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How to Turn "Event-Driven Traffic" into "Increased Consumer Spending": An Empirical Study on the Economic Stimulus Effect of the Jiangsu Super League on the Cultural and Tourism Economy

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Abstract. Sporting events can attract large crowds and boost sports participation, city promotion, and tourism. This paper focuses on the 2025 Jiangsu Provincial City Football League, commonly known as the Jiangsu Super League. Using public data from the Jiangsu Provincial Government, audience surveys, input-output analysis, literature review, and case studies, this paper examines how event-driven visitor traffic translates into consumer spending and the conditions that enable this conversion. In the 2025 season, out of 85 games, approximately 2.433 million people were watching live, about 28,600 per game. On home-city match days, the amount of cross-regional cultural and tourism expenditure by UnionPay reached 14.57 billion yuan and increased by 27.1% year-on-year; the reported ticket-based linkage ratio showed that for every 1 yuan spent on tickets, 7.3 yuan were spent on auxiliary services. Based on the above, it is concluded that the main form of this consumption conversion is the spillover effect of match-day visitor traffic into sectors such as catering, accommodation, transportation, tourist attractions and retail; furthermore, continuous promotional activities for events have positively impacted urban image, and relevant industries have been able to handle the increased demand reasonably well. All will increase the conversion rate: an off-site viewing venue model, ticket discounts and cross-departmental public services. Only the publicly available data show a correlation at the same time; they do not prove causality. Whether the event attracts new consumers depends on available consumption opportunities, the city's event management capacity, and the level of collaborative governance.

Keywords: Event Economy, Cultural and Tourism Integration, Sports Consumption, Jiangsu Super League, Consumption Transformation

1. Introduction

Sports events have drawn the attention of many people, boosted the economy of the host cities, created various consumption occasions, and promoted the integration of culture and tourism; thus, they are excellent platforms for expanding sports-related consumption and promoting cultural and

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tourism integration. According to the above research, the economic value of sports events is not limited to ticket sales; it also includes other effects on consumer spending that are influenced by the quantity of event-related products and supportive policies [1]. The effect of sports events on the development of tourist areas can only be achieved through planned organisation and effective implementation [2]. In light of the above, the 2025 Jiangsu Provincial City Football League (hereafter referred to as the Jiangsu Super League) is a typical case that has combined the popularity of events with cultural and tourism consumption scenarios due to its characteristics of public participation, urban rivalry and provincial coordination.

1.1. Macro-policies as drivers and practical demands

In recent years, China's policies and research on sports consumption have continuously pushed to expand the supply of sporting events and strengthen the integration of sports with other sectors, such as culture, tourism and commerce [1]. When mass sporting events are organised in scenic areas, neighbourhoods or commercial areas, one of the main problems that local event organisers need to solve is how to convert the large number of visitors coming to watch the game into actual consumption. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to answer the following three questions. First, how spectator attendance during the Jiangsu Super League season is related to cultural and tourism consumption. Second, the distribution of event attendees in different areas. Third, how the urban environment, including convenient transportation, housing and tourism facilities, organisation of commercial areas and events, etc., affects the flow of visitors' expenditure.

1.2. Meso-level industry characteristics and research challenges

The Jiangsu Super League is not a professional top-tier league but a mass football competition organised at the city level, and its revenue generation is more dependent on local identity, public participation and the integration of urban consumption scenarios. The continuously rising number of live spectators in the 2025 season shows that mass sports events are also capable of attracting attention and drawing in large numbers of people. As the available public data do not meet the strict requirements of a natural experiment, this paper takes the Jiangsu Super League as an example to study the effect of attention on consumption. Existing research has explained this phenomenon from the perspective of the integration of sports, culture and tourism [3]; it has also investigated the way in which such events promote consumption [4], and related studies have further clarified the operating mechanism of event branding [5].

1.3. Research foundation and research focus

Some research has examined the cause of the Jiangsu Super League in terms of cultural identity and the integration of sports and culture [3]. The particular ways that mass sports events promote consumption have also been studied [4]. Research has been carried out on the consumption brands of regional sports events to understand how these event brands operate [5]. Based on the 2,332 valid questionnaires obtained from the 13 matches in rounds 4-6, Lou Hu and others used an input-output model to quantify the direct and indirect economic stimulus effects [6]. Based on the above, official data released after the 2025 season are used to examine the relationship among visitor flow, consumption opportunities, consumer spending and supporting conditions. Based on the above, this paper is a review of existing studies; it does not employ an experimental group or causal

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identification. The above results aim to reveal the reasons behind and the conditions for the occurrence of these reasons.

2. Practical outcomes of the Jiangsu Super League: public data and existing empirical evidence

The total number of games in the 2025 Jiangsu Super League season was 85, the overall attendance reached 2.433 million people (about 28,600 per game), and the number of online live-streaming views was 2.22 billion. During the off-season, Grade-A tourist attractions in the host cities of the province received 25,117,100 visitors on weekends, up 17.38% from the previous year. Among them, non-local visitors were 14,403,000, up 23.22% year-on-year. The amount of cross-regional cultural and tourism spending via UnionPay channels was 14.57 billion yuan and rose 27.1% year-on-year [7]. Ticket sales were combined with discounts and other benefits at accommodations, restaurants and tourist attractions to create a leverage effect; that is to say, for every 1 yuan spent on tickets, about 7.3 yuan was additionally spent [7]. Together, the number of matches watched, the flow of tourists and payment amounts show that the popularity of the sports events and the extent of participation in cultural and tourism consumption varied together during the season.

Some studies have also collected data on the behaviour of consumers. Lou Hu and others randomly selected from the 13 games in Rounds 4-6 to obtain a total of 2,332 valid questionnaires, and among them, non-local spectators accounted for 38.25% and local spectators accounted for 61.75%. According to the spectator consumption data and the input-output model, the total economic impact multiplier is 3.19 [6]. It should be pointed out that Lou Hu and others studied the middle part of the season and estimated the total number of spectators for the whole season based on data available at that time; in contrast, the 2,433,000 spectator visits in this study are official statistics that have been released after the season ended. As the two sets of data were collected at different times and under different statistical conditions, they should not be combined directly. Based on the above evidence, it can be concluded that spectator participation is correlated with the increase in cultural and tourism consumption; however, it cannot be assumed that sporting events are the only reason for this rise in consumption. The conversion efficiency in different cities is also affected by a combination of factors, such as transportation links, housing availability, density of commercial areas, cultural and tourist attractions, event-handling capabilities, etc.

3. The three major theoretical mechanisms of traffic conversion

The above data show that there is a connection between sporting events and consumer behaviour, and they also help explain the reasons for this connection. When sporting events are organised in tourist areas, residential areas or commercial areas, it will be more convenient for people to attend the events and do some shopping at the same time [8]. Cooperation among all sides will expand the form of new-generation consumption occasions [9]. There will be some impact on the surrounding area due to the sports event, but it will be limited [10]. Moreover, the value of sporting events should be achieved through all-round plans made before, during and after the event [11]. Therefore, the consumer conversion effect of the Jiangsu Super League can be summarised by the three links below: an increase in visitors in the short run, strengthening of urban brand awareness, and expansion of the industrial chain. The result will depend on whether the city can direct a large number of visitors to places where they can shop and dine, stay longer, and visit again.

DOI: 10.54254/2754-1169/2026.38451

3.1. Spillover effect: the immediate boost to local consumption generated by sporting events

Spillover effect refers to the phenomenon where more people are drawn to participate in sports activities and thus use related services such as food and beverage, accommodation, transport, shopping, etc. When sporting events are held in tourist attractions, residential areas or commercial areas, it will be convenient for the public to participate and shop [8]. Off-site viewing places, ticket discount schemes and other commercial area activities organised during the Jiangsu Super League season have drawn in visitors who did not enter the stadium but stayed in the area after the event and participated in the consumption chain; official statistics on the growth of out-of-town cultural and tourism consumption provide data support for this conclusion [7]. However, not all enterprises will be affected by the spillover effect in the same way; other factors such as location, transportation convenience, commercial concentration and event-organisation ability will also affect whether the flow of visitors can be extended beyond the immediate area of the event venue. Based on the above, the economic effects of sports events vary among different areas and provinces [10].

3.2. Ratchet effect: sustained host-city awareness and potential repeat visits

Ratchet effect refers to the extended consciousness a person has of a host city after participating in sports activities repeatedly, and it is not guaranteed that this consciousness will lead to an increase in consumer spending. The Jiangsu Super League is built on the foundation of city identity; regional symbols, fan emotions and social media sharing can all be used to keep spectators interested in the host city's team. Research on the Jiangsu Super League has shown that mass sporting events can use cultural identity to boost the internal motivation for the integration of culture and tourism [3]. Research on event-based consumer brands has shown that local attachment and brand association can increase people's desire to participate in and repeatedly take part in [5]. Therefore, the conversion of initial attention into sustained interest should be regarded as a possible way to obtain long-term data validation; it cannot be concluded that sustained consumption has been achieved based solely on data from a single season.

3.3. Multiplier effect: industrial chain extension and new business models catalysis

A multiplier effect is caused by people's first-round-of-spending. The first-round expenditure will be passed on by the intermediate demand and service supply of the relevant industries to increase the overall economic stimulus of the event through ticket prices, travel and accommodation expenses, etc. It is necessary to distinguish between the ticket-based consumption linkage ratio and the economic impact multiplier in the sense of input-output. The former shows that for every yuan spent on tickets, there are about 7.3 yuan in extra costs; the latter is the total effect of distributing the initial expense through industrial linkages. The two measures are conceptually distinct. Lou Hu and others found that the total economic impact multiplier was 3.19 [6]. Whether the actual implementation of this mechanism will be effective depends on whether the local sectors, such as catering, accommodation, transportation, cultural and creative industries, retail and event services, etc., can meet the rising demand; thus, cross-sectoral coordination and scenario-based supply chain construction are necessary [9].

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4. Consumer scenario innovation and the government's role

4.1. Consumer scenario innovation: the core vehicle for traffic conversion

Only when the visitors can obtain some goods or services for purchase will the flow of event-driven visitors result in increased consumer spending. The scenario innovation of the Jiangsu Super League is not limited to stadiums; instead, it has increased the urban stay time for spectators by adding pre-game activities, game days and post-game leisure, integrating the attraction of sports with tourism, shopping and evening entertainment areas. According to the data published by the People's Government of Jiangsu Province, in recent years, 573 off-site viewing venues have been set up to combine the experience of watching a match with shopping, dining, etc.; digital maps, promotional activities and ticket-based benefits have also been released to connect these venues with stadiums and commercial areas [7]. This way is in line with the idea of changing consumption scenarios, which is to say, placing sports activities in tourist areas, neighbourhoods and shopping malls [8].

To expand the physical scope, some key places will be used as nodes to connect all the paths for fans and tourists easily. Thus, an uninterrupted consumption circle of "pre-event sightseeing - during-event viewing - post-event dining and shopping" has been created; that is, in addition to commercial stalls near the venue, many other places have been set up to meet the needs of out-of-town spectators, such as accommodation, dining and general sightseeing after attending the event. The actual scope of the application of this strategy will still be limited by the basic conditions of public transportation, walkability, hotel supply, business hours in the commercial area, etc.

The main forms of the spread of digital technology are online live-streaming, distribution of short videos and event information services, as well as online participation in offline activities. By 2025, the live-streaming records of the Jiangsu Super League will have reached 2.22 billion views, and the total number of views for related content on major social media platforms will exceed 81.8 billion [7]. Digital traffic is not the same as consumer revenue; only when it is combined with service interfaces, such as ticketing, map services, promotional benefits and merchant events, can the cost for audiences to obtain event information and find suitable consumption scenarios be reduced. Research on event leverage has shown that the value of sporting events is not a given after the event but rather depends on the planning made in advance, during, and after the event [11].

4.2. Government facilitator role: establishment of a comprehensive end-to-end support system

The Jiangsu Super League model is to have the government set rules and organise public services and risk management, but not to be a commercial enterprise itself. Related policies in Jiangsu Province aim to enhance the coordinated service support of all departments, strengthen the system of event safety and emergency response, promote the hosting of sporting events in tourist areas, residential areas and commercial districts, and use fiscal and financial policy tools to improve the conditions for organising such events and encourage corporate participation [7]. The institutions mentioned above will help to reduce the coordination costs of many parties involved in organising joint ventures and create a more favourable environment for market-oriented event organisation and delivery of consumer-facing event scenarios.

Cross-departmental coordination refers to the multiple organisations involved in organising major events; these include the departments for sports, culture and tourism, commerce, transportation, public security, etc., and the aim is to achieve smooth transportation connections, security management, information release, crowd control and orderly integration of various commercial activities. The government of Jiangsu Province has released many policies to build a good, all-

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encompassing one-stop service system for large-scale sports events [7]. With the improvement of transport links, visitor information has become more accessible, public safety has been enhanced, and spectators' travel and accommodation expenses have dropped; thus, they can enjoy tourist sites, shopping areas and other evening activities more freely.

Fiscal policies and financial instruments can reduce the participation costs for some consumers and businesses by offering consumption vouchers, fiscal incentives and subsidies, loan interest subsidies, etc., and thus motivate financial institutions, platform companies and merchants to participate. In 2025, Jiangsu Province will use the Jiangsu Super League to hold consumption promotion activities, distribute vouchers and introduce ticket-based benefits through the joint efforts of the government, banks and enterprises [7]. It will not be done through government takeover of the market. Instead, it addresses the coordination problems among all parties and various places by first building a foundation of public resources and public services. Market entities can then develop catering, accommodation, retail and cultural and creative products according to the actual demand of visitors to increase the stability of the event-related consumption chain.

5. Research contributions, limitations, and future directions

5.1. Research contributions and practical implications

According to the division of mid-season audience survey data and official post-season statistics, this paper categorizes event-driven consumer conversion into three types: short-term visitor overflow, urban brand awareness retention, and industry chain expansion, and examines the scenarios of consumer engagement and public governance that lead to their occurrence. In fact, all kinds of ticketed benefits, off-site viewing venues, digital visitor guides, cross-departmental cooperation and coordinated policy support can be combined flexibly to various degrees, and the actual effect differs from place to place. Cities with weak transportation, housing, commercial area coordination, event organisation, etc., may not achieve the same level of consumer conversion even if they organise the same type of event. Therefore, it is more practical to select a suitable combination of tools according to the resources and carrying capacity of a city, rather than blindly following the model of the Jiangsu Super League as a fixed template.

5.2. Research limitations and future directions

This paper has three shortcomings. Firstly, most of the data in this study come from the 2025 season and public secondary sources; therefore, it cannot be determined whether increased awareness of the host cities results in repeated visits and longer stays. Second, no independent causal identification model was employed; thus, the rise in consumption growth after the event cannot be attributed to this, but may have been caused by other factors, such as public holidays, city promotions, peak tourist seasons, etc. Therefore, the results should be regarded as current findings, and their possible reasons should not be taken as a single cause. Third, the sample is only from Jiangsu Province; given the differences in economic conditions, fan culture, transportation facilities, accommodation, etc., across different regions, the results need to be verified in other places.

In the future, one can build time-series datasets of match days and non-match days, as well as the periods before and after matches, and choose comparable cities as control variables. Difference-in-differences or event-study methods can then be used to distinguish the impact of sporting events, consumption promotion policies and holidays from the effects of home and away fixtures, start times and tournament stages. By combining micro-level data on mobile signalling, UnionPay

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payment records and hotel and tourist attraction information, researchers will obtain more detailed knowledge about the distribution of tourists, their duration of stay and sequences of consumption activities.

6. Conclusion

According to public data from the 2025 Jiangsu Provincial City Football League, urban football leagues that attract large numbers of both live spectators and online viewers within a short period are closely associated with increased cultural and tourism consumption. The 85 games attracted approximately 2.433 million live spectators, while cross-regional cultural and tourism expenditure through UnionPay channels reached 14.57 billion yuan on home-city match days, representing a year-on-year increase of 27.1%. The findings indicate that event attendance does not automatically translate into sustained consumption. Instead, consumer conversion depends on whether short-term visitor traffic can spill over into catering, accommodation, transportation, tourist attractions and retail, whether event exposure can continuously strengthen the host city's image, and whether related industries have sufficient capacity to meet the additional demand generated by the event. Consumption scenarios determine whether visitor traffic can be transformed into actual expenditure; transportation, accommodation and commercial facilities determine the carrying capacity of this process; and cross-sector public services influence its operating efficiency. Therefore, the key to developing the event economy lies not only in attracting spectators, but also in coordinating consumption scenarios, industrial supply and public governance so that visitors are encouraged to stay longer, spend more and develop the potential for repeat visits.

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