

"Racing Against Time": Analysis of the Generation Mechanism and Functions of Special Forces-Style Tourism for Youth Groups from the Perspective of Social Acceleration

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Abstract: The advent of an accelerated society and the integration of digital intelligence have reshaped youth tourism behavior while offering diverse life experiences. From the perspective of social acceleration theory, this study investigates the Special forces-style tourism phenomenon prevalent among youth groups through interviews and digital ethnography. The findings reveal that its emergence stems from three dimensions of acceleration: technological advancement, accelerated social transformations, and intensified life rhythms. This tourism model demonstrates positive functions, enabling youths to address time scarcity, pursue novel experiences to break away from linear routines, strengthen social connections to fulfill relational needs and rebuild real-world bonds, and alleviate daily stress through temporary mental escapism.

Keywords: Social Acceleration; Special Forces-Style Tourism; Youth Group

1. Introduction

In the current social environment, the phenomenon of social acceleration is becoming increasingly prominent. The driving forces behind it mainly come from the impetus of technology and intense competitive pressure, which jointly promote the continuous and accelerated development of all aspects of society. Under the accelerated impact of society, social hotspots are constantly emerging and innovating. Social hotspots not only vividly reflect the development trends and changes of society, but also have an important influence on the value concepts and travel behavior choices of the youth group. Since 2023, Special forces-style tourism has rapidly become popular among young people. Special forces-style tourism is a high-intensity travel

mode similar to the combat or training of special forces, emphasizing extreme challenges. Tight time and heavy tasks are the prominent characteristics of special forces-style tourism^[1]. This study focuses on analyzing the causes and functions of youth special forces-style tourism from the perspective of social acceleration theory, with the expectation of providing a new path to understand the youth group through the exploration of this emerging youth cultural phenomenon and tourism mode.

2. Literature Review

In the academic circle, relatively rich research results have been accumulated on the phenomenon of special forces-style tourism. Scholars mainly conduct research and discussions from two aspects. First of all, as a kind of consumption behavior, scholars have conducted multi-level studies on special forces tourism from the perspective of consumption. The essence of the tourism consumption behavior of special forces has been explored. Existing studies, from the perspective of consumption and in combination with the background of the digital age, hold that the tourism of special forces is essentially a kind of possession-based experiential consumption. This kind of possession of the quantity and knowledge of landscapes can not only be displayed in the Internet world, but also become a capital for the youth group to show off among their peers^[2]. Secondly, regarding the causes of special forces-style tourism, scholars have conducted analyses from different perspectives. Firstly, the rise of special commander-style tourism is closely related to the influence of media. A study on special commander-style tourism is conducted from the perspective of media. From the perspective of mediation, this paper interprets the psychology and behavior of special forces-style tourism by applying relevant

theories such as self-presentation. The phenomenon of special forces-style tourism is a deeply mediated "speed travel" under the accelerated social effect, achieved through the sense of ritual of checking in, and is a self-promotion of the rebellious spirit and a display of vitality and potential of young people. It is the satisfaction of the highly developed sharing desire on social media and the group trend-following craze driven by consumerism[3]. Secondly, a study on special forces-style tourism is conducted from the perspective of spatio-temporal perception. Special forces-style tourism is a product of spatio-temporal alienation under the background of social acceleration. Special forces-style tourism is essentially a travel mode for college students to pursue "time and space", with the "acceleration" attribute highlighted^[4]. Research indicates that "special forces-style tourism" is an active attempt by the youth group to break away from the survival situation where virtual life dominates real life and thereby reconstruct the perception of time and space^[5].

All in all, in the existing research on special forces-style tourism, there are both descriptive analyses of this phenomenon and discussions on its causes from different perspectives. However, most scholars hold a negative attitude towards special forces-style tourism, believing that it is an alienation of tourism behavior. Based on previous studies and drawing on Rosa's social acceleration theory, this paper analyzes the specific reasons and functions of special forces tourism among the youth group under the background of social acceleration, providing guidance for interpreting the tourism behavior of the youth group under the background of social acceleration.

3. Theoretical Framework

In the present era, society is in a state of high-speed operation. Rosa, a representative figure of the Frankfurt School in Germany, combined the reality and characteristics of The Times and proposed the highly influential theory of social acceleration. Social acceleration can be classified into technological acceleration, social change acceleration and the acceleration of the pace of life. Technological acceleration is manifested as the acceleration of transportation systems,

communication systems and production systems; Social acceleration includes the acceleration of trends, lifestyles, professional relationships and family structures; The acceleration of life is reflected in citizens' experience of time shortage and time tension. The superposition of technological acceleration, social change acceleration and the acceleration of the pace of life has forced modern individuals to be incorporated into the "liquid society" described by Rosa, with mobility becoming the norm of survival^[6]. Society is accelerating its integration into individual lives, such as individuals experiencing time anxiety, a tense pace of life, and an increasingly blurred sense of the boundary between work and life. The acceleration of society has brought a more profound impact on the youth group. The sense of time and various "new alienation" brought about by the acceleration of society may be further magnified in their thinking consciousness and action strategies, making them prone to conflicts between ideals and reality and triggering deep inner anxiety. In real life, from education to employment, from promotion to settlement, from marriage and love to parenting, from social participation to social integration, The anxiety of contemporary youth is everywhere^[7].

The theory of social acceleration has similarities with the special commander-style tourism of the youth group. Special commander-style tourism is influenced by the acceleration of technology, social change and the pace of life. Starting from the theory of social acceleration, this paper explores the generation mechanism of special forces-style tourism under the background of social acceleration.

4. Research Methods and Research Objects

Based on the research topic, this paper adopts the qualitative research method to design and organize the entire research process. First of all, the collection of qualitative data mainly adopts the interview method. Secondly, by adopting the method of online ethnography and based on the online network platform, two kinds of online cultures, group behaviors and related social phenomena of special forces-style tourism and urban roaming are observed, described and analyzed.

Based on the judgment sampling and snowball sampling methods, 10 interviewees who were

in line with the research topic were selected, and focused in-depth interviews were conducted with them. The interview questions mainly revolve around four aspects. The first one is the behavioral aspect, focusing on the reasons, experiences and impressive experiences of the interviewees participating in the special forces-style tourism. The second aspect is the perception level, to understand the physical sensations and emotional experiences of the interviewees during the special forces military-style travel. The third aspect is the evaluation level, with the focus on the interviewees' behavioral evaluations of the special forces-style tourism. The fourth is the feelings and experiences of individuals in the context of social acceleration.

A total of 10 interviewees were selected for this study. The age range of the interviewees was from 18 to 26 years old. Among them, 20% were male and 80% were female. The specific information of the interviewees is shown in the following table:

Table 1. List of Basic Information of Interviewees

Number	Gender	Age	Interview Method
P1	Female	22	Online
P2	Female	20	Online
P3	Female	24	Online
P4	Female	23	Online
P5	Female	25	Online
P6	Male	24	Online
P7	Female	26	Online
P8	Male	18	In-person
P9	Female	19	Online
P10	Female	20	Online

5. Generation Reasons: The Interweaving of Technological Empowerment, Social Drive and the Pace of Life

In today's fast-paced and high-pressure societal environment, the emergence of "special forces-style tourism" is influenced by a multitude of complex and diverse social factors as well as unique individual elements. To understand this phenomenon, we must go beyond superficial observations and conduct an in-depth analysis that contextualizes it within the broader framework of an accelerating society.

5.1 Technological Acceleration: The Prerequisite Guarantee for Special

Forces-Style Tourism

Whether it is the acceleration of the transportation system or the transformation of the communication system, both have led to changes in individual lifestyles. Special forces-style tourism, as an emerging cultural phenomenon, has largely benefited from technological acceleration. First of all, the development of the transportation system provides a prerequisite for special forces-style tourism. The continuous improvement of the transportation system, especially the popularization of rapid transportation methods such as trains, high-speed railways and civil aviation, has greatly expanded the territory of special forces tourism. Secondly, the development of communication technology has provided many conveniences for special commander-style tourism. With the help of online platforms and social media, young people can search for various travel guides in the style of special forces, helping them make reasonable itinerary arrangements within a limited time. In conclusion, the accelerated development of technology provides a prerequisite guarantee for special forces-style tourism, making it more efficient and simpler.

"When traveling, both train and high-speed rail are very convenient. As long as it's not a holiday, it's also easy to buy tickets. You can go wherever you want. If you are far away, you can even take a plane. All these conveniences brought to us by technological development. Moreover, I feel that the public transportation systems in various cities are now quite complete, providing great convenience for our travel. If you don't want to take the bus, you can also take a taxi. The development of transportation makes all these very convenient." (P8).

5.2 Accelerated Social Changes: A Stimulating Factor for Special Commander-Style Tourism

The impact brought about by the accelerated social changes is extremely profound. It sweeps across the entire society, gradually shortening the timeliness of things and information in society. Special forces-style tourism, as one of the annual hot popular cultures, has emerged in a short period of time and exerted a strong influence on the youth group. When special forces-style tourism frequently emerges in social hotspots and

receives widespread attention, it will gradually shape a new tourism trend. In addition, due to the influence of media, the visual and textual information provided by the media has enabled "special forces" to perceive in advance and enter the destination environment multiple times through symbolic representations for a more perfect journey, forming a "absent presence" relationship with the destination, that is, creating an presence where virtual and reality coexist^[8]. Various shares on social media about special commander-style travel, including detailed travel guides, wonderful photo and video records, etc., provide specific imitation examples for the youth group. The youth group is not only the recipients of social hot culture, but also the practitioners and creators of hot culture.

"It should have been Douyin at the very beginning. I don't remember when it became popular, but for a while, it started to vigorously promote college students' special forces style travel, and such topics often appeared on Weibo's hot search list. After seeing so many of them, I found it quite attractive. I guess I just followed the trend and got involved here." (P4).

5.3 Accelerated Pace of Life: The Realistic Background of Special Forces-Style Tourism

With the continuous acceleration of the pace of life, time anxiety has become a common problem faced by young people. Moreover, in their daily lives, young people are busy with their studies, work and other matters, and the degree of repetition in their lives is constantly increasing. Such a life makes young people feel bored and dull, and it is difficult for them to truly relax in their spare time. Facing the rapidly changing social environment, individuals tend to accelerate the pace of society to obtain more new experiences^[9]. To resolve the contradiction between an individual's life time and social time, individuals attempt to expand their life time at the horizontal level and increase the number of things they experience within a unit of time. Thus, special forces-style tourism emerged.

"Special commander-style tourism is a product of the current fast-paced social development. As everyone's life pace is very fast, it means that the time for entertainment and living has become very tight. Therefore, special

commander-style tourism has emerged as The Times require. It is a product of this era, so it can indeed meet people's current demands for tourism." (P7).

Time anxiety can also affect the breadth and depth of the special forces travel experience. On the one hand, time anxiety will prompt special forces tourists to visit different scenic spots as soon as possible within a short period of time, thereby continuously extending the breadth of tourism. On the other hand, in the world of digital media, a new model of "short experience and short memory" that runs contrary to the classic model has emerged^[10]. Due to the tight schedule, special forces-style tourism is more of a cursory browse rather than an in-depth experience of the cultural connotation and historical heritage of the city. In this case, the "alienation of time" proposed by Rosa emerges. Special forces travel will lead to the phenomenon of experience replacing experience, resulting in a situation where the travel experience is "short in time and shallow in memory".

"Special forces travel is a high-intensity form of travel, which is essentially just a cursory visit. One goes there to take a look and experience it, but it doesn't create many physical memories." (P6).

6. Function Analysis: Stress Relief, Social Reconstruction and Self-Breakthrough

Against the backdrop of an accelerating society, a unique phenomenon of "special forces-style tourism" has emerged, especially among the youth. The emergence of this travel style, which features high intensity and fast pace, and the ability to visit multiple scenic spots in a short period of time, is no accident. It is not only a behavioral approach chosen by the youth group to adapt to their own circumstances, but also, at a deeper level, demonstrates the connection between common group needs and the characteristics of The Times.

6.1 Address the Shortage of Time and Achieve an Efficient Experience

In an accelerating society, the development of technology and the vicious cycle of competition form a feedback loop, leading to a lack of time and insufficient leisure time among the youth, and causing them to fall into widespread time anxiety. People have strongly

felt that the volume of affairs in life is doubling. The acceleration of technology and the acceleration of the pace of life have formed a constantly mutually driven circular feedback system. Individuals within this system find it extremely difficult to resist. This leads to an accelerated cycle and an intensification of time scarcity^[11]. Against this backdrop, special forces-style tourism, as an active choice for young people to deal with the time predicament, can provide an effective way to understand the city in a short period of time, allowing them to enjoy the pleasure of exploration in their busy lives and becoming a strategic leisure method to relieve time anxiety and balance high-pressure life.

“The special forces style trip was actually my choice under the premise of insufficient time. As for myself, there is hardly any time for me to travel. I only take a short break each time and have some other things to do, so I have to travel quickly like a special forces soldier.” (P8).

6.2 Break Away from the Linear Rhythm and Pursue Novel Experiences

As a theoretical ensemble of spatial production, the production of time in modern society is characterized by linear rhythm dominance and rhythmic imbalance. The phenomenon of the contradiction between accelerated and scarce time directly points to the new alienation of daily life^[12]. This mechanical and repetitive pace of life has stimulated the young people's pursuit and yearning for freedom and novel experiences. Special commander-style tourism has become a choice for young people to break away from the linear rhythm of life, pursue novel experiences and explore personal freedom. Through special commander-style tourism, young people can visit many places in a short time at a highly efficient pace, not only enjoying the diversity of scenic and cultural landscapes but also experiencing the thrill of urban changes. This intensive experience enables them to briefly break free from constraints during the process and enjoy individual freedom. Special forces-style tourism is a breakthrough attempt by the youth group to the established lifestyle, to pursue novel experiences that are difficult to experience in daily life.

“During my college years, I sometimes felt very bored, just as if life was the same every

day. It's as if your entire being has been marked with a scale, and it feels the same when you are working. I think both college and work are highly regular activities. If you work five days a week and then have a holiday on Saturday and Sunday, when you are in a regular situation for a long time, you will feel very depressed and really want to release.” (P9).

6.3 Deepen Emotional Connections and Meet Social Needs

In today's fast-paced society, interpersonal relationships are constantly tending towards atomization, and contemporary youth are facing the crisis of social communication disconnection. The emergence of special commander-style tourism provides an opportunity to solve the group loneliness of young people. During the process of traveling, young people often travel with friends. They embark on a journey to explore the unknown together, get close to each other during the trip, deal with the unexpected and challenges along the way, share the joys and troubles in their lives, seek comfort and support from friends, and draw strength from each other's company. During this process, young people deepen their emotional connections with friends, meet their social needs, and alleviate the loneliness and isolation brought to individuals by atomization. “I think social needs are met because I feel that social needs mainly involve emotional communication. During the travel process, accompanying each other and having emotional exchanges can, to a certain extent, meet my social needs.” (P7).

6.4 Relieve Daily Stress and Achieve Short-Term Mental Escape

With the transformation from early modernity to late modernity, the ontological anxiety of life changes, the successful shaping of productive efficiency, the heavy burden of family obligations, and the social loss caused by the decline of public morality. This has led to modernity depression among young people in the dimensions of individuals, workplaces, families, and society^[13]. In an accelerating society, the social structure is also undergoing changes, and individuals' lives have suffered significant changes. The youth group will face pressure from all levels in their daily lives. Young people surrounded by various pressures need to find a suitable breakthrough point to

achieve a short-term mental escape. Through this process, they can regulate their own state in order to better face the pressures and challenges in life. The special forces style can help young people break away from their daily lives, giving them the opportunity to go to an unknown new environment, bringing them a different experience and alleviating the burden of pressure on them.

“Special forces military-style travel is a way to relax oneself, relieve stress and unwind during leisure time.” (P4).

6.5 Break Through Media Dependence and Rebuild Real Connections

With the advent of an accelerated society, the phenomenon of pan-entertainment is also spreading quietly. However, a life wrapped in information every day is hard to make the young people feel inner satisfaction; instead, it makes them feel even more empty inside. Facing the sense of emptiness brought about by information overload in the media era, special forces-style tourism prompts young people to step out of the virtual world and explore on the spot to rebuild the connection between themselves and reality. Experience the real environment through physical practice, alleviate the homogenization fatigue caused by algorithm push, and satisfy the active desire to explore nature and the world. Special commander-style tourism is a vivid practice for young people to enter the real world. To a certain extent, it meets the needs of young people to feel themselves and the world, and gives them the opportunity to connect and resonate with the real world.

“In the fast-paced era, more often than not, our attention is snatched away by apps on our mobile phones. When I push information to you through big data, there will be a process of being filled with interests, but I often feel very empty after reading it. Mobile phones have become a necessity in our lives, but to some extent we have become tired. So we are consciously or unconsciously exploring more interesting things, those related to nature and the world.” (P9).

7. Conclusion and Discussion

The rise of special forces-style tourism is closely linked to the acceleration of the entire society. This paper first analyzes the causes of the generation of special forces-style tourism in

combination with the background of social acceleration. Technological acceleration provides a prerequisite guarantee for special forces-style tourism. The acceleration of social changes becomes the stimulating and incentive for special forces-style tourism. The acceleration of the pace of life is the realistic background for conducting special forces-style tourism. In the context of an accelerating society, special forces tourism has become an important choice for young people to deal with multiple predicaments. Its value is mainly reflected in the following five aspects: First, it addresses the shortage of time. As an active choice for young people to deal with the time predicament, it provides an effective way to understand the city in a short time and alleviates time anxiety. The second is to break away from the linear rhythm and become a breakthrough attempt for young people to break away from the mechanical and repetitive life and pursue novel experiences and personal freedom. Thirdly, deepen emotional connections, provide an opportunity to solve the collective loneliness of young people, and meet social needs through interactions with friends; Fourth, it helps relieve daily stress, becoming an effective way for young people to escape from their daily lives and release stress, achieving a short-term mental escape. Fifth, break through media dependence, encourage young people to step out of the virtual world, and rebuild the connection between themselves and reality through on-site exploration, satisfying their desire for active exploration.

Based on the research conclusions, this paper further puts forward the following thoughts: First of all, we should respect the initiative and proactiveness of the youth group. They have their own unique ways of thinking and life pursuits. When facing travel choices, flexibly select your own travel mode based on your own actual situation. Special forces-style tourism represents the different attitudes and pursuits of the youth group towards life. This behavioral pattern has its characteristics, advantages and disadvantages. We should view special forces-style tourism dialectically. Secondly, in the current social context where consumerism prevails, we should prevent special command-style tourism from being eroded by consumerism and becoming a consumption means under capital control, thereby losing its own significance. When

tourism merely becomes an activity carried out for consumption, the value and significance it brings to the youth group will fade or even disappear.

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