Scientific and Social Research, 2025, Volume 7, Issue 9
https://ojs.bbwpublisher.com/index.php/SSR
Online ISSN: 2981-9946
Print ISSN: 2661-4332

Analysis of Ice and Snow Tourism Activities in Jilin Province: Applying the Theory of Planned Behavior

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Abstract: Under the dual national strategies of "300 Million People Participating in Winter Sports" and Jilin Province's development as a "Winter Sports Economy Powerhouse", ice and snow tourism has become a core driver for regional economic transformation and winter consumption market activation. However, existing research inadequately explores the driving mechanisms of ice and snow tourism behaviors in small and medium-sized cities and specific regions, particularly lacking systematic empirical analysis based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). This study focuses on potential ice and snow tourists in Jilin Province, integrating TPB core dimensions with tourism scenario characteristics to construct a theoretical framework of "attitude-subjective norms-perceived behavioral control-tourism intention." Through questionnaire surveys collecting 623 valid samples, the study conducted validity/consistency testing, correlation analysis, and structural equation modeling using SPSS 29.0 and AMOS 23.0. The findings reveal that attitude (β=0.327, $P < 0.001$), subjective norms (β=0.285, $P < 0.001$), and perceived behavioral control (β=0.251, $P < 0.001$) all significantly positively influence tourism intention, with attitude exerting the strongest effect. At the factor level, perceived tourism value (β=0.612, $P < 0.001$), influence of social reference groups (β=0.587, $P < 0.001$), and transportation/time convenience (β=0.563, $P < 0.001$) are key drivers across dimensions. These results provide theoretical foundations and practical references for optimizing ice and snow tourism product supply and developing targeted marketing strategies in Jilin Province.

Keywords: Theory of Planned Behavior; Jilin ice and snow tourism; Behavioral intention; Ice and snow economy

Online publication: September 9, 2025

1. Introduction

Under the backdrop of global climate warming, the scarcity and uniqueness of ice and snow resources have become increasingly prominent, making ice and snow tourism an important sub-sector of the low-carbon economy and ecotourism [1]. The Chinese government has successively issued policies such as the "Opinions on Vigorously Developing Ice and Snow Sports in Conjunction with the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics" and the "Ice and Snow

Tourism Development Action Plan (2021–2023)", promoting the transformation of ice and snow tourism from "niche experiences" to "mass consumption." As one of the provinces with the richest ice and snow resources in China, Jilin Province boasts world-class ice and snow IPs such as Changbai Mountain, Changchun Ice and Snow World, and Jilin Rime. During the 2023–2024 ice and snow season, it received over 120 million tourist visits and generated tourism revenue exceeding 80 billion yuan, making the ice and snow economy a strategic pillar industry for the province.

However, Jilin Province's ice and snow tourism development continues to face a "supply-demand mismatch" issue: On one hand, some scenic areas suffer from severe product homogenization and insufficient exploration of cultural depth; on the other hand, potential tourists' risk awareness and cost concerns about winter tourism hinder their travel decisions. Existing research predominantly focuses on large cities or popular tourist destinations (such as Harbin and Zhangjiakou), with limited studies examining ice and snow tourism behaviors in medium and small cities that serve as core radiation zones in Jilin Province. Moreover, there is a lack of systematic analysis of psychological factors such as "attitude-subjective norms-perceived behavioral control."

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Theoretical review

2.1.1. Review of the TPB literature

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen posits that individual behavioral intention is shaped by three interrelated factors: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. This theory has been extensively applied in tourism behavior research.

The Theory of Planned Behavior has been extensively applied and studied. In the tourism field, it proves effective in researching low-carbon tourism, rural tourism, winter sports tourism, and destination selection, significantly enhancing the explanatory and predictive power of tourist behavior. Lorenza López Moreno found through TPB research that tourists' attitudes toward ecotourism, participation behaviors of surrounding groups, and transportation accessibility all positively influence travel intention [2]. Setiawan et al. investigated how tourism behavior affects willingness to consume low-carbon tourism services, arguing that yacht tourism consumption is typically a rational choice made after careful consideration and meticulous planning, thus validating the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior for predicting and testing yacht tourism consumption behavior [3]. Rujiu et al. analyzed factors influencing yacht tourism consumption intentions by introducing demographic characteristics and yacht culture as two new variables, conducting empirical analysis on the three foundational variables of TPB, and examining their mechanisms [4]. Hoeksma et al. utilized an extended TPB model, establishing structural equations through case studies and investigating tourists' willingness to pay for ecological compensation based on theoretical frameworks [5]. Wismantoro et al. developed an expanded TPB model incorporating ethical norms and environmental concern variables to study ecotourism behavior intentions at Zhongshan Scenic Area (National Forest Park), Nanjing [6]. Xingjun et al. found in the study of green travel of urban residents that attitude affects travel intention through "environmental awareness", the effect of "policy support" and "social group influence" in subjective norms is significant, and perceived behavioral control is restricted by "transportation facility convenience" [7].

2.1.2. Review of the ice and snow tourism behavior literature

Scholarly research on ice and snow tourism behavior primarily focuses on three dimensions: First, the resource

and product dimension, such as how the scarcity of ice resources and product innovation influence tourist choices; Second, the marketing and communication dimension, where Mahon found that the "video content credibility" and "brand credibility" on social media platforms can indirectly enhance purchase intention by influencing consumer attitudes—a conclusion applicable to ice and snow tourism marketing (e.g., Douyin's "Jilin Ice and Snow" challenge) [8]; Third, the psychological and cognitive dimension, where Przymuszaa et al. proposed the "perceived behavioral control-device fit" mechanism explaining why tourists abandon ice tourism due to "insufficient skiing skills" or "incompatible scenic facilities" [9]. Research on Jilin Province predominantly focuses on resource development and industrial planning, such as analyzing brand building for Changbai Mountain ice tourism and developing models for Jilin's rime ice tourism, but lacks empirical analysis of tourist psychological factors, particularly addressing the core question: "Which psychological factors drive tourists to choose Jilin over other ice and snow destinations?"

2.2. Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior, using attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control as independent variables to examine ice-snow tourism intention.

Attitudes refer to tourists' overall evaluation of participating in Jilin Province's ice-snow tourism, comprising two sub-factors: Value Perception of Ice-Snow Tourism and Risk Awareness of Ice-Snow Tourism. Subjective Norms represent external group influences perceived by tourists, including Social Reference Group Influence and Policy Guidance. Perceived Behavioral Control assesses tourists' confidence in completing ice-snow tourism activities, encompassing three sub-factors: Transportation and Time Convenience, Economic Cost Controllability, and Social Environment. Ice-snow Tourism Intention indicates tourists' willingness to participate in future ice-snow tourism in Jilin Province.

Based on these definitions, the study constructed a theoretical model of factors influencing ice-snow tourism behavior in Jilin Province. In this model, attitudes (ATT), subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) are exogenous latent variables with their sub-factors as observed variables; ice-snow tourism intention (BI) is an endogenous latent variable with its items as observed variables. The model hypothesizes that attitudes, subjective norms, and PBC directly influence ice-snow tourism intention, while sub-factors indirectly affect intention through their effects on latent variables.

2.3. Research hypotheses

2.3.1. The influence of attitude on ice and snow tourism behavioral intention

Attitude constitutes an individual's comprehensive evaluation of behavior, where positive attitudes enhance behavioral intention. In ice and snow tourism scenarios, "value perception" reflects tourists' judgment that "benefits outweigh disadvantages" regarding Jilin Province's ice and snow tourism — If tourists perceive unique entertainment and cultural value from ice and snow tourism, their travel intention will significantly increase [10]; whereas "risk perception" indicates concerns about potential drawbacks — Cold health risks and skiing safety hazards may reduce travel intention [11]. Based on this, the hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Tourists' positive attitude toward Jilin Province's ice and snow tourism positively influences behavioral intention.

H1a: Value perception positively affects behavioral intention in ice and snow tourism.

H1b: Risk perception negatively impacts behavioral intention in ice and snow tourism.

2.3.2. The influence of subjective norms on ice and snow tourism behavioral intention

Subjective norms influence behavioral intention through "social pressure" and "information transmission." Regarding "Social Reference Group Influence", recommendations and positive experiences from family and friends can reduce tourists' decision uncertainty and enhance their travel willingness. For "Policy and Public Opinion Guidance", Jilin Province's "Ice and Snow Tourism Season" policies (including scenic area subsidies and transportation discounts) combined with social media promotion (e.g., the "Jilin Ice and Snow" topic on Douyin) strengthen tourists' trust in the destination, indirectly boosting behavioral intention [12]. Based on this, the authors propose:

H2: Tourists' perceived subjective norms positively influence their ice and snow tourism behavioral intention.

H2a: Social reference group influence positively impacts ice and snow tourism behavioral intention.

H2b: Policy guidance positively influences ice and snow tourism behavioral intention.

2.3.3. Perceived behavioral control's impact on ice and snow tourism behavioral intention

Perceived behavioral control reflects an individual's judgment of behavioral difficulty; stronger control perception leads to stronger behavioral intention. Regarding "Transportation and Time Convenience", most ice-snow destinations in Jilin Province are located in medium and small cities, where accessibility is a key factor influencing tourists' decisions — Adequate high-speed rail services and convenient shuttle buses to scenic areas can significantly boost travel willingness [13]. For "Economic Affordability", the high costs associated with ice-snow tourism — such as ski equipment rentals and luxury accommodations — constitute major barriers. When expenses align with tourists' budgets, travel intentions increase substantially [11]. In terms of "Snow Skills and Facility Adaptability", beginners often abandon trips due to insufficient skiing skills or a lack of suitable facilities at resorts. Providing instructor guidance and beginner slopes enhances tourists' sense of control [14]. Based on these findings, the hypotheses are proposed:

H3: Perceived behavioral control positively influences ice-snow tourism intention.

H3a: Transportation and time convenience positively influence ice-snow tourism intention.

H3b: Economic affordability positively influences ice-snow tourism intention.

H3c: Social environment positively influences ice-snow tourism intention.

3. Research methodology

The study utilized a Likert 5-point scale to develop questionnaires distributed through the Questionnaire Star platform and physical tourist attractions to collect potential visitor data. SPSS 29.0 was employed for reliability/validity testing and correlation analysis, while AMOS 23.0 was used to construct structural equation models for hypothesis verification and model fit evaluation.

3.1. Questionnaire design

The questionnaire design takes the planned behavior theory (TPB) as the core framework, and adjusts the items according to the characteristics of ice and snow tourism scenarios in Jilin Province, and finally forms a structured questionnaire containing five parts:

All items used the Likert 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). After completing the initial draft, three tourism management scholars and two practitioners from Jilin's ice-snow attractions participated in content validity evaluations. Issues such as "ambiguous phrasing" (e.g., clarifying "ice-snow activities" as "skiing,

ice fishing") and "item redundancy" (removing one item highly overlapping with "transport convenience") were addressed through revisions. Subsequently, 50 questionnaires were pre-distributed through the "Wenjuanxing" platform. Analysis using SPSS 29.0 revealed an overall Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.918, with all dimensions exceeding 0.8. The KMO value reached 0.887, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity showed $P < 0.001$, indicating good reliability and validity. This confirms the questionnaire's suitability as a formal research tool.

3.2. Data collection

The data collection methodology combines online and offline approaches, balancing sample representativeness with seasonal characteristics of Jilin's ice-snow tourism. The survey period spans from December 1, 2024, to February 28, 2025 (Jilin's peak ice-snow tourism season), ensuring respondents are in their "decision-making active phase" for winter tourism, thereby enhancing data timeliness. Online surveys were distributed through the Wenjuanxing platform to potential tourists in neighboring provinces, including Jilin, Liaoning, Heilongjiang, and Inner Mongolia. Offline surveys were conducted at airports, high-speed rail stations, and ice-snow attractions in Changchun and Jilin cities, with on-site guidance provided to minimize inefficiency.

The sample was screened to exclude questionnaires with completion times under 3 minutes, items showing patterned responses (e.g., all selecting "3=Normal"), and those lacking exposure to ice-snow tourism information. A total of 623 valid questionnaires were collected, achieving an 87.5% response rate. This met the "sample size ≥5:1 item count" criterion proposed by Jonckere and Rosseel for SEM analysis (the questionnaire contains 33 scale items, satisfying the requirement).

3.3. Data analysis methods

The reliability test adopts Cronbach's α coefficient (the standard of "α>0.8 is high reliability"); the validity test verifies the structural validity of the scale through the KMO test, Bartlett's sphericity test (the standard of "KMO>0.8 is suitable for factor analysis"), and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

Correlation analysis was used to analyze the correlation between variables with the Pearson correlation coefficient, and the logic that "significant correlation ($P < 0.05$) is the premise of model construction" laid a foundation for subsequent SEM analysis.

Structural equation model (SEM). The model was constructed with AMOS23.0, and the fitting criteria (x^2/df<3, RMSEA<0.08, CFI>0.9) were used to test the significance of path hypotheses and analyze the direct effects between variables.

4. Analysis and results

4.1. Credibility and validity testing

The overall reliability of the questionnaire was 0.937, indicating stable and reliable measurement results. The KMO (Kurtosis of Moments) reached 0.912, with Bartlett's test of sphericity x^2=4826.357 ($P < 0.001$), confirming data suitability for factor analysis. Key metrics showed x^2/df=2.137 (<3), RMSEA=0.062 (<0.08), CFI=0.958 (>0.9), and TLI=0.949 (>0.9), demonstrating excellent structural validity as the scale structure closely aligns with the theoretical framework.

4.2. Correlation analysis

Attitude and Behavioral Intention (r=0.624, $P < 0.001$), Subjective Norms and Behavioral Intention (r=0.587,

$P < 0.001$), and Perceived Behavioral Control and Behavioral Intention (r=0.546, $P < 0.001$). This provides preliminary support for Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3.

Attitude and Subjective Norms (r=0.485, $P < 0.001$), Attitude and Perceived Behavioral Control (r=0.452, $P < 0.001$), and Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioral Control (r=0.417, $P < 0.001$). These findings align with the "three-variable interconnection" hypothesis in TPB theory, with no multicollinearity issues (VIF<5).

4.3. Structural equation modeling results

4.3.1. Model fit

The overall model fit results of this study are shown in **Table 1**, where all indicators meet the "good fit" standard. This indicates that the Jilin Province Ice and Snow Tourism Behavior Influencing Factors Model, constructed based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, closely aligns with actual data, enabling further path analysis.

Table 1. Structural equation modeling fit indicators

Type of fitting indicator	Specific indicators	Finding	Applicability judgement
Absolute fitting index	x^2/df	2.089	Fine
	RMSEA	0.059	Fine
Value-added fit indicators	CFI	0.962	Excellent
	IFI	0.958	Excellent
Simplified fitting index	PNFI	0.683	Fine
	PGFI	0.657	Fine

4.3.2. Path coefficients and hypothesis testing

The path coefficient was calculated by the maximum likelihood estimation method through AMOS 23.0, and all the research hypotheses were supported.

Core Dimensions Direct Influence on Ice and Snow Tourism Behavioral Intention. Attitude (β=0.327, $P < 0.001$), subjective norm (β=0.285, $P < 0.001$), and perceived behavioral control (β=0.251, $P < 0.001$) all exerted significant positive effects on behavioral intention, with attitude having the strongest impact. This aligns with the conclusion from Vincent that "attitude is the core driver of green travel behavioral intention", and also corroborates Vermeir et al.'s emphasis on "the dominant role of consumer attitudes in behavioral intention" — n ice and snow tourism scenarios, tourists' overall evaluation (attitude) of destinations directly determines whether they include Jilin Province in their travel plans [15–16].

Attitude Sub-factors Influence Ice and Snow Tourism. Value Perception (β=0.612, $P < 0.001$) positively influenced attitude, while ice and snow tourism risk perception (β=-0.356, $P < 0.001$) negatively impacted it. This result echoes East et al.'s decomposition logic of "attitude = positive cognition + negative cognition" [10]. Tourists' perception of unique values like rime landscapes and Manchu ethnic customs (positive cognition) strengthens positive attitudes, while concerns about low temperatures and skiing safety (negative cognition) weaken them, ultimately jointly influencing behavioral intention.

The impact of subjective norm sub-factors. Social reference groups (β=0.587, $P < 0.001$) and policy/opinion guidance (β=0.413, $P < 0.001$) both positively influence subjective norms, with social reference groups exerting stronger effects. This aligns closely with Djukic and Stankovic's conclusion that "reference group evaluations

significantly outperform platform dissemination in shaping consumer attitudes" [17]. Recommendations from family and friends, along with shared travel experiences, demonstrate greater effectiveness than government policy promotion in reducing tourists' decision uncertainty and enhancing participation willingness.

The impact of behavioral control sub-factors. Transportation and time convenience (β=0.563, $P < 0.001$), cost controllability (β=0.432, $P < 0.001$), and snow sports skill-facility compatibility (β=0.408, $P < 0.001$) all positively influence behavioral control. Transportation convenience shows the strongest effect, consistent with Klinger and Lanzendorf's finding that "commuter behavior in small and medium-sized cities is most significantly constrained by transportation accessibility" [18]. As Jilin Province's ice-snow destinations are predominantly located in medium-sized cities like Tonghua and Baishan, transportation infrastructure, such as high-speed rail services and scenic area shuttle buses, directly determines tourist accessibility.

5. Research conclusions

5.1. Conclusions

The Theory of Planned Behavior demonstrates strong applicability to ice-snow tourism behaviors in Jilin Province, with attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control collectively explaining 68.3% of variations in travel intention (R^2=0.683). This validates TPB's cross-scenario explanatory power in seasonal, experience-intensive ice-snow tourism contexts.

The core driver of attitude formation stems from the "value-risk" balance: perceived value of ice-snow tourism serves as the primary positive factor (β=0.612), while risk perception acts as the dominant negative factor (β=-0.356). This indicates that tourist attitudes toward Jilin's ice-snow tourism fundamentally reflect a balance between "unique experiential value" and "potential risks." Positive attitudes and travel intentions emerge only when perceived value outweighs perceived risk, aligning with Qing et al.'s conclusion that "attitudes are shaped by both positive and negative cognitive factors" [14].

In subjective norms, the "social reference group" effect dominates. The influence of social reference groups (β=0.587) on subjective norms significantly surpasses that of policy guidance and public opinion (β=0.413), suggesting that recommendations from family and friends carry more weight in tourist decision-making than government policies like the "Ice-Snow Tourism Season" initiative or social media promotions. This finding aligns closely with Vincent et al.'s conclusion that "reference group evaluation is the core influencing factor of consumer attitudes" [15]. In the information-overloaded winter tourism market, travelers place greater trust in "authentic experiences" from acquaintances rather than official or platform "one-way communication."

Perceived behavioral control is most significantly influenced by "transport convenience": transportation and time accessibility (β=0.563) are the strongest drivers, followed by cost controllability (β=0.432) and snow sports skill adaptability (β=0.408). This aligns with Dzicielski et al.'s finding that "commuter behavior in small and medium-sized cities is most affected by transportation accessibility" [19]. Most winter destinations in Jilin Province are located in smaller cities, where issues like insufficient high-speed rail services and inadequate shuttle buses directly reduce tourists' sense of control over "smooth participation", thereby suppressing behavioral intentions.

5.2. Research limitations

5.2.1. Sample representativeness limitation

The sample primarily comes from neighboring provinces like Jilin, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang (78.3%), lacking nationwide representation, which may limit the conclusions' generalizability to southern tourist groups.

5.2.2. Variable configuration limitation

The study did not account for moderating variables such as "winter tourism habits" and "destination loyalty." If tourists have annual participation habits, risk perception's negative impact might weaken. Future research should incorporate these moderating variables to refine the model.

5.2.3. The limitation of data timeliness

The survey time is the 2024–2025 ice and snow season, which does not cover the "off-season" data, so it is impossible to analyze the influence of seasonal changes on behavioral intention. However, ice and snow tourism has strong seasonality, so cross-seasonal tracking research should be carried out in the future.

5.3. Future prospects

5.3.1. Expand research samples and scenarios

Extend the study to southern provinces (e.g., Guangdong, Zhejiang) to compare behavioral factors influencing tourists between northern and southern regions. Expand research scope from "potential tourists" to "experienced tourists" to analyze how TPB's three dimensions affect revisit intention, thereby refining theoretical models.

5.3.2. Introduce moderating/mediating variables

Incorporate "ice-snow tourism habit" (moderator variable) and "destination trust" (mediator variable) into an extended model combining the TPB framework with moderated and mediated approaches to enhance theoretical explanatory power.

Funding

Research on the Mechanism of Enhancing the Resilience of Jilin Ice and Snow Economic Industry Chain under the High-quality Development Pattern (JJKH20251430SK), Scientific Research Project of Jilin Provincial Department of Education, 2025

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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