



## On the development of sports tourism in China

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### ABSTRACT

*Based on CNKI DATABASE developed by Tsinghua Tongfang, the author adopts literature review in this paper. The author uses the mathematical statistics methods to count the number of papers concerning sports tourism in the DATABASE between the year 2002 and 2013, the number of theses and dissertations, the number of journals, the number of core journals, etc. The statistical analysis shows that the number of papers about sports tourism has increased and faculties in sports colleges and universities are the main researchers in this field. Despite these achievements, the research on Chinese sports tourism is still at a relatively low level. The methods adopted are mainly descriptive and conceptual. There is still a large gap between domestic and foreign research production due to the lack of attention from the Chinese government. However, the Chinese sports tourism is developing on the whole.*

**Key words:** sports tourism; literature; statistical analysis

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### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, sports tourism has developed at a fast speed not only in China but also in the whole world. Especially in recent decades, the output value of domestic sports tourism has increased by 30% — 40%. By 2014, the income of sports tourism will account for 32%<sup>[1]</sup> of the total tourism income in the world. The implement of the Tourism Law of the People's Republic of China from Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 will lead to the rapid development of Chinese sports tourism.

The developmental level of Chinese sports tourism can be represented by the research level in this field, and the research level can be shown by related literature to some extent. Scholars have done a lot of work on the counting of papers and the study of their characters. These studies have attributed to the development of Chinese sports tourism.

Among these scholars, Yue Xianfeng and Liu Yan (Yue & Liu, 2014) based on the CSSCI database. They researched on the tourism papers from 2008 to 2012 and came to the result that the research methods will diversify<sup>[1]</sup>. Liu Ying (Liu, 2012) statistically analyzed the literature about sports tourism in CNKI DATABASE in these two decades. She divided the research on Chinese sports tourism into 5 stages and stated that the research field has been expanding. She also gave some suggestion on the future studies<sup>[2]</sup>. Based on the analysis of literature, Yang Qiang (Yang, 2011) studied the sports tourism from 1991 to 2010. He defines sports tourism as a sport industry instead of a tourism industry<sup>[3]</sup>. Xu Huiling (Xu, 1997) showed that literature review was a method with great potential in the study of sports tourism. She gave some advice on using this method<sup>[4]</sup>. Zhao Yongfeng and An Jianqun (Zhao & An, 2013) analyzed 149 papers on sports tourism in CNKI DATABASE. He put forward that domestic researchers only used papers in the same topic as reference but collaborated with other authors not so often. Besides, few authors published their papers in the core journals<sup>[5]</sup>.

Based on the retrospect and prospect of the Chinese sports tourism, the author uses CNKI DATABASE to analyze

literature from 2002 to 2013. Based on the analysis, the author will study the characters of papers about Chinese sports tourism. Hopefully, this paper can contribute to the development of Chinese sports tourism industry.

## 1. BRIEF INTRODUCTION ON SPORTS TOURISM

As a rising tourism industry, sports tourism is a modern way of traveling. It combines recreation, physical exercise, watching sports games and communicating with sports fans. It is a social activity that has the characters of both sports and traveling. With the growing of Chinese economy, sports tourism has become a rising industry. This industry can not only give travelers pleasant experience but also bring remarkable economic, social and cultural benefit to the destination.

### 2.1 *The features of sports tourism*

Sports tourism is traveling activities for doing sports or watching sports games. It possesses the dual features of both sports and tourism. The tourists should be familiar with sports to a certain extent whether they are players or spectators. Meanwhile, sports activities require related equipment and services, and spectating sports games requires costs such as tickets, making sports tourism an industry with large expenditures. What's more some sports are seasonal and dangerous. For example, ice-snow sports have considerable requirements both on weather and on the professional skills of the tourists. As a tourism industry, sports tourism will also stimulate the socio-economic development of the local society. As mentioned above, the features of sports tourism can be concluded as listed <sup>[6]</sup>:

- 1) People doing sports tourism need to have related professional knowledge, equipment and skills;
- 2) Sports tourism consumes large expenditures;
- 3) Certain sports tourism is dangerous;
- 4) Certain sports tourism is seasonal;
- 5) Sports tourism stimulates the socio-economic and cultural development to some extent.

### 1.2 *The possibility for China to vigorously develop sports tourism*

China, with a vast territory, a long history and various ethnic groups, is rich in ice-snow resources, cultural landscape resources, as well as sports tourism resources with ethnic characteristics. Among them, there are tourism activities with unique local natural characteristics including ice-snow sports and rock climbing, activities with ethnic characteristics such as dragon boat racing, and also traditional sports events such as dragon dance and lion dance. Currently, with the rapid development of China's economy, people's living standards is rising non-stop, and the time spent on leisure is longer. Doing sports tourism for leisure can both enrich people's cultural life and at the same develop intelligence and bodybuilding. The success of the Beijing Olympics and the Guangzhou Asian Games has also stimulated the development of sports tourism. An increasing number of tourists have made sports their main goal of traveling. China is now at an economic transformation stage. Developing sports tourism can stimulate the process by making full use of its cultural heritage and natural resources to develop local economy and provide employment opportunities so as to bring economic benefits to local people. The reasons for China to vigorously develop sports tourism can be concluded as followed <sup>[6]</sup>:

- 1) China has rich resources in landscape, ice-snow and ethnic sports;
- 2) China's economy is experiencing a rapid growth, and people's living standards are rising;
- 3) The increasing stress on work and study makes people need richer cultural life;
- 4) The success of major sports events has stimulated the development of sports tourism;
- 5) The development of outdoor sports has stimulated the sports tourism.

## 2. THE ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE STATISTICS ON SPORTS TOURISM

CNKI DATABASE has a large paper load and a complete classification. This paper gives the statistics of the number and sources of papers related to sports tourism included in CNKI DATABASE between the year 2002 and 2013 based on the database, and conducts a quantitative analysis on the statistics so as to study the research level and development of sports tourism in China.

### 3.1 *The statistics of literature related to sports tourism in CNKI DATABASE*

The number of papers related to China's sports tourism represents the overall research level of this field, and the number of Master's theses and doctoral dissertations about China's sports tourism represents the advanced research level of the field. To conduct a quantitative analysis of sports tourism's development condition and trend in China, this paper does a high level search on the CNKI website, with sports tourism as the subject, sets the time range, and limit the search range to literature, Master's theses and doctoral dissertations and journal articles. By doing so, this paper has the statistics of the number of publications on sports tourism, theses and dissertations, and journal publications. The statistics are as shown in Fig.1:

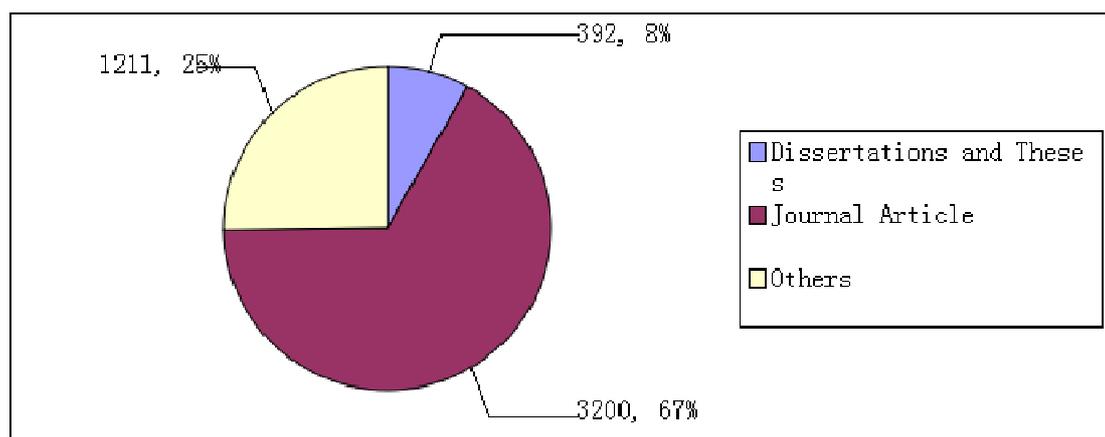


Fig. 1 Number of publications on sports tourism, theses and dissertations, and journal publications

It is shown in Fig.1 that, between 2002 and 2013, CNKI DATABASE by Tsinghua Tongfang included 4083 papers about sports tourism, among which journal articles have the largest number 3200, accounting for 66.63% of the total. Master's theses and doctoral dissertations representing advanced research level accounts for 8.16% of the total with the number 392. Other papers from symposiums, newspapers and yearbooks accounts for 25.21% with the number 1211. The number of theses represents China's research on sports tourism to a certain extent. However, there are few high level papers, and the overall level is relatively low, and the Master's theses and doctoral dissertations representing advanced researches account for less than 10%. This means China's research on its sports tourism is just getting started, and the research level is relatively low and insufficient for China's ever-rising sports tourism industry. There is still a long way to go for China's research on its sports tourism.

### 3.2 The analysis on the developmental trend of literature related to sports tourism

To analyze the developmental process and trend of sports tourism in China, this paper collects the statistics of the number of publications on sports tourism, theses and dissertations, and journal publications included by CNKI DATABASE every year between the year 2002 and 2013. The statistics are shown in chart 1:

Chart 1 Statistics of papers about sports tourism in CNKI DATABASE

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
number of publications	104	114	186	266	266	382
theses and dissertations	3	3	5	12	7	31
journal	75	89	124	210	216	272
Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
number of publications	521	501	558	691	613	601
theses and dissertations	38	36	47	65	84	61
journal publications	362	353	340	411	372	376

It is shown in chart 1 that, between the year 2002 and 2013, the total number of publications raised from 104 to 601, with an increase of 4.78 times and an annual growth of 17.29%. The number of theses and dissertations raised from 3 in 2002 to 61 in 2014, with an increase of 19.33 times and an annual growth of 31.50%. Journal publications about sports tourism raised from 75 in 2002 to 376 in 2013, with an increase of 4.01 times and an annual growth of 15.78%. The rapid growth of the paper numbers about China's sports tourism indicates to a certain extent that China's sports tourism industry is developing ceaselessly and that there is urgent need for theoretical research about this industry. There are more and more journal publications of the field, occupying over a half of the total papers published every year. This reflects that China's research on sports tourism mainly lingers at a low level stage in the past decade. Theses and dissertations have experience a faster growth than the others. Although journal publications and papers of other sources are larger in number, they are slower in growth rate than theses and dissertation, which indirectly reflects that the importance attached to the sports tourism is increasing, and the high level research about this field is constantly developing.

To further analyze the developmental trend of papers related to China's sports tourism, this paper compares the developmental trend of theses and dissertations, journal publications, and other publications of this field. Due to the huge gap in number, this paper has done pretreatment to the statistics so as to make it easier to do comparison. This paper calculates the percentages the number of each type of papers in a certain year account for in the 12 years, and compares the three types based on this data. The developmental trend of the three types is shown in Fig.2:

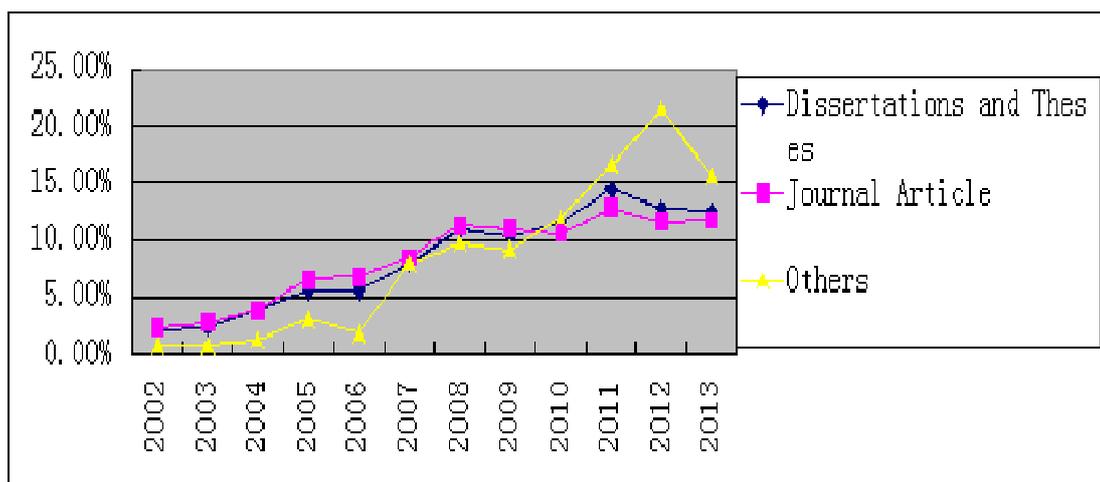


Fig. 2 Changes in the number of thesis and dissertation, journal publications, and other publications on sports tourism

It is shown in Fig.2 that, between 2002-2013, although there is some fluctuation in the developmental trend of the number of theses, dissertations and journal publications, as a whole, the number is experiencing a fast growth, and the growth is relatively steady. Although the growing rate of the number of theses, dissertations and journal publications is slowing down, the growth is still fast and steady. This means for China's sports tourism, the level of advanced researches and lower-tier researches are steadily rising. This also means that China's universities and academic institutions are paying increasing attention to sports tourism and the high level research of this field is constantly developing.

The number of other sources has experienced large fluctuation. It is shown in Fig.2 that the development of journal publications can be divided into two stages. The first is the period between 2002 and 2006. In these five years, there was little change in the number of journal publications, which only accounts for 7.67% of the 12 years' total. Compared with the 7 years between 2007 and 2013, the number is very small, which is mainly because China's sports tourism was not largely developed yet. The second stage is the period between 2007 and 2013. In this period, the growing rate was very fast. Although the number in 2013 is relatively smaller than that of 2012, the overall trend is not affected. This is mainly because of the success of the Olympics and the Asian Games that has brought business opportunities and conditions to the development of China's sports tourism, as well as to China's socio-economic development.

### 3.3 The analysis of the statistics of literature about sports tourism in core sports journals

The papers published on core sports journals have relatively higher scientific and technological content, with higher level. The number of publications about sports tourism on this type of journals can also reflect the research level and development of China's sports tourism. This paper consults 12 Chinese sports journal with relatively high level sports papers in CNKI DATABASE by Tsinghua Tongfang, and calculates the number of papers on sports tourism published on them between 2002 and 2013. The statistics are shown in chart 2:

Chart 2 The number of publications on core journal sports tourism

journal	China Sport Science	China Sport Science and Technology	Sports & Science	Journal of Beijing Sport University	Journal of Physical Education	Journal of Shanghai University of Sport
Number	8	14	20	50	35	16
percentage	2.20%	3.86%	5.51%	13.77%	9.64%	4.41%
journal	Sports Culture Guide	Journal of Chengdu Sport University	Journal of Xi'an Institute of Physical Education	Journal of Wuhan Institute of Physical Education	Journal of Tianjin University of Sport	Journal of Capital University of Physical Education and Sports
Number	92	37	31	37	3	20
percentage	25.34%	10.19%	8.54%	10.19%	0.83%	5.51%

In the 12 journals consulted and the number of papers on sports tourism published on them in the 12 years, the percentages the number of papers published on each journal accounts for compared with the total of the 12 journals are shown in chart 2. In these 12 journals, 363 papers on sports tourism have been published in the 12 years, among which 7 are journals of physical education institutes with a total of 194 publications of the field, accounting for 53.44%. It can be seen that China's physical education institutes occupy a main position in the research of sports tourism. *Sports Culture Periodical* has published the most number of papers, accounting for 25.34% of the total with

92 papers. *Journal of Tianjin University of Sports* has only published 3 papers, accounting for 0.83%. It can be seen in the above statistics that, in the 3200 publications about sports tourism on journals in the past 12 years, the occupation 11.34% of the total of these 12 journals is relatively large. Special attention can be made to these 12 journals for future development of sports tourism.

### 3. THE ANALYSIS ON THE FEATURES OF SPORTS TOURISM LITERATURE

To further analyze the development of China's sports tourism, this paper collects the sampling statistics of papers on sports tourism from CNKI DATABASE by Tsinghua Tongfang. This paper has 100 papers of this field as random samples and collects the statistics of the number of funded project papers and the research methods of the papers, and then analyzes the statistics.

#### 4.1 The analysis of statistics about funded project papers

Funded projects, as the most advanced researches in the field, represents the latest study direction and research level<sup>[1]</sup>. This paper collects statistics from 363 papers on sports tourism published in the past 12 years, and classifies them into three types, including national funded project funded projects, provincial funded project funded projects and non-funded project. The statistics are as shown in chart 3:

Chart 3 Statistics of funded project papers on sports tourism

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
national funded project	4	4	6	15	11	9
provincial funded project	3	1	6	9	12	8
non-funded project	13	9	17	21	19	14
Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
national funded project	8	7	4	9	5	4
provincial funded project	11	14	11	16	8	10
non-funded project	10	14	12	15	9	15

It can be seen in chart 3 that, among the 363 papers, 86 of them are of national funded projects, accounting for 23.69% of the total, 109 of them are of provincial funded projects accounting for 30.03%, and 168 are of non-funded projects, accounting for 46.28%. Papers of national funded projects and provincial funded projects total 195, accounting for 53.72% of the total.

However, China's amount of funding in sports tourism projects is not optimistic. With further process of the statistics in chart 3, this paper calculates the proportion of the number of funded project papers accounts for compared to the total number of publications every year. The result is as shown in chart 4:

Char 4 The number of funded project papers on sports tourism and their proportion of the total

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Number	7	5	12	24	33	17
Proportion	35.00%	35.71%	41.38%	53.33%	54.76%	54.84%
Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number	19	21	15	25	13	14
Proportion	65.52%	60.00%	55.56%	62.50%	59.09%	48.28%

It can be seen in chart 4 that, the number of funded project papers on sports tourism experienced a fastest growth between 2003 and 2006. From the year 2007, the number grows and drops within the fluctuation 20 papers. Between 2003 and 2006, the main reason behind the fast growth was the success of the Beijing Olympics. However, the fluctuation since 2007 indicates that national and provincial funded projects have attaches enough importance to the development of the country's sports and swimming industry.

The proportions can be divided into two stages. In the period between 2002 and 2008, the proportion grows ceaselessly, the proportion of funded project papers on sports tourism raised from 35.00% in 2002 to 65.52% in 2008. Yet since 2009, the number has been dropping. Until 2013, the proportion has dropped by 48.28%. It shows that, in recent years, China's funding in sports tourism researches has been constantly decreasing. The country needs to resume its attention once paid to sports tourism so as to ensure a rapid and healthy development of China's sports tourism.

#### 4.2 Research Content of China's Sports Tourism

This paper on China's sports tourism mainly focuses its studies on the basic theories, and conducts analysis on the 100 samples randomly selected. The statistics result is presented in chart 5.

Chart 5 Analysis of research contents on sports tourism

Research Content	Basic Theories	Practice	Overview	Other
Quantity	14	79	5	2
Percentage	14%	79%	5%	2%

Among the 100 essay samples, 79 of them are research papers into the practice of sports tourism, accounting for 79% of the total. The practice of sports tourism reforms to the development of sports tourism, the sustainable development of sports tourism, and so on. It can push forward the development of China's sports tourism industry in the most direct way. Basic theories of sports tourism refers to the concept, categories, and scientific integration of sports tourism. Of all the essays selected, 14 of them are about basic theories, accounting for 14% of the total. Overviews of sports tourism are analysis on the current condition of China's sports tourism and the academic researches into the comparison between China's sports tourism and that of other countries. Of all the samples, 5 of them are on the overview of sports tourism, accounting for 5% of the total. The rest two papers are on how sports tourism drives the advancement of socio-economic development and the risks in the high and middle risk projects of sports tourism respectively. The statistics shows that researches into China's sports tourism mainly concentrate on how to push forward the development of China's sports tourism.

#### 4.3 Comparison of the research method between China and abroad on sports tourism

There are generally four research methods: mathematical statistic method, structure modeling, descriptive method, and conceptual method. In terms of academic papers, different choices of research methods will certainly affect the quality of the paper. The author of this paper has conducted a research into the research methods used in the 100 essay samples. The result is presented in Fig. 3.

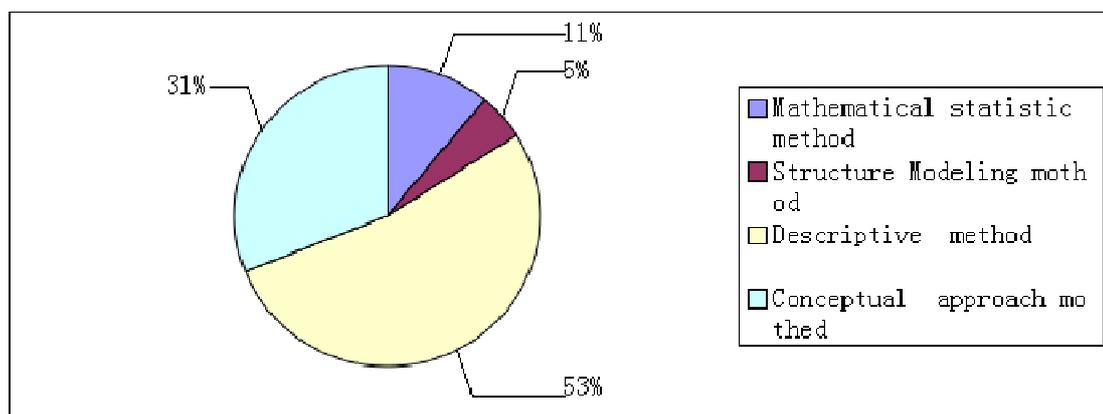


Fig. 3 Statistics of the research methods used in papers on sports tourism in China

As one can learn from Fig. 3, of all the 100 essays, 53 papers resort to the research method of description, accounting for 53% of the total. 31 papers use the method of conception, accounting for 31% of the total. Together, papers using these two methods account for 84% of the total number of essays selected. Those using mathematical statistic method and structure modeling only number 11 and 5, together accounting for 16% of the total. According to the literature review, in other countries, papers using mathematical statistic method account for 59% of the total number of publications. Those using structure modeling account for 17% of the total publications. Papers using descriptive method and conceptual method take up 24% of the total. This is completely the opposite of the situation in China. Quantitative analysis on sports tourism by using mathematical statistic method and structure modeling is definitely more persuasive than qualitative analysis, which depends on descriptive method and conceptual method. This difference in the research method of studies on sports tourism between China and abroad shows that studies on sports tourism in China still lags behind. It also proves that research on sports tourism in China is still at its preliminary stage, which needs more attention from Chinese government and researchers.

## CONCLUSION

Research into sports tourism in China is still at its early stage, and lags behind compared with that in other countries. What's more, more than half of the researches are conducted by researchers in sports-related institutions. Research into sports tourism in China mainly focuses on the development of sports tourism and on the relations between sustainable development and sports tourism. In recent years, although the number of papers on sports tourism is growing, problems do linger on. The number of funded projects in this area has come to a stall. The percentage of funded projects of sports tourism in the total number of publications of sports tourism keeps dropping. The

government is not paying enough attention to the research into sports tourism. The investment into research and development of this field is shrinking. With the continuous socio-economic development in China, there has been a growing demand for sports tourism. Therefore, in order to maintain a sound and rapid development of China's sports tourism, the government needs to increase its investment. Researchers need to devote more time and energy to the study on this field, so as to shed more light on the development of China's sports tourism industry.

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