to the mode of pursuing freshness and high efficiency, with low social stickiness, mainly based on personal needs, independent of each other, and the same without sticking. Due to the inevitable inequality of costs such as time and money among acquaintances, the phenomenon of finding peers in social media after determining the travel destination is rich and diverse. Therefore, focusing on this emerging phenomenon, we combine the social phenomenon of college students' partners with the form of

tourism, and then explore the intrinsic motivation of college students looking for strange tourism partners.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Research background

2.1.1 Partner

The word "partner" comes from "partner". It refers to people's partnership in a vertical subdivision in social interaction. A partner is between an acquaintance and a friend, which is more temporary than an ordinary friend relationship, but more intimate than an acquaintance who just knows and nods. It is defined by scholars as "precise companionship with vertical subdivision" [1]. Some scholars combine partner culture with "weak relationship theory" and think that partner culture is a form of social presentation under weak relationship. In contrast to the strong relationship with close interpersonal relations and strong emotional ties, the weak relationship represents people's low emotional investment in the relationship and the reduction of the frequency of interaction between people. In the partner culture, people will look for exclusive partners in this field based on certain needs, maintain their relationship in this fixed activity or scene, provide necessary help and support, and even have emotional interaction. However, this relationship will break with the collapse or transformation of the scene, so people can easily get out of the partner relationship.

2.1.2 Internet Companion Travel and "Travel Partner"

Internet companion travel is a concept that has been involved in tourism research in recent years. It refers to the travel companion relationship based on online travel platform or virtual community to find travel lovers, plan trips together, share travel information and share travel expenses. Researchers believe that "companion travel" in tourism virtual community is a new type of travel companion relationship established by means of virtual community platform under the influence of self-help tourism concept [2]. It is worth noting that Internet companion travel is also considered by domestic researchers as the offline participation behavior of users in tourism virtual communities.

There is no strict definition of tourism partners in the academic field. It is the basic consensus for tourism partners to spend the whole or part of the journey together and share the travel expenses equally. In this study, the tourism partner is defined as a shallow social relationship formed through various channels in the tourism scene. Access to tourism partners is not limited to the virtual community on the Internet. Searching based on existing common social relations (such as acquaintance introduction, finding partners on campus intranet) and meeting temporary partners on the way are all access to tourism partners. Partners can screen each other, share travel information and plan their trips before traveling; Provide companionship, interaction and sharing expenses during travel; After traveling, the relationship between partners may end, continue, or even upgrade to intimate relationships such as friends and lovers. In addition, due to the innate meaning of "travel partner", travel partner belongs to a kind of travel companion relationship under self-help travel, and it can not form a travel partner relationship in the strict sense of "traveling with a group" registered by travel agencies.

2.1.3 Motivation and needs

Motivation is the internal driving force for a person to carry out a certain behavior, which needs to be stimulated by certain factors to stimulate and influence a person's behavior. Any behavior is based on motivation. The root cause of motivation lies in people's deep-seated needs, which should be met in social interaction because of people's sociality. Under the background of tourism, social interaction has been formed by looking for tourism partners and establishing the relationship between them. Scholar Lu jun Su pointed out in his research on the emotional adjustment of traveling companions that the existence of traveling companions has an important influence on the emotional

arousal of tourists. When traveling companions exist, tourists' emotions are more fully aroused and satisfied, which shows the needs of individuals for traveling companions.

The basic view of this study is that people's diverse needs stimulate the motivation of traveling together and stimulate people to actively find "travel partners" through various channels to travel together to meet their own needs. This study will explore the internal needs reflected behind the behavior of individuals looking for travel partners, and summarize the motivation of college students looking for travel partners.

2.2. Research Status

2.2.1 Research on Tourism Motivation

In the field of tourism motivation research, Dann pointed out that tourism motivation is a physiological or psychological need or desire, which can stimulate tourism behavior and tourism activities. Xie Yanjun, a Chinese scholar, pointed out that tourism motivation is the internal motivation that is stimulated by tourism needs, influenced by social concepts and norms, and leads to specific tourism behaviors. Dann creatively applies the push-pull theoretical model to the research field of tourism motivation, which is divided into two aspects: thrust and pull. Among them, the motivation to promote tourism is a variety of tourism needs in people's hearts; The motivation to promote tourism is the charm of the tourist destination itself [3]. Later, Gonth supplemented and expanded Dane's concept of pulling force, and built a tourism motivation model to cover the tourism motivation caused by tourists' mastery of the relevant information of tourist destinations [4]. These tourist information not only includes information about tourist destinations, but also includes information about travel modes, accommodation information, unique route information and help channels. Yu Pengyan, a domestic scholar, based on the motivation model, takes the uniqueness of the behavior of traveling together as the external cause and the psychological and physical needs of tourists as the thrust factors, and launches a research on the motivation of college students to participate in traveling together.

2.2.2 Research on the Use Motivation of Virtual Tourism Community

Youcheng Wang creatively constructed a demand model for community members' participation based on their perception of community functions, including functional needs, social needs and psychological needs [5]. Among them, functional requirements refer to inquiring about the relevant effective information of tourism, trading virtual products, physical products and tourism services, and getting relaxation, convenience or entertainment without the limitation of time and place; Social needs include trusting members and collectives in the community, making friends with the same tourism interests, and sharing and exchanging tourism experiences and information; Psychological needs include building community identity and sense of belonging, finding oneself and escaping from real life. Wang's demand model of community members' participation focuses on the online interaction of members of tourism virtual community, which has certain reference significance for the subsequent research on the motivation of traveling together in virtual community [6].

Some domestic scholars regard internet self-help tourism as an offline participation behavior of members of tourism virtual community, and study the influencing factors of this participation behavior. Hu Xianghong and Zhang Gaojun proved that interpersonal relationships in tourism virtual communities are positively related to the tourism willingness of community members through empirical research [7].

2.2.3 Internet self-help travel motivation classification

With the development of tourism virtual community, the offline self-help travel behavior of community members, which takes virtual community as the access channel for travel companions, has entered the researchers' sight, which has given birth to the research on the motivation of Internet self-help travel. In this subdivision, the companion motivation hidden behind the self-help travel motivation is included in the research category, and the self-help travel motivation and companion motivation are measured separately, and finally the companion self-help travel motivation is obtained.

This study sorts out the predecessors' classification of Internet travel motivation.

Miao Xueling and Bao Jigang divided the motivation of traveling together into safety motivation, sharing motivation and economic motivation. Among them, safety is the primary motivation, pointing out the behavioral mutual assistance and psychological care brought by companions when walking; Sharing motivation refers to travelers' fear of loneliness and desire for communication within the group, as well as the excitement brought by companionship; The economic motivation is to reduce the personal cost of eating, living and playing, and at the same time experience more projects with less money [2].

Zhu Feng classified this kind of motivation as interpersonal communication, profound experience, low cost, pressure release and flexible time, among which "profound experience" and "flexible time" are different from previous studies. The profound experience means that the traveling companions choose senior travel enthusiasts, or companions with the same interest orientation in tourism segmentation, and carry out unique travel experiences, such as adventure, skiing, special theme travel and so on. Releasing pressure is the purpose of choosing a strange travel companion instead of an acquaintance travel companion. Flexible time is a big advantage of internet travel compared with acquaintance travel. The large-scale group of the Internet makes it easier for partners to find a travel companion who coincides with their free time [8].

Yu Pengyan takes college students, a special member of the tourism virtual community, as the research object, and analyzes the motives and obstacles of college students traveling together in the tourism virtual community. This study subdivides the people who travel together on the Internet and focuses on the college students [9].

Liu Huigan applied the demand model of virtual community members' participation to the motivation research of Internet self-help travel. According to Wang's demand model of community members' participation, community members' participation in Internet self-help tourism can also meet their functional needs, social needs and psychological needs. Among them, functional requirements refer to jointly planning trips and sharing economic pressures; Social demand refers to sharing feelings and establishing "friend-like relationship" at any time during the journey; Psychological needs refer to the sense of belonging and identity to the group [10].

2.2.4 Research purpose

In reality, the way people get partners is not limited to the Internet virtual community, and the "partner relationship" is not only constructed by strangers. Previous studies mostly focus on the companion motivation of obtaining strange partners based on tourism virtual community from the perspective of interest groups, while ignoring the diverse ways for young people to obtain travel companions. In the past, most of the research on motivation used quantification as the research method, while qualitative research can better explore the deep-seated reasons behind motivation and more unique phenomena. This paper chooses qualitative research, takes in-depth interview as the main research method, hangs the transcendental research conclusion on "the motivation of self-help travel in virtual communities", and tries to explore the needs and difficulties of contemporary college students in the social interaction of partners under the special background of tourism.

2.3. Research significance

As a new social form, partner socialization is the product of the fragmentation of modern life and the development of media. Studying the motivation of college students looking for partners under the background of tourism can give a glimpse of the needs and alienation of contemporary youth for social relations contradictions.

In recent years, academic circles have noticed the phenomenon of searching for "tourism partners" in Internet-based communities, but the research is mostly limited to the motivation of members of tourism virtual communities to use the community, and there are few studies that combine tourism motivation with companionship motivation. The context of this study covers a variety of ways to find "tourism partners" to a greater extent, trying to fill the gaps in the motivation research of other ways to obtain tourism partners outside the Internet, and providing reference ideas for the function

expansion and security guarantee of tourism virtual communities by excavating the deep motivation of accompanying tourists.

3. Research Method

3.1. Interviewee introduction

A semi-structured interview was used in this motivation study, with seven respondents. According to the ways to find travel partners, the interviewees are roughly divided into three categories:

(1) Looking for them from Internet media.

(2) Introduce alumni or acquaintances.

(3) Encounter in the process of traveling. (See Appendix I)

3.2. Interview Question Design

Youcheng Wang designed the participation demand model based on the members' perception of community function in tourism virtual community as a reference model for designing interview questions [6]. The interview questions are roughly divided into three parts:

Part I: Ways to find a partner: What are your ways to find a partner for travel?

Part II: Basic information about the interviewee (see Appendix II).

The third part: the recognition and actual effect of the previous package tour (see Appendix 3).

The third part is divided into three parts according to the participation demand model: functional demand, social demand and psychological demand. Interview questions are the components of each part. Functional requirements include: convenience and information; The elements of social needs are: interaction, communication, relationship and trust. The elements of psychological needs are participation, belonging and status role.

4. Analysis of results

4.1. Functional requirements

4.1.1 Share the economic pressure

Functional demand is the primary motivation for college students to choose partners. In the interview, the interviewees invariably mentioned that economic pressure was the main reason for choosing a partner. "If there are more than a few people, the cost of sharing will not be so high, so that your economic pressure is not so great." "You can spread the cost equally and make the journey more cost-effective." Students have no stable income and limited living expenses. Traveling in groups of people can effectively reduce the cost of catering, accommodation and activities. Choosing a partner is conducive to improving the level of consumption and expanding the scope of choice, so as to achieve a balance between economic constraints and consumption desires [2].

4.1.2 Sharing travel information

On the way, the partners share their information with each other and remind each other to avoid the mistakes in itinerary arrangement caused by personal information cocoon room and save time and cost. As the interviewees explained, they will actively share information with each other. "Of course, it is mainly to share which places are more interesting, hoping to go to places that both sides want to go at the same time." "That's for sure. There are too many places that everyone wants to go. We must plan our time in advance so as not to waste it." At the same time, we will also expect feedback from the other side, and the two sides will work together to make the trip more fulfilling. "Because I am worried that I have always been dominant, people are embarrassed to say what they think or feel uncomfortable. It is interesting to take a couple together and go in both directions." Using the shortest time, spending the least money and playing the most places, whether it is time or economic cost saving, are very attractive to college students who are not rich in both.

4.2. Social demand

4.2.1 Socializing with people

"Do you think peer relationship is important in travel?" "Do you think you need the other person to communicate with you?" Most of the respondents expressed strong social needs. They look forward to maintaining a "friend" relationship with their partners who can share their feelings and communicate actively at any time during the trip. "Having someone to chat with and then share something they don't know is equivalent to making a new friend. More fun can also increase my knowledge." In addition to chatting, behavioral interaction is also an extremely important part of social interaction. "Like me, I prefer photography. Sometimes it will be a little monotonous to take pictures of my mother when I go out for a trip. If I am with my partner, we can take pictures of each other and take many beautiful pictures, which is very fulfilling for me."

4.2.2 Expectation for the relationship

Through long-term communication and interaction during the trip, if it is found that the other party has similar interests or life experiences, it is very likely that the two sides will promote the original loose partner relationship into a deep communication relationship [11]. "I want to turn my partner's relationship into a fixed partner, just like learning from my sister. I want everyone to go to Japan again if they are free." "It would be better if we could hang out together in the future. I hope that long-term travel partners can become friends."

Some respondents also said that they do not expect to have further relations with the child. "It's a friend who knows more than a stranger, but the sense of boundary is still quite heavy. In fact, keep a slightly subtle boundary." "When playing, it is similar to that kind of good friend, but this good friend may be limited to these days. After the end, everyone will happily say goodbye, and naturally they will not contact each other." Different from the traditional deep social interaction in China, partners are more temporary, hoping that personal space will be respected without bothering each other. The tacit sense of boundary and distance between the two sides allows everyone to stay in their comfort zones, and there is no need to maintain a certain relationship. This kind of shallow socialization does not need long-term emotional communication, and there is no need to worry about becoming unfamiliar because of neglect of business; While harvesting the emotional value and companionship they need, they also reduce the cost of silence [11].

4.3. Psychological needs

When talking about what kind of psychological needs are met by choosing a partner, the respondents mentioned the most frequently that it brings a sense of belonging and reduces loneliness. The cognition that "I am not a person but belong to a certain group" will bring them a strong sense of security and satisfaction. "It will give me a sense of security, that kind of practical feeling." "I will be very afraid to go out to play alone. Without anyone around me, I will always feel psychologically empty and can't play well." Group is the in our nature of human beings. No matter the difference of cultural environment and the change of times, people's desire for interpersonal relationships always exists, and they need to be attached to a certain group or join an organization, and they need to be accepted by society and seek recognition [12].

Respondents said that it is difficult to travel with really close friends most of the time, and taking a partner is the best choice. "Of course I want to go with my good friends if possible, but the fact is that we can only meet when we go home in winter and summer vacations." "I can't help it. Good friends who really play are separated from me by hundreds of thousands of miles. They all have their own things to do in different schools, and the chances of coordinating time to play together are particularly rare." Friendship based on long-term social interaction separates the two places in the constant social flow, familiar friends are too far apart, and spatial distance, as an insurmountable gap, frequently hinders offline social activities. However, the nature of human beings as social animals cannot be changed, and the demand for emotional support through social interaction will not disappear with the acceleration of social mobility [11]. This provides an opportunity for the

emergence of "partner", which realizes the timely feedback of emotions, has the dual functions of psychological comfort and role recognition, and makes up for the lack of security and gain in people's communication [13].

4.4. Summary of characteristics

4.4.1 Leading Motivation-Functional Requirements

According to the respondents' answers, the dominant motivation of college students when looking for a travel package is functional demand, that is, they need someone to share the economic pressure with them, plan their itinerary and improve the cost performance. They don't care about each other's personality, and they don't expect to draw emotional value from them. They just need a companion who can have fun and enjoy activities. After the trip, the two sides stopped contacting each other tacitly, or they belonged to strangers, or they became casual acquaintances praised in the circle of friends.

4.4.2 The core of social needs-establishing friendship.

Secondly, social needs are the leading motivation, and a key word presented by such respondents is called "friends". Whether you are eager to develop intimate relationship after the trip or stop contacting, there is no doubt about the need to establish friends during the trip. During a temporary journey, they need to get along with each other as friends and need to communicate and interact in time. Both sides maintain a subtle sense of boundary while providing emotional value to each other, and respect each other's personal space, which not only gives opportunities for people with similar interests who want to further develop their partner relationship into intimacy, but also leaves room for those who find that they can't share the same frequency with each other or don't expect to develop intimacy, and can say goodbye gracefully after the trip.

4.4.3 Psychological needs-longing for group belonging

Finally, psychological needs are the leading motivation, which is a kind of demand that respondents show the least. Respondents who are dominated by psychological needs pin more emotional value on their partners, have a strong need to belong to a certain group, and urgently need others to accompany them to dispel their loneliness.

4.4.4 Three motives jointly drive the "partner" behavior.

Although these three kinds of needs are different in dominant quantity, they are never mutually exclusive. No matter which kind of demand is the dominant motivation, there will be more or less demand for the other two kinds. The three kinds of needs intersect with each other and jointly drive the respondents to choose to travel with their children.

After literature review, it was found that Wang,youcheng and other scholars combined the theory of virtual community with tourism, and built a model of community members' participation needs-functional, social and psychological needs, which was consistent with the assumption of college students' motivation to choose a travel partner in this study, and provided another perspective for the follow-up study on the motivation of traveling together.

5. Discussion and summary

5.1. Research found that

Returning to the research question of this paper, according to the interview results, the intrinsic motivation is the main motivation for finding travel partners, that is, their interest and satisfaction with the travel behavior itself. Compared with traveling with relatives and friends or a "just leave" trip, traveling with your partner shows more purpose and planning.

Different levels of autonomy will also affect the experience of finding a partner. College students with a higher level of autonomy can better meet their own needs in the process of tourism, and it is

easier to find a partner who fits the three views. However, people with a low level of autonomy have a chance to choose an unsuitable partner or face being forced to accommodate others.

When college students choose to travel with their partners, they also pay great attention to the mobility characteristics of their partners, such as whether they can get along or not, whether they can be replaced next time, and whether they can be deleted after a big deal.

5.2. research reflection: there are some hidden dangers for college students to take "partners" as their travel companions.

5.2.1 Emotional worries

It is true that both parties do not need to put too much emotional and energy costs in social interaction, so it is difficult to build a real emotional foundation [13]. The strong purpose and substitutability of traveling with partners will make people blur the definition of friendship, thus blocking the deeper process of mutual affection. And in the process of traveling, if the partner inspires contradictions, it will only increase emotional internal friction. At this time, a strong sense of loneliness will occupy the main emotion, resulting in inner emptiness and paralysis in the face of emotional construction.

5.2.2 Potential safety hazards

The characteristics of tourism partners provide opportunities for criminals. On social platforms, it is not uncommon for related victims to post cases of fund fraud or even human trafficking under the guise of finding a travel partner. Therefore, we should always be vigilant when communicating with strangers. Maintaining a sense of boundary and guarding their privacy should be the main theme of social interaction between partners.

5.3. Research limitations

The number of samples in this interview is small, and the interviewees are mostly Macao college students, without giving full consideration to college students from other regions and economic conditions. Semi-structured interviews have a certain dependence on the interviewees' memories, and there may be information bias. The core of self-determination theory comes from the subjective exposition of the interviewee, so the result may be influenced by the honesty and accuracy of the interviewee's answers. Besides, the external environmental factors, such as cultural and social background, were not discussed in detail during the research. To sum up, it is expected that in the future research, the sample size can be expanded and various variables can be fully included for further classification research.

5.4. Prospect of the future based on the platform level

Tourism platforms and communities can provide users with more comprehensive information. Add more details about travel preferences and values to users' personal data, and use this information to recommend more suitable partners for college students to increase the matching degree between partners. Setting up a security mechanism is the most important thing. Including identity verification, emergency contact channels, etc., to improve college students' sense of security in traveling together. Each platform also needs to develop and improve the social interaction function, so as to facilitate the harmonious coexistence between partners and enhance the social experience during the journey.

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