

# *Making Sailing Possible Beyond the Coast: Scene Novelty, Scene Fit, and Tourist Value in Highland Lake Sailing Tourism*

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**Abstract:** Sailing tourism is conventionally associated with coastal and marine settings, yet inland lakes are increasingly developed as sites for water-based sport tourism. This study examines how sailing becomes experientially possible in a non-coastal highland lake destination. Drawing on survey data from 396 visitors who participated in sailing tourism at Fuxian Lake, Yunnan, China, we develop and test a scene-based mechanism linking scene novelty, scene fit, perceived value, and satisfaction/re-participation intention. The findings show that novelty is important but insufficient. Tourists form positive evaluations when the distinctiveness of highland lake sailing is translated into perceived compatibility with the lake landscape, destination atmosphere and leisure identity. Perceived value further emerges as the strongest proximal predictor of satisfaction and behavioral intention. The study contributes to blue tourism and sport tourism research by conceptualizing non-coastal water sport tourism as the recontextualization of a coastal sport script within an inland lacustrine scene.

## 1. Introduction

Sailing is a tourism activity saturated with spatial imagination. In destination marketing, tourist imaginaries and consumption scripts, sailing is usually associated with coasts, marinas, sea breezes, islands, harbours and open-sea mobility [1-3]. This association is not merely descriptive; it shapes how tourists judge where sailing belongs and what kinds of waterscapes can legitimately support sailing experiences. As a result, inland sailing may appear secondary or counterintuitive when evaluated against the dominant coastal imaginary of blue tourism. Yet the expansion of water-based leisure, sport tourism and lower-impact experiential products has encouraged inland destinations to introduce activities historically coded as coastal [4-7]. The key question is therefore not whether inland lakes can technically host sailing, but how tourists perceive lake-based sailing as meaningful, appropriate and worth repeating.

This question matters because it concerns the recontextualization of tourism activities across waterscapes. Blue tourism research has moved beyond beach tourism to examine water as a medium

of leisure, wellbeing, sport and environmental governance [1,4,8-10]. Lake tourism studies similarly argue that lacustrine destinations should be understood as integrated systems in which water quality, shoreline communities, landscape meanings and recreational practices interact [5,11]. However, less is known about how a specific activity acquires legitimacy when it is transferred from its conventional waterscape to a less expected one. Sailing beyond the coast is a useful case because tourists must renegotiate the relationship between activity, place and meaning.

Fuxian Lake in Yunnan Province provides a distinctive empirical setting. As a deep and clear highland lake with strong scenic appeal and a growing leisure tourism market, it has a clear waterscape identity but lacks the marine culture and harbour-based infrastructure of mature coastal sailing destinations. Its sailing tourism is therefore not simply an inland extension of coastal sport tourism, but a form of destination innovation in which a highland lake must construct its own experiential logic for sailing.

To explain this process, this study adopts a scene-based perspective. A tourism scene is more than a physical setting; it is a perceived configuration of landscape, atmosphere, activity, service design, social practice and symbolic meaning [12-20]. For highland lake sailing, two scene-based judgments are particularly important. Scene novelty captures tourists' perception that sailing on a highland inland lake is fresh, distinctive and different from conventional seaside sailing [21-25]. Scene fit refers to the perceived compatibility between sailing and the lake's landscape, atmosphere, environmental conditions and leisure identity. Novelty may attract attention, but only when accompanied by fit can sailing move from being surprising to being credible.

This study uses survey data from 396 tourists who participated in sailing activities at Fuxian Lake to examine three questions: what motivations shape participation in highland lake sailing tourism, how scene novelty and scene fit affect perceived value, and how these factors translate into satisfaction and re-participation intention. The study contributes to tourism research by extending water sport tourism beyond coastal settings and by showing how non-coastal water sport products become legitimate through the joint formation of novelty, fit and value.

## **2. Literature Background and Hypotheses**

### **2.1. Water Sport Tourism beyond the Coast**

Water-based tourism has long been framed through marine and coastal destinations, where beaches, islands, marinas and open-sea mobility dominate blue tourism imaginaries [1,4]. Recent research has expanded this perspective by recognizing rivers, reservoirs, wetlands and inland lakes as important blue spaces for leisure and recreation [5,8-10]. This shift is important because water is not merely a scenic resource; it is also an activity medium, an affective landscape and a carrier of wellbeing and place-based meanings.

Sport tourism adds an embodied dimension to these waterscapes. Unlike sightseeing or lakeside photography, water sport tourism requires tourists to engage with the destination through movement, skill, equipment, instruction, social interaction and risk interpretation [6,19]. Sailing is a typical example because the experience is produced through the dynamic relationship among wind, boat, water surface, instructor, companions and the participant's bodily adjustment. This embodied quality makes sailing a useful case for examining how water sport activities are recontextualized beyond the coast.

### **2.2. Scene Novelty, Scene Fit and Perceived Value**

Scene novelty captures tourists' perception that sailing on a highland lake is fresh, distinctive and different from conventional seaside sailing. In the context of Fuxian Lake, novelty arises from the

contrast between the coastal imaginary of sailing and the inland lake environment in which the activity is experienced. However, novelty alone does not necessarily lead to positive evaluation. When an activity is transferred from its conventional setting to a new destination scene, tourists also need to judge whether the activity is appropriate for that place.

Scene fit refers to the perceived compatibility between sailing and the lake’s landscape, atmosphere, environmental conditions and leisure identity. If tourists perceive highland lake sailing as novel, they are likely to further evaluate whether this novelty fits the specific lake setting. When sailing is perceived as both different from coastal sailing and compatible with Fuxian Lake, the activity can move from being surprising to being credible. Accordingly, we propose:

H1. Scene novelty positively affects scene fit.

Perceived value explains how tourists translate experience quality, emotional response, social meaning and cost-benefit assessment into satisfaction and behavioral intention [26-32]. In non-coastal sailing tourism, perceived value is shaped by both scene novelty and scene fit. Novelty may make highland lake sailing fresh, distinctive and shareable, while fit provides experiential legitimacy by making tourists feel that sailing is compatible with the lake’s landscape and leisure identity. Accordingly, we propose:

H2a. Scene novelty positively affects perceived value.

H2b. Scene fit positively affects perceived value.

### 2.3. Satisfaction and Re-Participation Intention

Satisfaction and future behavioral intention are central outcome variables in tourism management. Prior research has consistently shown that tourists’ perceived value and satisfaction are important predictors of revisit intention, recommendation intention and destination loyalty [29,30,33]. In experiential and sport tourism, these outcomes depend not only on service quality or activity performance, but also on whether tourists perceive the experience as meaningful, appropriate and worth remembering.

For highland lake sailing, satisfaction is likely to be shaped by tourists’ interpretation of the whole sailing scene. A technically safe and well-organized sailing activity may still fail to generate strong post-experience responses if tourists perceive it as disconnected from the destination environment. Conversely, when sailing is perceived as novel, compatible with the lake setting and valuable, tourists are more likely to evaluate the experience positively and express stronger willingness to participate again or recommend it to others. Accordingly, we propose:

H3a. Scene novelty positively affects satisfaction/re-participation intention.

H3b. Scene fit positively affects satisfaction/re-participation intention.

H3c. Perceived value positively affects satisfaction/re-participation intention.

A scene-based mechanism for non-coastal water sport tourism

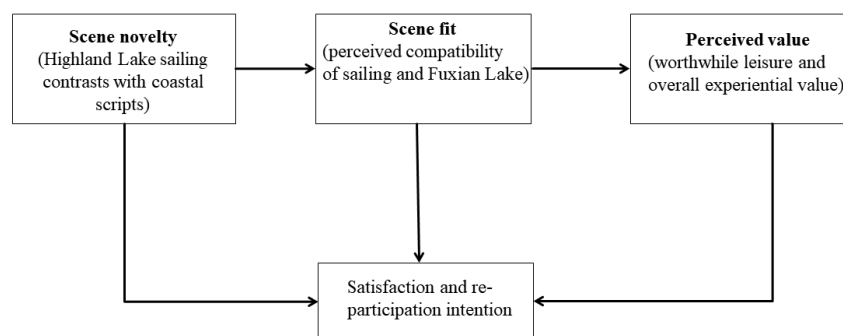


Figure 1: Conceptual framework.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework and summarizes the hypothesized scene-based mechanism.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Study Setting and Sample

Fuxian Lake, located in Yunnan Province, Southwest China, was selected because it represents a highland inland lake where sailing tourism has been introduced beyond its conventional coastal setting. The lake's clear water, mountainous landscape and leisure atmosphere make it suitable for examining how tourists evaluate the novelty, scene fit and value of lake-based sailing.

The survey targeted tourists who had participated in Fuxian Lake sailing tourism or related sailing trial experiences. This criterion ensured that respondents evaluated the activity based on direct experience rather than hypothetical interest. A total of 396 valid responses were obtained. All respondents passed an embedded attention check, and response times ranged from 64 to 184 seconds, with a mean of 106.7 seconds and a median of 108 seconds. The sample included respondents from Yunnan Province, other provinces or regions in the Chinese mainland, and Chinese Hong Kong, Chinese Macao and Chinese Taiwan, and overseas areas.

#### 3.2. Survey Design and Measures

The questionnaire included screening questions, demographic and behavioral information, participation motivations, and psychometric measures. The core measurement model consisted of four latent constructs: scene novelty, scene fit, perceived value, and satisfaction/intention. Each construct was measured with three items using five-point Likert-type scales. Scene novelty captured tourists' perception of highland lake sailing as fresh and distinctive; scene fit measured the perceived compatibility between sailing and the Fuxian Lake setting; perceived value assessed the overall worth and leisure value of the experience; and satisfaction/intention measured satisfaction, willingness to participate again and recommendation intention.

The sample size was adequate for the proposed model. The main regression model included three predictors, while the measurement model contained 12 observed Likert-scale items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was 0.939, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant,  $\chi^2(66) = 1268.53$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , indicating that the data were suitable for factor-based analysis.

#### 3.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis included descriptive statistics, reliability and validity diagnostics, Pearson correlation analysis, standardized ordinary least squares regression, and bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to test indirect effects. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency, while composite reliability and average variance extracted were used to evaluate convergent validity. This regression-based path analysis approach provided a transparent test of how scene-based evaluations were translated into perceived value and post-experience responses.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1. Descriptive Findings

The descriptive results suggest that Fuxian Lake sailing was not perceived merely as a sport-interest product. The most frequently selected motivation was experiencing the activity with friends

or family (38.4%), followed by relaxation and stress relief (33.8%), distinctiveness from seaside sailing (30.1%), and the novelty of sailing on a highland lake (27.3%). Interest in sailing itself was less prominent. This pattern indicates that tourists evaluate highland lake sailing primarily as a social leisure experience and a scene-differentiated activity rather than simply as a technical water sport.

Influence ratings showed a similar pattern. Fuxian Lake’s destination reputation, interest in water sports, distinctiveness from seaside sailing, relaxation needs, and attractiveness for photography and social sharing were the most influential factors. Together, these findings support the study’s premise that highland lake sailing gains appeal by integrating water sport participation with the distinctive scene qualities of an inland lake destination. These descriptive findings also justify the subsequent focus on scene novelty, scene fit and perceived value as key explanatory constructs in the proposed mechanism.

## 4.2. Measurement Diagnostics

Table 1 presents the construct-level descriptive statistics and measurement diagnostics. The construct means ranged from 3.50 to 3.61, indicating generally positive evaluations. Cronbach’s alpha values ranged from 0.575 to 0.652, which are below the conventional 0.70 threshold and require careful interpretation. However, composite reliability values exceeded 0.77 and average variance extracted values exceeded 0.54 for all constructs, suggesting acceptable convergent validity for an exploratory test of the proposed mechanism. Therefore, the constructs were retained for subsequent path analysis, but the results should be interpreted with caution and further validated in future research.

Table 1: Construct reliability and descriptive statistics.

Construct	Mean	SD	Cronbach alpha	CR	AVE
Scene novelty	3.530	0.970	0.575	0.779	0.540
Scene fit	3.590	0.940	0.610	0.794	0.563
Perceived value	3.610	1.060	0.652	0.812	0.590
Satisfaction/intention	3.500	1.010	0.606	0.792	0.560

Pearson correlations among the four constructs were all positive and significant at  $p < 0.001$ . Scene novelty was strongly correlated with scene fit ( $r = 0.610$ ), perceived value ( $r = 0.625$ ) and satisfaction/intention ( $r = 0.593$ ). Perceived value showed the strongest bivariate relationship with satisfaction/intention ( $r = 0.635$ ). These results provided preliminary support for the proposed mechanism before regression testing.

## 4.3. Hypothesis Tests and Indirect Effects

Table 2 summarizes the standardized regression results and bootstrap indirect effects. Scene novelty had a strong positive effect on scene fit ( $\beta = 0.610$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H1. When perceived value was regressed on scene novelty and scene fit, both predictors were significant: scene novelty exerted a positive effect on perceived value ( $\beta = 0.402$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and scene fit also had a positive effect ( $\beta = 0.365$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The model explained 47.4% of the variance in perceived value, supporting H2a and H2b.

The final model examined satisfaction/intention as the dependent variable. Scene novelty, scene fit and perceived value all remained significant predictors. Perceived value had the strongest proximal effect ( $\beta = 0.332$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), followed by scene fit ( $\beta = 0.270$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and scene novelty ( $\beta = 0.221$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The model explained 50.6% of the variance in satisfaction/intention, supporting H3a, H3b and H3c. These results indicate that tourists’ post-experience responses are not driven by novelty alone. Instead, satisfaction and re-participation intention depend on a combined evaluation in

which the activity is perceived as distinctive, compatible with the lake setting and valuable as a leisure experience.

To further examine the transmission mechanism implied by the conceptual framework, bootstrap tests were conducted for the indirect effects. Scene novelty had a significant indirect effect on perceived value through scene fit (effect = 0.244, 95% CI [0.173, 0.320]). Perceived value also mediated the effects of scene novelty and scene fit on satisfaction/intention. The serial pathway from scene novelty to scene fit, perceived value, and satisfaction/intention was significant (effect = 0.077, 95% CI [0.047, 0.111]), indicating that making sailing possible beyond the coast depends on a sequential process in which novelty is interpreted as fit and then converted into value and positive post-experience responses.

Table 2: Standardized regression and bootstrap indirect effects.

Effect or path	$\beta$ / Effect	SE	t / 95% CI	Model R <sup>2</sup>
Scene novelty → Scene fit	0.610	0.040	15.29***	0.372
Scene novelty → Perceived value	0.402	0.046	8.70***	0.474
Scene fit → Perceived value	0.365	0.046	7.89***	0.474
Scene novelty → Satisfaction/intention	0.221	0.049	4.51***	0.506
Scene fit → Satisfaction/intention	0.270	0.048	5.59***	0.506
Perceived value → Satisfaction/intention	0.332	0.049	6.79***	0.506
Novelty → Fit → Value	0.244	—	[0.173, 0.320]	—
Novelty → Value → Satisfaction/intention	0.138	—	[0.090, 0.194]	—
Fit → Value → Satisfaction/intention	0.129	—	[0.083, 0.183]	—
Novelty → Fit → Value → Satisfaction/intention	0.077	—	[0.047, 0.111]	—

Note. \*\*\* p < 0.001. Confidence intervals are based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples.

## 5. Discussion

This study advances tourism research by explaining how a water sport conventionally associated with coastal and marine settings can be reinterpreted within a highland inland lake. The findings show that tourists do not evaluate Fuxian Lake sailing through a simple destination-attribute logic. Instead, their evaluations are shaped by the interaction among activity novelty, scene compatibility and experiential value. This shifts attention from resource availability to scene construction: a lake may have sufficient water surface and scenic quality, but sailing tourism becomes meaningful only when tourists perceive that the activity fits the destination scene.

The study extends blue tourism, lake tourism and sport tourism research in three ways. First, it shows that the appeal of inland blue tourism may lie not in similarity to coastal tourism, but in difference supported by perceived compatibility. Second, it highlights a softer and more inclusive form of water sport experience, in which social co-presence, relaxation, scenery and light skill engagement are central. Third, it contributes to experience-value theory by showing that perceived value is formed through a prior scene-based mechanism: novelty differentiates the experience, while fit gives it experiential legitimacy. This argument is especially relevant for inland destinations seeking product innovation under ecological constraints, because it explains why a transferred activity can succeed only when tourists interpret it as both distinctive and locally appropriate.

The findings also offer practical implications. Fuxian Lake sailing should not be positioned as an

inland imitation of coastal sailing. Promotional strategies should emphasize the distinctive highland lake scene, including clear water, mountain scenery, a calm leisure atmosphere and the contrast with seaside sailing. Product design should strengthen accessibility and perceived value through beginner-friendly routes, family or group packages, short guided experiences, photography-oriented services, transparent pricing, professional instruction and reliable safety procedures. The experience should be narrated not only as a sport activity, but also as a place-specific way of entering the lake landscape. In this sense, interpretation, route design, waiting-area comfort and post-experience sharing can all help tourists connect the activity with the destination atmosphere. Environmental governance should also be embedded through carrying-capacity control, route zoning and coordination with lake protection policies so that sailing maintains its low-impact and scene-compatible character.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference, and future studies could compare tourists' expectations before participation with post-experience evaluations. Some constructs showed modest internal consistency, suggesting the need for scale refinement, additional items and confirmatory validation. Because the study focused on a single destination, comparative research across inland lakes, reservoirs and coastal sailing destinations is needed to test the generalizability of the proposed mechanism. Future studies could also integrate tourist perceptions with objective indicators such as wind conditions, water quality, route design, carrying capacity and operator practices, thereby linking scene evaluation more directly with sustainable destination management.

## 6. Conclusions

This study examined how sailing tourism becomes possible in a non-coastal highland lake destination. Based on 396 visitor responses from Fuxian Lake, the findings show that tourists respond positively to the novelty of sailing in an inland highland lake, but novelty alone is insufficient. Favorable post-experience responses depend on whether tourists perceive sailing as compatible with the lake environment, destination atmosphere and leisure identity. Scene novelty and scene fit jointly enhance perceived value, which further strengthens satisfaction, re-participation intention and recommendation willingness.

The study suggests that inland destinations should not simply replicate coastal water sport products. Instead, they need to construct activity-place configurations that are meaningful within their own waterscapes. For Fuxian Lake, sailing tourism is most promising when positioned and managed as a distinctive, low-impact, socially shared and value-rich highland lake experience. This scene-based perspective shows that the development of non-coastal water sport tourism depends not only on the transfer of an activity, but also on the construction of perceived compatibility between the activity and the destination scene.

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