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Article

# What Influences College Students' Choice of Red Tourism? Evidence from China

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**Abstract:** Red tourism is a new form of tourism promoted by patriotic education in China. College students, as the main target of patriotic education, occupy an important proportion in red tourism. The tourism behavioral intention is influenced by tourism perception, which is no exception among college students in red tourism. However, there is no literature to conduct this study, so this article focuses on college students. Red tourism belongs to policy-driven tourism, which determines that tourism behavior intention is more influenced by government, media, and relatives (variables of the theory of planned behavior theory). Therefore, this study introduces the theory of planned behavior theory as an intermediary variable to discuss the relationship between perceived value and behavioral intention. Besides, the tourism experience varies depending on the group's cognition and experience. Therefore, this study also introduces tourism experience theory as an intermediary variable. Through the analysis of survey data on red tourism among college students, the results of the structural equation model indicate that facility value, spiritual value, and cost value have a positive impact on behavioral intention, while resource value has no impact. Besides, the theory of planned behavior has a positive mediating effect, while tourism experience only has a partial moderating effect. This study deepens the understanding of red and political tourism, and provides management insights for the marketing of red tourism.

**Keywords:** red tourism; college students; tourist perceived value; behavior intention; multiple linear regression analysis

## 1. Introduction

Red tourism is a thematic tourism activity of commemorating, studying, and visiting socialist heritage sites [1]. These red tourist attractions include monuments, scenic spots of revolutionaries, memorials, etc., which were created from 1921 to 1949, that is, from the founding of the Communist Party of China to the founding of the People's Republic of China [2]. In recent years, tourists' enthusiasm for red tourism in China is rising steadily [3]. 41.7% of the respondents participated in red tourism more than three times in 2021 according to the "China Red Tourism Consumption Big Data Report (2021)", which was released by the China Tourism Research Institute and the Mafengwo Free Travel Big Data Joint Laboratory. Among them, 7.1% of tourists participate in red tourism more than five times, over 40% of tourists frequently choose red scenic locations to explore and study. Besides, visitors can experience a fiery political climate through red tourism [4]. As a result, red tourism in China has turned into an approach to maintain people's loyalty to the Communist Party of China strengthen their belief in the ideal of socialist construction, and reinforce patriotism education [5]. Red tourism has been actively promoted by the Chinese

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government in China.

The perceived value of tourism reflects tourists' opinion of tourism activities, and the behavioral intention of tourism indicates a willingness to revisit or recommend to others [6]. Perceived value is considered as one of the most important determinants of tourism behavior and future intentions [7]. For traditional types of tourism, existing documents have comprehensively studied the relationship between tourism perceived value and tourism behavioral intention, from the view of types of tourism, tourism groups, and impact mechanisms. For example, Refs. [8–11] discussed the impact of perceived value on behavioral intention with various types of tourism, such as ecotourism, medical tourism, and cultural heritage tourism, indicating that different types of tourism have different impact mechanisms. In addition, other viewpoints reveal that the impacts of tourism perceived value on behavioral intention is influenced by the characteristics of tourist groups, such as Refs. [7,12,13]**,** discussing the special situations of Muslim, youth, and volunteer groups.

The perceived value of red tourism refers to the overall evaluation of red tourism products or services from the perspective of perceived gains and losses when tourists participate in red tourism [14]. Only a few studies address the perceived value of red tourism [15–17], focusing on content such as satisfaction and loyalty, and lack of research about the intermediate and moderating variables between tourists' perceived value and behavioral intention. However, compared with general tourism, red tourism is more politically driven [5]. The strong publicity and recommendation of red tourism by the government and the media will promote tourists' behavioral intentions, which shows the mediating role of subjective norm variables between perceived value and behavioral intentions. In addition, tourists' behavioral attitudes and their actual control conditions (such as personal abilities, opportunities, and resources obtained) can also affect their behavioral intentions [18]. For example, the Chinese government has implemented the free policy of red tourism, which has improved the ability of tourists to red tourism [19]. The strong political and cultural atmosphere enhances tourists' behavioral attitudes. Therefore, the theory of planned behavior is considered as a mediating variable between perceived value and behavioral intention. Besides, red tourism experience refers to the spiritual satisfaction that tourists experience during the red tourism process, influenced by previous experiences and the environment and activities at that time [20]. Tourism experience emphasizes the 'interactivity' between tourists and attractions. And this interaction will affect tourists' perception and evaluation, thereby affecting their behavioral intentions. Other studies on cultural heritage tourism have confirmed the significance of tourism experience in the interplay between perceived value and behavioral intention [21–24]. Therefore, this study intends to add the tourism experience as a moderating variable.

Young tourists are seen as a desirable and potent segment market [25]. Different from other types of tourism that pay attention to young tourists, red tourism ignores young tourists [7]. For the young group, the demands of red tourist should be considered since they are the key audience of red tourism education. Therefore, the motivation, interest, experience and behavior of young people in Red tourism need to be considered [26]. Many academic research on young tourists choose college students as targets, which also applies to this study [27]. This is because college students are the most active group among youth tourists [28].

In conclusion, this study takes college students as the research object, and explores the relationship between perceived value and behavior in red tourism. The theory of planned behavior and tourism experience are added as a mediator variable to improve the accuracy of the study. The research results show that perceived value has a positive impact on behavioral intention. The theory of planned behavior and tourism experience have mediating effects. These contents will help the scenic spot to make new decisions and promote educational effect of red tourism.

## 2. Research Hypothesis and Conceptual Framework

Traditional research on perceived value focuses on resource value, facility value, and cost value. This is because resources are the essential part of a scenic area, which distinguishes it from other scenic areas [29]. In addition, infrastructure is the foundation for tourism activities to be carried out [30]. Cost is a concern that every tourist will consider [31]. Therefore, we can understand why analysis of tourism perceived value generally includes resource value, facility value, and cost value. However, unlike general tourism, red tourism has strong cultural and educational attributes [32]. Therefore, we introduce spiritual value as the added indicator to evaluate the red tourism. For that reason, the measurement items of perceived value in this study include resource value, facility value, cost value, and

spiritual value. In addition, behavioral intention reflects perceived value [33–35]. There are various behavioral intentions in tourism, among which the most important is recommendation intention. Therefore, in this study, recommendation intention was selected as the indicator to evaluate the tourism behavior intention. As current research on the relationship between perceived value and behavioral intention lacks attention to young people and red tourism, we propose research hypothesis 1:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** *The perceived value of red tourism among college students has a significant positive impact on behavioral intention*.

The impact of perceived value on behavioral intention is a complex process [24]. The theory of planned behavior suggests that behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control all have an impact on it [23]. Firstly, when tourists have a high perceived value, they will affirm the tourism behavior (behavioral attitude) and form a positive behavioral intention. In addition, tourists' behavioral intentions are not only influenced by subjective perceived value, but also by external factors (subjective norms) such as government, society, and friends [36]. For example, tourists may recommend some tourism projects with moderate subjective perceived value but good social reputation. Thirdly, when tourists believe that the perceived value of tourism matches the energy, physical strength, and time spent (perceived behavioral control), they will generate positive behavioral intentions. Therefore, we propose Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3:

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** *The perceived value of red tourism for college students has a significant positive impact on the variables in the theory of planned behavior.*

**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** *The variables in the theory of planned behavior for college students in red tourism have a significant positive impact on their behavioral intention*.

Facility value, resource value, cost value, and spiritual value are all perceptual judgments based on the objective material of the scenic area. This perception judgment will generate different tourist experiences due to different tourists [37], including aesthetic feelings, emotional stimuli, and educational feelings. For example, scenic spots with the same facilities, resources, and expenses may have different tourist aesthetic perceptions, emotional resonance, and knowledge acquisition, which also affects their willingness to recommend the scenic spot to others. Therefore, this article introduces tourism experience to analyze the impact of perceived value on behavioral intention, including aesthetic experience, emotional experience, and educational experience. The fourth and fifth hypotheses are proposed as follows:

**Hypothesis 4 (H4):** *College students' red tourism experience has a moderating effect on the process of perceived value affecting the variables within the theory of planned behavior.*

**Hypothesis 5 (H5):** *College students' red tourism experience plays a moderating role in the process that variables in the theory of planned behavior affects behavior intention.*

Based on the above theoretical derivation and assumptions, this study constructed a theoretical model to describe the relationship between perceived value and behavioral intention of university student tourists in red tourism, as shown in Figure 1.

## 3. Methodology

### *3.1. Measurement Instruments*

The red tourism perceived value scale of college students includes 4 dimensions and 13 items. The design of the planned behavior scale is based on Ajzen's research [38], with 3 dimensions and 9 items. There are 3 dimensions and 11 items in the red tourism experience scale for college students' tourists. Three measurement items are used to measure tourists' behavioral intentions. Respondents were asked to write their opinions about red tourism using a Likert 5-subscale, a rating scale used to measure opinions, attitudes, or behaviors (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

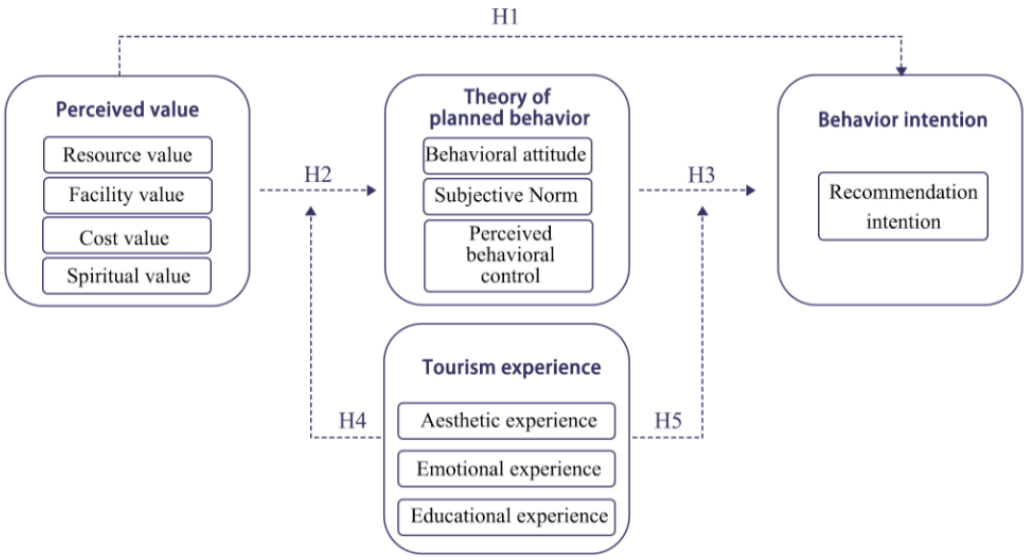



**Figure 1.** Hypothesized structural model.

*3.2. Procedures*

The SERVQUAL model is a system to evaluate service quality, where service quality judges from the difference between user perceived service value and expected service value [39]. According to this method, the research is divided into four steps (Figure 2). Firstly, propose research hypotheses and determine measurement indicators for each dimension. Secondly, modifying the questionnaire items based on various opinions is the second stage. This includes expert interview opinions from 4 representative college students, expert opinions from 2 professors and 3 doctors, and evaluation measurements from 51 small-scale questionnaires. Thirdly, a total of 814 sample data were collected, and 572 samples were validated, as well as effectiveness testing and other work were carried out. Fourthly, this study uses regression analysis to analyze the relationship between perceived value and behavioral intention, as well as the mediating role of planned behavior theory and tourism experience.

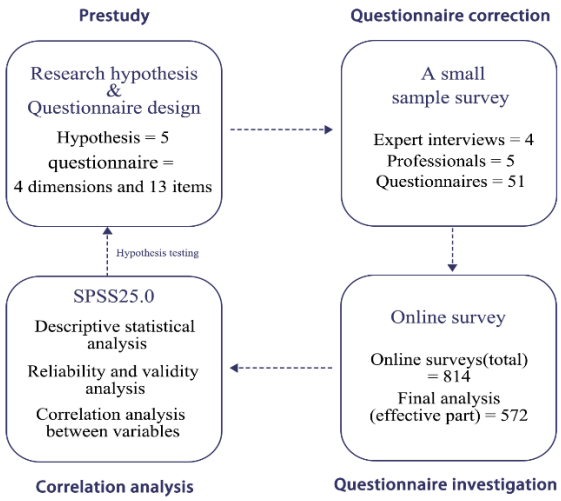



**Figure 2.** Procedures.

*3.3. Sampling and Data Collection*

Using the Questionnaire Star, a survey platform, 814 samples were collected from December 12 to December 22, 2022. We deleted 242 questionnaires that were eighter completed within 60 s or all the consistent response choices (for example, all the options were “strongly disagree”). A total of 572 survey responses were selected in the final analysis.

## 4. Results

### *4.1. Sample Profile*

Gender, age, education and political status of tourists were used to describe the college students being tested. Among the 572 responses, women (69.06%) are more than men (30.94%). Most respondents were students aged from 18 to 30 (94.41%), with 29.37% being the Communist Party members (as shown in Table 1).

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of demographic variables (N = 572).

| Items | Category | Observations | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 177 | 30.94 |
| | Female | 395 | 69.06 |
| Age | Under 18 | 14 | 2.45 |
| | 18–30 | 540 | 94.41 |
| | 31 and above | 18 | 3.15 |
| Education | Specialized Degree | 24 | 4.2 |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 412 | 72.03 |
| | Master's Degree | 110 | 19.23 |
| | Doctoral Degree | 26 | 4.55 |
| Political status | General public | 63 | 11.01 |
| | Communist Youth | 240 | 59.44 |
| | CPC | 168 | 29.37 |
| | A party other than CPC | 1 | 0.17 |

In this study, descriptive statistical analysis uses four indicators, including the mean value, standard deviation value, kurtosis value, and skewness value, to describe the characteristics of the sample. The four items all fall in a reasonable level (Table 2), and the sample complies with the normal distribution hypothesis. Therefore, it is worth further analysis.

### *4.2. Reliability and Validity Analysis*

Reliability analysis aims to investigate the data reliability, and validity analysis tests the rationality of questionnaire measurement items [40]. Firstly, SPSS22.0 software was used for reliability analysis. When the value of Cronbach's α ranges from 0.8 to 0.9, it indicates that the reliability of the scale is very good. In this study, the value of Cronbach's α is 0.883. Furthermore, if the value of Cronbach's Alpha-if-Item-Deleted is less than the Cronbach' α, then it can be concluded that the internal consistency of the scale is good. See Table 2, all the values of Cronbach's Alpha-if-Item-Deleted are smaller than Cronbach' α (0.883). According to this result, all items can be retained. Subsequently, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Bartlett's sphericity test, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) are used for validity analysis. The KMO value in this study was 0.929, reaching the applicable standard (greater than 0.9). The significance of Bartlett's sphericity test was 0.000 (less than 0.05 is the ideal range). The common factors retrieved by CFA exceeded 0.5, between 0.513 and 0.811, can explain the data of the questionnaire. Extracting the first two common factors (initial eigenvalues > 1), the proportion of common factors explaining the overall questionnaire data is 72.300% (the minimum acceptable value is 60%). In conclusion, all indicators are reasonable, and can thus be used for further hypothesis verification analysis.

### *4.3. Correlation Analysis between Variables*

Pearson correlation coefficient is widely used to measure the degree of correlation between two variables, with a value between −1 and 1. Table 3 shows that there is some correlation between the variables.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of measurement items in questionnaire.

| Measurement item | Indicator | Mean | Standard Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Facility value (FV) | FV1 | 3.83 | 0.892 | −0.423 | −0.052 | 0.875 |
| | FV2 | 3.79 | 0.871 | −0.294 | −0.374 | |
| | FV3 | 3.81 | 0.871 | −0.283 | −0.554 | |
| Resource value (RV) | RV1 | 4.01 | 0.899 | −0.635 | −0.153 | 0.874 |
| | RV2 | 3.83 | 0.969 | −0.506 | −0.293 | |
| | RV3 | 3.50 | 1.031 | −0.332 | −0.427 | |
| | RV4 | 3.72 | 0.985 | −0.522 | −0.137 | |
| Spiritual value (SV) | SV1 | 4.39 | 0.681 | −0.914 | 0.776 | 0.865 |
| | SV2 | 4.04 | 0.849 | −0.772 | 0.736 | |
| | SV3 | 4.43 | 0.700 | −1.058 | 0.902 | |
| Cost value (CV) | CV1 | 3.99 | 0.848 | −0.491 | −0.189 | 0.866 |
| | CV2 | 4.17 | 0.788 | −0.741 | 0.368 | |
| | CV3 | 4.16 | 0.810 | −0.844 | 0.754 | |
| Behavior attitude (BA) | BA1 | 4.18 | 0.799 | −0.728 | 0.093 | 0.862 |
| | BA2 | 4.43 | 0.703 | −1.120 | 1.200 | |
| | BA3 | 4.31 | 0.766 | −0.880 | 0.143 | |
| Subjective Norm (SN) | SN1 | 4.19 | 0.822 | −0.802 | 0.232 | 0.866 |
| | SN2 | 4.28 | 0.767 | −0.901 | 0.662 | |
| | SN3 | 4.28 | 0.742 | −0.818 | 0.424 | |
| Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) | PBC1 | 3.99 | 0.934 | −0.840 | 0.577 | 0.870 |
| | PBC2 | 3.62 | 1.073 | −0.477 | −0.288 | |
| | PBC3 | 4.04 | 0.831 | −0.602 | 0.194 | |
| Aesthetic Experience (AE) | AE1 | 4.12 | 0.788 | −0.497 | −0.361 | 0.866 |
| | AE2 | 3.84 | 0.978 | −0.629 | 0.107 | |
| | AE3 | 4.22 | 0.775 | −0.837 | 0.623 | |
| Emotional Experience (EmE) | EmE1 | 4.34 | 0.715 | −0.796 | 0.090 | 0.864 |
| | EmE2 | 4.30 | 0.767 | −0.890 | 0.404 | |
| | EmE3 | 4.33 | 0.748 | −0.862 | 0.274 | |
| | EmE4 | 4.41 | 0.737 | −1.096 | 0.848 | |
| | EmE5 | 4.33 | 0.730 | −0.896 | 0.593 | |
| Educational Experience (EdE) | EdE1 | 4.38 | 0.711 | −0.962 | 0.560 | 0.864 |
| | EdE2 | 4.21 | 0.822 | −0.797 | 0.158 | |
| | EdE3 | 4.44 | 0.709 | −1.165 | 1.206 | |
| Recommendation Intention (RI) | RI1 | 4.19 | 0.789 | −0.766 | 0.245 | 0.867 |
| | RI2 | 4.15 | 0.795 | −0.611 | −0.157 | |
| | RI3 | 4.07 | 0.889 | −0.730 | 0.086 | |

**Table 3.** Correlation analysis between variables.

| | FV | RV | SV | CV | BA | SN | PBC | AE | EmE | EdE | RI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FV | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| RV | 0.662 ** | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| SV | 0.507 ** | 0.549 ** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| CV | 0.471 ** | 0.514 ** | 0.766 ** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| BA | 0.489 ** | 0.496 ** | 0.779 ** | 0.770 ** | 1 | | | | | | |
| SN | 0.421 ** | 0.451 ** | 0.645 ** | 0.617 ** | 0.749 ** | 1 | | | | | |
| PBC | 0.422 ** | 0.438 ** | 0.48 ** | 0.526 ** | 0.562 ** | 0.564 ** | 1 | | | | |
| AE | 0.498 ** | 0.555 ** | 0.623 ** | 0.608 ** | 0.658 ** | 0.574 ** | 0.621 ** | 1 | | | |
| EmE | 0.372 ** | 0.424 ** | 0.668 ** | 0.621 ** | 0.744 ** | 0.677 ** | 0.541 ** | 0.736 ** | 1 | | |
| EdE | 0.402 ** | 0.412 ** | 0.695 ** | 0.649 ** | 0.765 ** | 0.678 ** | 0.527 ** | 0.678 ** | 0.866 ** | 1 | |
| RI | 0.418 ** | 0.420 ** | 0.568 ** | 0.615 ** | 0.666 ** | 0.607 ** | 0.595 ** | 0.637 ** | 0.631 ** | 0.638 ** | 1 |

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

### *4.4. Empirical Analysis*

In correlation analysis, when *p*-value is less than 0.05, there is a correlation between variables. When the standardized regression coefficient is positive, it reflects an enhancement effect. The opposite is the inhibitory effect. In addition, when the interaction coefficient and the independent variable coefficient of the main effect are both positive or negative, it is an enhanced regulatory effect. On the contrary, it is a weakened regulatory effect. The test structure of the hypotheses has been verified in Figure 3.

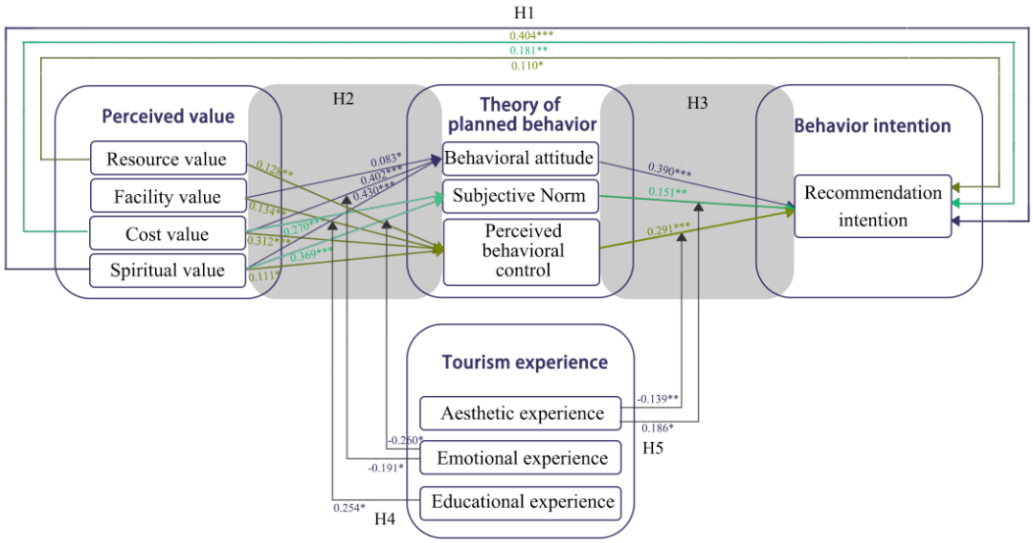



**Figure 3.** The influence mechanism of perceived value and behavioral intention of red tourism among college students (Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$).

According to the data in Table 4, Hypothesis 1 is partially supported. In red tourism, facility value, spiritual value, and cost value have a strong positive effect on college students' behavioral intention, while resource value has no effect. This may be related to the driving force of red tourism. Unlike natural and humanistic tourism, the core driver of red tourism is not natural or humanistic resources. The government has led and promoted the popularization of red tourism among the college student population.

Hypothesis 2 is partially supported. First, the facility value, spiritual value, and cost value of college students in red tourism have a significant positive impact on behavioral attitudes, while resource value has no impact. This is consistent with the findings of Hypothesis 1, again as a result of the specificity of the drivers of

red tourism. Besides, cost value and spiritual value have a significant positive impact on subjective norms, but facility value and resource value do not work. On the contrary, the government, media, friends, etc. would recommend the red scenic spots that make college students gain higher spiritual gains. This is because such scenic spots are more conducive to the realization of the goal of patriotic education. In addition, the scenic spots that college students consider to be cost-effective are also highly recommended by society. Thirdly, perceived value has a positive impact on perceived behavior control. The higher the overall evaluation of red tourism among college students, the more willing they are to overcome difficulties and engage in red tourism.

The data results support Hypothesis 3. Consistent with the research results of general tourism, the behavioral attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control for tourist have a significant positive impact on their behavioral intention. College students' level of recommendation of red attractions increased when they possessed more positive attitudes and more well-rounded travel abilities toward red tourism, and received greater support from significant others. This may be determined by the cautious character of college students, who will consider their own attitudes and abilities as well as the advice of others when choosing a Red Tour.

**Table 4.** The regression analysis results.

| Hypotheses | | AMOS | T Ratio | *p*-Value | Collinearity Diagnosis | | Outcomes | Adj. R-Squared | F | D-W |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | TOL | VIF | | | | |
| H1 | FV → RI | 0.110 * | 2.482 | 0.013 | 0.530 | 1.887 | Accepted | 0.410 | 100.159 *** | 2.025 |
| | RV → RI | 0.040 | 0.864 | 0.388 | 0.494 | 2.025 | Rejected | | | |
| | SV → RI | 0.181 ** | 3.453 | 0.001 | 0.374 | 2.673 | Accepted | | | |
| | CV → RI | 0.404 *** | 7.937 | 0.000 | 0.399 | 2.508 | Accepted | | | |
| H2 | FV → BA | 0.083 * | 2.556 | 0.011 | 0.530 | 1.887 | Accepted | 0.683 | 308.009 *** | 2.140 |
| | RV → BA | −0.001 | −0.044 | 0.965 | 0.494 | 2.025 | Rejected | | | |
| | SV → BA | 0.430 *** | 11.159 | 0.000 | 0.374 | 2.673 | Accepted | | | |
| | CV → BA | 0.402 *** | 10.776 | 0.000 | 0.399 | 2.508 | Accepted | | | |
| H2 | FV → SN | 0.063 | 1.478 | 0.140 | 0.530 | 1.887 | Rejected | 0.457 | 121.286 *** | 2.052 |
| | RV → SN | 0.068 | 1.545 | 0.123 | 0.494 | 2.025 | Rejected | | | |
| | SV → SN | 0.369 *** | 7.321 | 0.000 | 0.374 | 2.673 | Accepted | | | |
| | CV → SN | 0.270 *** | 5.525 | 0.000 | 0.399 | 2.508 | Accepted | | | |
| H2 | FV → PBC | 0.134 ** | 2.846 | 0.005 | 0.530 | 1.887 | Accepted | 0.326 | 70.120 *** | 2.117 |
| | RV → PBC | 0.128 ** | 2.614 | 0.009 | 0.494 | 2.025 | Accepted | | | |
| | SV → PBC | 0.111 * | 1.972 | 0.049 | 0.374 | 2.673 | Accepted | | | |
| | CV → PBC | 0.312 *** | 5.741 | 0.000 | 0.399 | 2.508 | Accepted | | | |
| H3 | BA → RI | 0.390 *** | 8.626 | 0.000 | 0.410 | 2.439 | Accepted | 0.522 | 208.590 *** | 2.045 |
| | SN → RI | 0.151 ** | 3.325 | 0.001 | 0.409 | 2.448 | Accepted | | | |
| | PBC → RI | 0.291 *** | 8.025 | 0.000 | 0.637 | 1.569 | Accepted | | | |

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. PV, perceived value; PBT, Planned behavior theory.

Hypothesis 4 is partially supported (see Table 5). First, in verifying the moderating role of tourism experience (emotional experience, educational experience, aesthetic experience) in the process of perceived value (facility value, resource value, cost value, spiritual value) influencing behavioral attitudes, only one case of reverse moderation was found. Emotional experience plays a negative regulatory role in the process of cost value affecting behavioral attitudes. The influence of perceived cost value on college students' behavioral attitudes diminishes as their emotional experience gradually strengthens during red tourism. This means that positive emotional experience helps to enhance college students' intention to travel in red tourism. College students will ignore their financial, time and physical

limitations and actively travel when they get positive emotional experiences. In another, emotional experience did not significantly modulate the processes by which facility value, resource value, and cost value influence subjective norms, but negatively moderated the processes by which spiritual value influences subjective norms. This shows that as the emotional experience of college students strengthened, the influence of their perceived spiritual values on subjective norms diminished. High cost-effectiveness has become an indicator for governments, media, friends, etc. to recommend red attractions. However, emotional experience is not a recommended indicator. Apparently, when college students reap the positive emotional experiences of red tourism, they perceive the emotional resonance of historical events as originating from their inner perceptions rather than from the influence of social factors. This suggests that college students attach great importance to the emotional experience in red tourism. Besides, educational experience has no significant moderating effect on the process of facility value, resource value, and spiritual value influencing subjective norms, but has a significant positive moderating effect on the process of cost value influencing subjective norms. This means that as the educational experience of tourists strengthens, the impact of their perceived cost value on subjective norms strengthens. Accordingly, the study found a generalization that facility value, resource value, and spiritual value all play a positive role in subjective norms regardless of the educational experience. In addition, the government, media, friends and relatives are willing to recommend red scenic spots that college students think are cost-effective and have high-quality educational experience. Finally, there is no significant moderating effect of tourism experience on the process of perceived behavioral control influenced by perceived value. This is because tourism activities involving emotional experience, educational experience, and aesthetic experience in red tourism are not challenging for college students, and therefore the tourism experience will not affect college students' judgment of their own tourism ability.

Hypothesis 5 is partially supported (see Table 6). First, aesthetic experience had a significant positive moderating effect in the process of subjective norms influencing behavioral intentions, a significant negative moderating effect in the process of perceived behavioral control influencing behavioral intentions, but no significant moderating effect in the process of behavioral attitudes influencing behavioral intentions. This means that as aesthetic experience strengthens, the positive effect of subjective norms on behavioral intentions is reinforced, and the positive effect of perceived behavioral control on behavioral intentions diminishes. This suggests that college students will be more cognizant of the social reputation of red scenic spots and more active in overcoming difficulties in red tourism as the aesthetic experience strengthens. In addition, aesthetic experience does not affect the positive effect of behavioral attitude on behavioral intention. This suggests that college students will not affect their recommendation of red scenic spots due to their good or bad aesthetic experience. Finally, it was found that affective and educational experiences did not have a significant moderating effect on the process of influencing behavioral intention by the three elements of the theory of planned behavior. College students will consider their own attitudes and abilities as well as the advice of others, but not the emotional experience and educational experience as to whether to recommend red scenic spots. This may be caused by the fact that college students are not currently reaping the higher emotional and educational experiences of red tourism.

## 5. Discussion of the Results

The red tourism market accounts for a huge proportion in China. Although red tourism is an important and constantly developing research field, research on this topic is still uncertain and fragmented. From the development practice and related theoretical research of tourism, tourist behavior intention is influenced by numerous factors from multiple levels such as individuals, groups, and society [41]. This study attempts to incorporate the theory of planned behavior and tourism experience into the model of the relationship between perceived value and behavior to address several contributing elements. In addition, the behavioral intention of tourism exhibits group characteristics [42]. However, as an important audience group for patriotic education, research attention on college students is still insufficient. The most important thing is that the development of red tourism can effectively enhance tourists' political identity with the CPC [43]. Discussing the relationship between tourists' perceived value and behavioral intention in red tourism can provide development decisions for red tourism, and then promote the development of patriotism education [5]. Finally, the research setup and scale design have also been integrated and innovated based on the differences in existing research.

**Table 5.** Analysis of the moderating effect of tourism experience (Dependent Variable: Behavior attitude, Subjective norm and perceived behavioral control).

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable: Behavior Attitude | | | | Dependent Variable: Subjective Norm | | | | Dependent Variable: Perceived Behavioral Control | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | | Model 5 | | Model 6 | |
| | AMOS | *p*-Value | AMOS | *p*-Value | AMOS | *p*-Value | AMOS | *p*-Value | AMOS | *p*-Value | AMOS | *p*-Value |
| FV | 0.072 * | 0.014 | 0.087 * | 0.004 | 0.057 | 0.146 | 0.064 | 0.109 | 0.092 * | 0.037 | 0.075 | 0.095 |
| RV | −0.012 | 0.685 | −0.021 | 0.507 | 0.059 | 0.154 | 0.066 | 0.123 | 0.048 | 0.297 | 0.057 | 0.236 |
| SV | 0.245 *** | 0.000 | 0.246 *** | 0.000 | 0.158 ** | 0.002 | 0.136 ** | 0.008 | −0.056 | 0.318 | −0.068 | 0.237 |
| CV | 0.292 *** | 0.000 | 0.294 *** | 0.000 | 0.148 ** | 0.001 | 0.156 ** | 0.001 | 0.181 ** | 0.001 | 0.175 ** | 0.001 |
| AE | 0.028 | 0.421 | −0.002 | 0.965 | −0.007 | 0.888 | 0.001 | 0.983 | 0.364 *** | 0.000 | 0.424 *** | 0.000 |
| EmE | 0.170 *** | 0.000 | 0.158 * | 0.003 | 0.267 *** | 0.000 | 0.220 ** | 0.002 | 0.072 | 0.306 | 0.046 | 0.552 |
| EX | 0.215 *** | 0.000 | 0.241 *** | 0.000 | 0.199 ** | 0.001 | 0.239 *** | 0.000 | 0.083 | 0.220 | 0.086 | 0.248 |
| FV × AE | | | 0.014 | 0.752 | | | 0.117 * | 0.044 | | | 0.076 | 0.243 |
| FV × EmE | | | 0.016 | 0.818 | | | −0.031 | 0.741 | | | −0.158 | 0.128 |
| FV × EdE | | | −0.057 | 0.401 | | | −0.017 | 0.849 | | | 0.206 * | 0.042 |
| RV × AE | | | −0.112 * | 0.018 | | | −0.048 | 0.451 | | | 0.182 * | 0.010 |
| RV × EmE | | | 0.044 | 0.575 | | | 0.135 | 0.197 | | | 0.030 | 0.796 |
| RV × EdE | | | 0.078 | 0.284 | | | −0.122 | 0.210 | | | −0.182 | 0.096 |
| SV × AE | | | 0.012 | 0.852 | | | 0.052 | 0.561 | | | −0.304 ** | 0.003 |
| SV × EmE | | | 0.056 | 0.547 | | | −0.260 * | 0.038 | | | 0.141 | 0.316 |
| SV × EdE | | | −0.056 | 0.525 | | | 0.052 | 0.662 | | | 0.034 | 0.796 |
| CV × AE | | | 0.032 | 0.564 | | | −0.074 | 0.315 | | | 0.094 | 0.254 |
| CV × EmE | | | −0.191 * | 0.015 | | | −0.047 | 0.654 | | | 0.049 | 0.675 |
| CV × EdE | | | 0.120 | 0.129 | | | 0.254 * | 0.017 | | | −0.040 | 0.738 |
| Adj. R-squared | 0.752 | | 0.754 | | 0.550 | | 0.562 | | 0.429 | | 0.450 | |
| $R^2$ | 0.755 | | 0.007 | | 0.555 | | 0.022 | | 0.436 | | 0.032 | |
| F | 248.404 | | 93.180 | | 100.574 | | 39.616 | | 62.395 | | 25.583 | |

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Firstly, this study screened four types of perceived values of red tourism among college students. After the evaluation and modification of several models by experts, a variable measurement scale that is in line with the characteristics of red tourism destinations was designed. After data analysis, it was ultimately determined that three perceived values have a positive impact on behavioral intention: facility value, spiritual value, and cost value. Different from general studies [44, 45], this study found that the resource value of red tourism among college students has no impact on behavioral intention. Although other scholars have concluded that perceived value has a positive impact on behavioral intention [46 – 48], this study focuses on the segmented fields of college students. This is because college students have a prominent position in patriotic education. The interview participants provided the following comments:

**Table 6.** Analysis of the moderating effect of tourism experience (Dependent Variable: Behavioral intention).

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable: Behavioral Intention | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model 7 | | | Model 8 | | |
| | AMOS | T Ratio | *p*-Value | AMOS | T Ratio | *p*-Value |
| BA | 0.224 *** | 4.359 | 0.000 | 0.216 *** | 4.112 | 0.000 |
| SN | 0.104 * | 2.317 | 0.021 | 0.158 ** | 3.383 | 0.001 |
| PBC | 0.207 *** | 5.466 | 0.000 | 0.172 *** | 4.463 | 0.000 |
| AE | 0.194 *** | 4.262 | 0.000 | 0.155** | 3.337 | 0.001 |
| EmE | 0.015 | 0.247 | 0.805 | 0.034 | 0.517 | 0.606 |
| EdE | 0.143* | 2.373 | 0.018 | 0.169 * | 2.538 | 0.011 |
| BA & AE | | | | −0.081 | −1.064 | 0.288 |
| BA & EmE | | | | −0.047 | −0.368 | 0.713 |
| BA & EDE | | | | 0.033 | 0.316 | 0.752 |
| SN & AE | | | | 0.186 * | 2.451 | 0.015 |
| SN & EmE | | | | 0.048 | 0.382 | 0.703 |
| SN & EDE | | | | −0.020 | −0.183 | 0.855 |
| PBC & AE | | | | −0.139 ** | −2.757 | 0.006 |
| PBC & EmE | | | | −0.068 | −0.800 | 0.424 |
| PBC & EDE | | | | 0.121 | 1.664 | 0.097 |
| Adjusted R-Squared | 0.555 | | | 0.565 | | |
| $R^2$ | 0.559 | | | 0.017 | | |
| F | 119.574 | | | 50.501 | | |

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

*"The construction of red scenic spots in China is very good, and the strong red cultural atmosphere has immersed me and benefited me a lot."* (T01—A PhD 3-grade boy)

Secondly, the theory of planned behavior is used as a research variable to further reveal the law of college students 'perceived value of red tourism on their behavioral intention. It is concluded that perceived value affects behavioral intention through behavioral attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control. The above research contents have verified the relevant results of existing studies to different degrees [49,50]. The interview participants provided the following comments:

*"In the summer of graduating from high school, my father and I went to more than ten red scenic spots in the Hunan Jiangxi Border Region, where we spent a 7-day vacation."* (T02—A sophomore female student whose father was a teacher)

Third, considering the popularity of the experiential tourism model, the study examined tourism experience as a moderating variable. The moderating role of tourism experience in the process of perceived value influencing the theory of planned behavior and in the process of the theory of planned behavior influencing the Theory of Behavioral Intentions was derived and tested. However, unlike the results of other studies on the mediating role of tourism experiences [33], the hypothesized relationships of hypotheses 4 and 5 were only marginally supported. Among them, emotional experience and aesthetic experience played a moderating role between 2 groups of variables, respectively, while educational experience was found in only 1 group. The research group believes that it is mainly the specificity of the driving force of red tourism and the group

characteristics of college students that lead to a large gap with the assumptions. This also brings us the revelation that the experience program of red scenic spots needs to be targeted for development.

> *"The most impressive red scenic spot for me is the Memorial Hall of Railway Workers and CoalMiners. There is a cave that restores the working environment of absenteeism. When I got into the cave, I really felt the hardships of the workers.* (T03—A third grade female college student)

> *"I have watched the immersive performance in Shaoshan Scenic Area, which has made me remember many historical events. The visual effect of this performance is very stunning. Although the performance is a bit expensive, but it's worth watching.* (T04—A male university student in Grade 1)

## 6. Conclusions

### *6.1. Findings*

(1) This paper first derives and tests the structural relationship between the perceived value and behavioral intention of college students' red tourism. According to the findings of Hypothesis 1, the value of facilities, spiritual value and cost value of college students in red scenic spots had a positive effect on their behavioral intention, while the value of resources had no effect. This indicates that college students will consider the infrastructure construction of red scenic spots, the spiritual rewards of tourism and the cost-effectiveness to judge whether to undertake red tourism. However, the results of the research found that college students are generally dissatisfied with the development of resources in red scenic spots. This indicates that the driving force for college students' red tourism comes mostly from external factors such as the government.

(2) College students have their own criteria for whether to recommend red scenic spots, and they will consider the perceived value, the social pressure, the attitude towards red tourism, and the factors of ability. College students consider various social factors to choose red tourism. In addition, the higher their comprehensive evaluation of red tourism, the more willing they are to overcome the difficulties to carry out red tourism. Of course, they will also consider their own attitude, ability and social pressure. In terms of social recommendation, scenic spots with higher spiritual values will be the ones with higher social recommendation. College students also believe that such scenic spots also have higher value for money.

(3) In red tourism, college students' tourism experience produced only partially moderating effect in the process of perceived value influencing the theory of planned behavior and in the process of the theory of planned behavior influencing behavioral intention. College students pay more attention to the emotional experience during red tourism. When they gain a higher emotional experience, they ignore the limitations of their own financial resources, time and physical strength and actively travel. The study found that high cost-effectiveness became an indicator for the government, media, friends and others to recommend red scenic spots. In addition, the educational experience also becomes a recommendation indicator, and the quality educational experience gives the cost-effective red scenic spots a higher social evaluation. However, emotional experience has not become a recommendation indicator. Surprisingly, aesthetic experience does not affect the social recommendation of the red scenic spots. Contrarily, college students place a higher importance on the aesthetic experience of scenic locations.

### *6.2. Management Implications*

Based on the above research results and conclusions, this paper puts forward the following management recommendations.

(1) Infrastructure construction of red scenic spots is crucial, especially in terms of red cultural atmosphere. College students benefit spiritually from the rich cultural environment, which also provides them with rich knowledge of red history, a happy journey and patriotic feelings. This is consistent with Wenyue Tang's research [5]. The red scenic spot also benefits from a higher cost performance and social evaluation due to its significant spiritual value. Since college students are generally dissatisfied with the development of resources in red scenic spots, the scenic spots need to dig deeper into the red culture of their own characteristics. For

example, the entrances, passages, and other non-exhibition hall areas of scenic spots are also decorated with red cultural elements, red-themed music and films are played, red cultural and creative product development is carried out, and regionalized folk activities and cuisine are developed.

(2) Strengthen the publicity and promotion of scenic spots while enhancing the perceived value of red scenic spots. Although college students pay more attention to the cost-effectiveness of red tourism, they will overcome their own difficulties and choose red tourism because of the high-quality perceived value of tourism and social evaluation. The government can continue to maintain the free strategy for red scenic spots and upgrade the construction level of scenic spots and increase the publicity for red scenic spots, which will attract more college students to travel to red scenic spots.

(3) Strengthen the digital construction of red scenic spots and enhance the emotional experience of the scenic spots. The rich emotional experience will arouse the emotional resonance of college students to the red history and attract more college students to the red scenic spots. However, the fact is that the government, media, and others lack coverage on the digital construction of red scenic spots. It is worth noting that emotional experience does not affect college students' judgment of the cost-effectiveness of red scenic spots. This gives us management inspiration: red scenic spots should use digital technologies such as VR for immersive showroom design, increase experiential activities such as historical scenario reenactment, and actively publicize them. This is consistent with the findings of Pine and Gilmore [51]. Although this may make traveling more expensive, it is clear that college students are willing to pay for it.

(4) The most pressing issue is the need for patriotic education in red tourism hotspots to adapt to and take into account the realities of the contemporary world. The government, media and relatives are keen to recommend scenic spots with better educational experiences, but college students have not reaped the benefits of impressive educational activities in red tourism. College students look forward to a quality educational experience, which will make them feel that the red tour is worthwhile. Since the lives of modern college students are very different from the history of the Communist Party of China's "Red Struggle", patriotic education must be carried out in a way that can arouse the empathy of college students, such as immersive exhibitions using virtual reality technology.

(5) Enhance the aesthetic construction level of red scenic spots. College students are very concerned about the aesthetic experience of scenic spots, but will not hold a negative opinion towards red tourism because of the diminished aesthetic experience. Surprisingly, society, the media, etc. will not publicize the content of the aesthetic experience of the scenic spots, which will not be conducive to attracting more college students to the red scenic spots. The scenic spot can enhance the aesthetic experience by optimizing the design of the exhibition space, developing characteristic red cultural and creative products, and improving the service level of the scenic spot, etc. The government and the media should strengthen the publicity of the aesthetic experience.

### *6.3. Implications*

Some limitations may affect the universality of the results. Firstly, the research model design has limitations. The scale design in this article is based on an adaptation of existing high-reliability scales and has improved the scientific effectiveness and completeness of the testing project through methods such as on-site investigation, interviews, and expert consultation. However, there is still a certain degree of subjectivity in the design process of the scale. Finally, the information collected is horizontal and cannot assess the level of understanding of new information by tourists before and after their travels.

## 7. Concluding Remarks

In theory, the research results demonstrate the impact pattern of the perceived value of red tourism on behavioral intention among college students and expand the research content on the perceived value of red tourism. The research results indicate that the theory of planned behavior plays a positive mediating role in the process of perceived value affecting behavioral intention. Tourism experience plays a partial moderating role in the process of perceived value influencing the planned behavior theory and the planned behavior theory influencing behavioral intention.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement**

The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of Hunan Agricultural University (protocol code NO.2023140 and January 2023).

**Informed Consent Statement**

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement**

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. (The data are not publicly available due to privacy restrictions.)

**Conflicts of Interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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