

How Sensory Impression Affects Pro-environmental Behavior Through Community Participation in Mountain Tourism



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Abstract: This study investigates the influence pathways of sensory impression shaping on pro-environmental behavior in mountain tourism from the perspective of community participation. Against the backdrop of sustainable tourism development, plateau and mountain destinations face dual challenges of ecological conservation and tourism growth. Community participation is identified as a core factor in achieving sustainable tourism, as it directly impacts the effectiveness of environmental management and the quality of tourists' experiences. Sensory impressions, formed through multi-sensory experiences such as vision, hearing, and smell, play a crucial role in shaping tourists' cognitive and emotional connections with the destination, thereby influencing their pro-environmental behaviors. Community participation enriches these sensory experiences by integrating local knowledge, cultural heritage, and authentic lifestyle elements into tourism activities, enhancing the authenticity and uniqueness of tourists' sensory impressions and fostering deeper place attachment and environmental responsibility. The study constructs a theoretical framework showing that sensory impressions directly stimulate pro-environmental behaviors through emotional resonance and cognitive enhancement. It provides practical strategies for tourism managers to optimize sensory impression shaping, such as designing unique visual landscapes, creating rich auditory environments, and promoting distinctive olfactory experiences. Additionally, it emphasizes strengthening community involvement in tourism services, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental protection activities to establish a positive feedback mechanism. This research offers valuable insights for balancing tourism growth and ecological conservation in plateau and mountain regions and highlights the need for future multi-disciplinary analyses to further explore these complex relationships. By enhancing community participation and optimizing sensory experiences, this study aims to provide a comprehensive framework for sustainable mountain tourism management, contributing to both theoretical advancements and practical applications in the field. Future research could focus on empirical studies to validate these findings and explore the long-term impacts of sensory impression shaping and community participation on sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Community Participation; Mountain Tourism; Sensory Impressions; Pro-environmental Behavior

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1 Introduction

Against the backdrop of the global tourism industry continuously expanding its boundaries and depth, plateau and mountain tourism has successfully captured the attention of both domestic and international tourists with its unique natural landscapes, rich biodiversity, and profound cultural heritage, emerging as a highly sought-after tourist destination. This form of tourism not only offers tourists the opportunity to connect with nature and experience exotic cultures but also generates economic benefits and unprecedented development opportunities for local communities. It is estimated that by 2040, more than half of the population in developed countries will be over 50 years old, enjoying good health and possessing a more discerning global perspective [1], which is likely to result in an increase in the number of mountain tourists. In recent years, with the booming development of the tourism industry, a substantial amount of research has focused on the demand for sustainable tourism models [2]. However, in the face of the growing number of tourists visiting plateau and mountain regions, these tourism destinations are also confronted with a series of environmental issues, such as ecological degradation and the over-exploitation of natural resources. If these problems are not properly addressed, they will pose a severe threat to the sustainable development of plateau and mountain tourism.

When it comes to the sustainable development of plateau and mountain tourism, community participation undoubtedly stands out as a pivotal factor that cannot be overlooked. Community participation in tourism underscores the active integration and involvement of local residents in the processes of tourism planning, development, management, and supervision, with the aim of achieving a harmonious balance between tourism growth and community interests [3]. In the context of plateau and mountain tourism, local communities not only serve as custodians and inheritors of tourism resources but also emerge as the primary providers of tourism services. Leveraging their profound knowledge of mountain culture and natural characteristics, they showcase the unique natural landscapes and cultural ethos of the mountains to tourists through their participation and endeavors, thereby significantly enriching tourists' travel experiences. More importantly, community participation effectively stimulates local economic development, enhances residents' quality of life, and subsequently fosters their sense of identification with and satisfaction towards tourism de-

velopment. Through the aforementioned analysis, delving into the mechanism of community participation in plateau and mountain tourism holds profound strategic significance for advancing the sustainable development of the tourism industry.

Simultaneously, the application of sensory impression shaping in the tourism domain has gradually unveiled its distinctive allure. Sensory impression refers to the holistic cognition formed by individuals after receiving external information through sensory channels such as sight, hearing, and smell [4]. During the tourism experience, tourists perceive the natural scenery, cultural ambiance, and human history of the destination through all five senses. These perceptions converge to form unique sensory impressions that profoundly influence tourists' cognition, evaluation, and subsequent behavioral decisions regarding the destination. Research suggests that the richer the sensory experiences tourists have during their travels, the more profound and enduring the sensory impressions formed, which in turn effectively fosters loyalty towards the destination [5]. For plateau and mountain tourism, the key to enhancing tourists' travel experiences lies in adeptly integrating the natural and cultural features of the mountains to effectively craft memorable sensory impressions. By meticulously blending sensory elements such as visually captivating landscapes, melodious natural sounds, and fresh air, an immersive tourism atmosphere can be created, allowing tourists to not only revel in the natural beauty but also deeply appreciate the unique charm of mountain culture.

Sensory marketing, as a crucial means of shaping sensory impressions, has witnessed increasingly widespread and in-depth applications in the tourism sector. Research has explored the specific applications of visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile senses during the tourism experience, demonstrating that sensory intake contributes to the formation of place attachment among tourists towards tourism destinations [6]. Through meticulously planned tourism products and services, destinations precisely stimulate tourists' sensory experiences, thereby enhancing their memory points and loyalty towards the destinations. In plateau and mountain tourism, the application of sensory marketing is manifested in various aspects. These well-designed sensory experiences not only add immense pleasure to tourists' travel lives but also facilitate their in-depth understanding and identification with local cultures, injecting new vitality into the sustainable develop-

ment of tourism destinations.

As the tourism industry continues to flourish, it also conceals environmental pressures beneath its prosperity. While enjoying the pleasure and satisfaction derived from tourism, tourists, as significant participants in tourism activities, should also shoulder the responsibility of environmental protection. Pro-environmental behavior, rooted in environmental psychology, aims to understand and improve the relationship between humans and the natural environment [10]. As positive actions taken by individuals to protect the environment and promote sustainable development, pro-environmental behavior holds special and significant implications in the tourism domain. In plateau and mountain tourism, tourists' pro-environmental behavior is of paramount importance in safeguarding the ecological environment of tourism destinations and enhancing tourism quality. However, in reality, tourists' environmental awareness and behaviors are often influenced by a multitude of complex factors, including personal values, psychological factors, environmental attitudes, and tourism experiences [11]. Therefore, how to effectively stimulate tourists' pro-environmental behavior through sensory impression shaping has emerged as an urgent and important issue in current research on plateau and mountain tourism.

Currently, research on plateau and mountain tourism predominantly focuses on resource evaluation, product development, and other aspects, leaving a research gap in the relationship between sensory impression shaping and pro-environmental behavior in mountain tourism, particularly from the perspective of community participation. Based on this, the present study aims to delve into the influence pathway of sensory impression shaping on pro-environmental behavior in mountain tourism from the perspective of community participation. By thoroughly analyzing the intrinsic connections and mechanisms among community participation, sensory impression shaping, and pro-environmental behavior, this study explores how to enhance tourists' pro-environmental behavior through the effective integration of community participation and sensory marketing. This endeavor aims to comprehensively and deeply understand the relationship between sensory impression shaping and pro-environmental behavior in plateau and mountain tourism, enrich the theoretical framework of research on pro-environmental behavior in this field, and provide practical strategic recommendations for managers and planners of plateau and mountain tourism destinations, thereby holding significant academic and practical value.

2 The Role of Sensory Impression

2.1 Connotative Characteristics of Sensory Impression

Sensory experience primarily refers to the reflexive behaviors and emotional responses generated by an individual's sensory organs upon receiving external stimuli. It encompasses five main sensory factors: vision, audition, touch, taste, and olfaction. These five sensory factors serve as the foundation for perceiving the world [7] and constitute an indispensable part of the tourism experience. In the specific context of mountain tourism, sensory experience assumes particular significance, as it not only involves tourists' intuitive perceptions of natural landscapes but also encompasses in-depth perceptions of local culture, customs, and lifestyles.

These sensory experiences intertwine with one another, collectively shaping tourists' overall cognition of mountain tourism destinations, which is referred to as sensory impression [4]. Sensory impression is the outcome of tourists' sensory experiences, and a clear sensory impression often cannot be formed in the absence of genuine sensory encounters [9]. The formation of sensory impression is a complex and multidimensional process, representing not merely direct responses to external stimuli but also a synthesis of tourists' individual cognition, emotions, and behaviors. In the tourism domain, the shaping of sensory impression has emerged as a crucial strategy for enhancing tourists' experiences and augmenting destination attractiveness. Against this backdrop, sensory marketing, a marketing approach aimed at achieving marketing objectives by stimulating tourists' sensory experiences, has come into being.

Sensory marketing refers to a marketing modality that integrates consumers' five sensory experiences (touch, vision, taste, olfaction, and audition) to influence their perceptions, judgments, and behaviors [8]. In mountain tourism, the application of sensory marketing is particularly widespread. Specifically, it manifests in the creation of visually striking landscapes with local characteristics, such as magnificent mountain vistas and distinctive residential architectures, to captivate tourists' attention. It also involves the cultivation of unique auditory ambiances through the broadcasting of local traditional music and natural sounds. Additionally, sensory marketing entails offering authentic culinary experiences, allowing tourists

to savor local flavors and cultures through tasting. The skillful integration of these sensory elements not only enriches tourists' travel experiences but also stimulates their curiosity and exploratory desires towards the destination, thereby fostering the generation of pro-environmental behaviors.

The connotative characteristics of sensory impression lie not only in its manifestation as tourists' overall cognition of tourism destinations but also in its close association with sensory marketing. Through the effective utilization of sensory marketing, tourists' sensory experiences can be significantly enhanced, leading to the formation of positive and favorable sensory impressions. This, in turn, lays a solid foundation for stimulating pro-environmental behaviors.

2.2 Application of Sensory Impression in Mountain Tourism

Mountain tourism destinations, with their unique natural landscapes such as snow-capped mountains, canyons, and forests, serve as visual focal points that significantly contribute to shaping tourists' sensory impressions. Abundant visual experiences facilitate the deepening of tourists' impressions of the destinations and foster long-term loyalty [5]. For instance, when tourists admire magnificent mountain vistas, the visual stimulation not only provides aesthetic pleasure but also enhances their sense of identification with and willingness to protect the natural environment. The natural sounds within mountain environments, such as birdsong, wind rustling, and water flowing, along with the folk cultural sounds of local communities, such as traditional music and folklore, create distinctive auditory experiences that help strengthen tourists' sense of place attachment [6]. For example, when tourists listen to local folk songs, they can gain a deeper understanding of local culture, thereby forging emotional connections with the destination. The natural fragrances specific to mountain regions, such as the scent of wildflowers and earthy aromas, as well as the unique culinary odors, offer tourists unique olfactory experiences. Olfactory experiences contribute to the formation of tourists' distinct memories and perceptions of the tourism destinations. For instance, when tourists smell the fragrance of mountain wildflowers, they may associate it with the natural beauty of the destination, thus deepening their impression of it. Therefore, the application of sensory impression in mountain tourism enhances tourists' sense of

place attachment to mountain tourism destinations.

2.3 Sensory Impression: Boosting Tourist Pro-environmental Behavior

Sensory impression stimulates tourists' pro-environmental awareness by enhancing their perception and experience of the natural environment, fostering a special attachment to the destination [14]. Moreover, the sensory impressions tourists experience at tourism destinations have a direct impact on their pro-environmental behaviors because profound sensory impressions can directly influence individuals' behaviors without requiring cognitive processing [12]. The process by which sensory impression stimulates tourists' pro-environmental behaviors can be elaborated from two dimensions: emotional resonance and cognitive enhancement.

Emotional resonance refers to the tendency to experience similar or identical emotional or affective responses under the stimulation of situations (or circumstances) where others' emotional expressions cause changes in one's own emotions [15]. From the perspective of emotional resonance, when tourists are immersed in the magnificent scenery, fresh air, and melodious sounds of mountain regions, these sensory stimuli trigger their emotional reactions, often evoking complex emotions such as appreciation for natural beauty, awe for vitality, and sorrow over environmental degradation. These emotional reactions prompt tourists to profoundly recognize the importance of environmental protection, forming emotional identification with and moral responsibility for the environment, thereby leading to pro-environmental behaviors.

From the perspective of cognitive enhancement, sensory impression aids tourists in constructing a comprehensive cognition of the natural environment by providing abundant environmental information. When tourists transition from their accustomed daily environments to unfamiliar natural settings, the sensory inputs they perceive from the natural environment generate physiological sensations associated with closeness to nature, cultivating an appreciation and longing for nature [13]. Sensory experiences such as the visual splendor of landscapes, the auditory harmony of natural sounds, and the olfactory freshness of air collectively form tourists' overall cognitive framework of mountain tourism destinations. This cognitive framework not only includes intuitive perceptions of natural landscapes but also involves an understanding of deeper knowledge such as ecosystem functions and the

significance of environmental protection. When tourists acquire these cognitions through sensory impressions, they can more clearly recognize the impact of human activities on the environment, thereby generating pro-environmental behaviors after forming an intrinsic motivation to protect the environment.

3 The Role of Community Participation

3.1 The Role of Community Participation in Mountain Tourism

As direct dependents and beneficiaries of mountain tourism resources, local communities bear an inherent sense of responsibility and mission for the protection of natural resources and cultural heritage. They are deeply involved in various aspects of mountain tourism development, and their participation should permeate all facets and the entire process of tourism development. Achieving comprehensive development in terms of economic, social, environmental, and cultural benefits of tourism necessitates full consideration of community residents' participation [16]. Through initiatives such as ecological monitoring, formulating conservation rules, and implementing sustainable utilization practices, community residents ensure the integrity of mountain landscapes and the stability of ecosystems. Such conservation efforts not only safeguard the long-term value of tourism resources but also provide a solid foundation for delivering high-quality sensory experiences to tourists [17].

Meanwhile, community residents serve as carriers and disseminators of local culture. They integrate regional cultural characteristics into the tourism experience, enabling tourists to profoundly perceive the unique charm of local culture through multi-dimensional sensory layers such as vision, audition, and touch. For instance, in the Hani terraced field communities of Yunnan Province, residents preserve traditional farming cultures and mushroom house architectures, allowing tourists to appreciate the beauty of terraced fields while immersing themselves in a rich ethnic cultural atmosphere. Additionally, community involvement spans the entire process of tourism services, encompassing accommodation and catering, tour guiding services, and the sale of specialty goods, directly influencing the quality of tourists' service experiences.

High-quality services not only meet tourists' physiological needs but also convey the community's enthusiasm and hospitality through interactions during the service process, enhancing tourists' sensory pleasure. For example, Tibetan-style homestays developed by communities surrounding the Daocheng Yading Scenic Area in Sichuan Province, with their unique architectural styles, authentic Tibetan cuisine, and warm hospitality, have become important windows for tourists to experience Tibetan culture.

3.2 Community Participation's Role in Sensory Impression Shaping

As a crucial driving force in tourism development, community participation plays a pivotal role in shaping sensory impressions in mountain tourism. In mountain tourism, tourists often seek unique and authentic travel experiences rather than cookie-cutter commercialized services. The local knowledge (Local Knowledge) of community residents provides a solid foundation for such unique experiences [18]. Through their age-old lifestyles, traditional craftsmanship, and cultural customs, they offer tourists sensory experiences that starkly contrast with standardized commercial services. For example, in Dong ethnic villages of Guizhou Province, residents prepare sour soup fish using traditional methods, which not only tantalizes tourists' taste buds with its unique flavor but also achieves a profound integration of gustatory, olfactory, and visual experiences through the display of culinary culture. This integration not only enhances the authenticity of sensory impressions but also highlights the unique charm of mountain tourism, enabling tourists to feel the profound cultural heritage of the locality while savoring the cuisine. The active participation of community residents not only enriches the content of tourism experiences but also profoundly influences tourists' overall perceptions and emotional connections with tourism destinations, thereby significantly enhancing the quality of sensory impressions in mountain tourism.

4 Management Insights

4.1 Optimization Strategies for Pro-environmental Behavior

Sensory impression, as a crucial foundation for tourists'

cognitive and emotional connections with tourism destinations, exerts a significant influence on stimulating pro-environmental behavior. Firstly, it is essential to fully leverage the uniqueness of mountain natural landscapes by crafting distinctive visual impressions through meticulously designed tourism routes and scenic nodes. For instance, trail designs that conform to the mountain's topography and viewing platforms that offer ever-changing vistas enable tourists to fully appreciate the grandeur and uniqueness of the mountains while walking, thereby enhancing their sense of awe and protection for the natural environment. Meanwhile, integrating local cultural characteristics to create rich auditory and olfactory experiences is also an effective way to enhance sensory impressions and promote pro-environmental behavior. Exploring and organizing traditional music and folk songs, installing natural soundscape audio equipment, and promoting local specialty cuisines and handicrafts can all allow tourists to deepen their cultural identification and emotional connections with the tourism destination through a comprehensive sensory experience, thereby inspiring pro-environmental behavior.

4.2 Pro-environmental Behavior Promotion: Community View

Community participation serves as a vital guarantee for the sustainable development of mountain tourism and a key factor in promoting tourists' pro-environmental behavior. To strengthen interactions and exchanges between communities and tourists, it is advisable to organize diverse cultural activities, handicraft displays, and local specialty culinary experiences, enabling tourists to gain an in-depth understanding of local culture while enhancing their emotional bonds with community residents. Additionally, establishing a sound incentive mechanism to encourage community residents to actively participate in tourism services and cultural heritage preservation is also an important measure to elevate the level of pro-environmental behavior. By safeguarding the legitimate interests of community residents, broadening their avenues for participating in tourism activities, and encouraging their involvement in ecotourism planning and scenic area management, not only can the sense of identity and belonging of community residents towards tourism development be strengthened, but they can also be prompted to convey environmental protection concepts and guide tourists to adopt pro-environmental behaviors

during the service process. This positive interaction between communities and tourists will lay a solid foundation for the sustainable development of mountain tourism.

4.3 Boosting Pro-environmental Behavior in Mountain Tourism

4.3.1 Stimulating Tourists' Pro-environmental Behavior through Sensory Impression Shaping

The shaping of sensory impressions not only enables tourists to gain a deeper understanding of the natural environment and cultural ecology but also enhances their awareness and sense of responsibility for environmental protection. By showcasing the fragility of plateau mountain ecological environments and the importance of their protection, tourists' environmental awareness and behaviors can be stimulated. In Banff National Park, the government integrates ecological environmental concepts into community architectural design and urban planning, displaying ecological artworks on the walls of the town to reflect ecological connections, vulnerabilities, and the park's action needs. This approach to sensory impression shaping allows tourists to profoundly feel the importance of environmental protection during their visits, thereby consciously cultivating good environmental habits.

4.3.2 Creating a Pro-environmental Tourism Atmosphere through Community Participation

The role of community participation in creating a pro-environmental atmosphere is mainly manifested in two aspects: firstly, through the demonstration and leadership of community residents, environmental protection concepts and behaviors are conveyed; secondly, through community-organized environmental protection activities, such as tree planting, garbage sorting, and ecological restoration, tourists are invited to participate and jointly contribute to environmental protection. During their participation in such activities, tourists can also profoundly appreciate the importance of environmental protection, thereby consciously cultivating good environmental habits.

5 Conclusion

This study delves into the influence pathways of sensory impression shaping on pro-environmental behavior in mountain tourism from the perspective of community participation, unveiling the intrinsic connections and mechanisms among sensory impression shaping, community participation, and pro-environmental behavior. The research underscores that sensory impression, as a vital foundation for tourists' cognitive and emotional connections with tourism destinations, can significantly stimulate tourists' pro-environmental awareness and guide them to adopt positive pro-environmental behaviors through multi-sensory experiences involving vision, audition, and olfaction. Meanwhile, community participation plays a pivotal role in shaping sensory impressions in mountain tourism, enhancing their authenticity and uniqueness, thereby further promoting the emergence of pro-environmental behaviors.

Through literature reviews, theoretical analyses, and case studies, this research constructs a theoretical framework for the impact of sensory impression shaping on pro-environmental behavior in mountain tourism from the perspective of community participation, offering new perspectives and methodologies for research in related fields. On a practical level, this study provides actionable strategic recommendations for managers and planners of plateau mountain tourism destinations. These recommendations encompass how to leverage the natural landscapes and cultural characteristics of mountains to create unique sensory impressions, as well as how to motivate community residents to actively participate in tourism services and cultural heritage preservation to foster tourists' pro-environmental behaviors.

Looking ahead, with the continuous development of the global tourism industry and the increasing prosperity of plateau mountain tourism, balancing the relationship between tourism development and environmental protection to achieve sustainable tourism development will become a focal point of concern for both academia and practitioners. This study offers valuable references and insights for this issue, hoping to play a positive role in advancing the sustainable development of plateau mountain tourism. Simultaneously, this study has certain limitations. It predominantly relies on theoretical research and lacks applied research. Additionally, the analysis of the theoretical domains is somewhat constrained, primarily focusing on the fields of management and marketing. Future research

could delve into multi-disciplinary analyses to further broaden the scope and depth of the study, thereby validating and refining the conclusions of this research.

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