

Rental Location Choice Characteristics and Tendencies of Migrants in Guangzhou, China

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Abstract: The inner-urban residential location choice is a topic of continuing interest in urban geography. However, not much research has been done on migrants' rental location choices. Based on data from a questionnaire completed by 276 migrant renters in Guangzhou, this paper analyzes the demographics and social class characteristics of migrants, and the condition and location of housing preferred by this population. The results show that the migrants in Guangzhou mainly rent in the Center Business District (CBD) area (Tianhe District) and Huangpu, Panyu and Haizhu districts. The main reason for this choice of location choices is the houses' convenience to their workplaces. A second reason is that nearby subways make travel convenient, for consumption and daily life, for children to go to school, and for access to large shopping centers/malls.

Keywords: Renting house; Migrants; Location choice; Guangzhou

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1. Introduction

Urban migrants account for a large proportion of the population in China's megacities. In recent years, the soaring housing prices in these areas have made it increasingly difficult for migrants to buy houses. Renting a house has almost become the only way to solve the housing problem when migrants first arrive in these cities. Compared with the characteristics and mechanisms of local residents' housing choices, those of migrants are different ^[1], and migrants are more easily influenced by relevant local institutional factors ^[2] and exclusive housing policies ^[3]. Therefore, it is necessary to study the housing concerns of migrants.

Urban residential location choice is a classic topic in urban geography that involves many aspects, such as transportation accessibility, daily life convenience, public services, public safety, landscape and environment and social space ^[4-7]. The influencing factors are diverse and coupled with the complexity of its mechanism and data limitations; thus, the academic community still lacks a unified and convincing conclusion ^[8]. Thus, the choice of housing location is also an academic frontier problem that has been explored by academia. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a case study to examine the characteristics and tendencies of the residential location choices of urban migrants, which is conducive to analyzing the mechanisms behind rental location choice.

In recent years, some studies have given special attention to the characteristics and tendencies of

residents' rental location choices in Chinese cities. For example, Yu et al.'s research on Beijing shows that work factors have a more obvious impact on tenants' residential location choice^[9]; Zheng conducted a case study of Hong Kong and found that affordability of rents decided the level of demand and was the most important variable affecting the rental choice^[10]. Hong Kong-based research by Leung and Yiu showed that tenants have to compromise between living space and housing facilities to reduce rents, which leads to tenants renting houses in crowded and poor living environments^[11]. On the basis of the above studies, it is necessary to further expand on the research by focusing on migrants and analyzing their rental location choice characteristics and tendencies. China's urban geography researcher focuses on Guangzhou, which is a "first-tier city" where the rental housing market occupies an important position in the whole housing market, which makes it a suitable location for this research. Thus, we chose the city for our study and asked migrants to respond to our questionnaire. This paper analyzes and summarizes their responses, giving us an insight into the characteristics and tendencies of their choices of residential location, enriching previous research and providing a reference for the formulation of housing policies. The value of this research is that it will provide a basis for the government to select the location of rental housing supply and formulate rental policies scientifically and rationally.

2. Methods and data

2.1. Study area and methods

We chose Guangzhou as our case study area and surveyed 276 migrant renters as the basic research objects. The 276 questionnaires were administered in the Yuexiu, Liwan, Haizhu, Tianhe, Baiyun, Huangpu, Nansha and Panyu districts; and the areas where the migrant renters were located were representative and typical. We used the questionnaire survey method to obtain the primary research data. The quantitative statistical analysis method was used to analyze the study results.

2.2. Data

The questionnaire data are from the Guangzhou Household Energy Consumption Survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed by Dr. Lu Jiang in June 2020 and was commissioned by research organizations to carry out the survey from July to December 2020. The questionnaire involved 23 questions about the basic characteristics of residents and their housing. A total of 1208 questionnaires were distributed, and 1097 valid questionnaires were recovered. On the basis of the results of this effective questionnaire, we selected 276 questionnaires, which were used as the basic data for this research.

3. Results and analysis

3.1. Demographic and social class characteristics of migrants renting houses in Guangzhou

According to the data from the questionnaires, the demographic and social class characteristics of the migrants renting houses in Guangzhou are as follows: First, the gender composition of renters is roughly the same, with 49.3% males and 50.7% females; Second, migrants are young, with a high proportion, 71.5%, under 35 years old; Third, high school/technical secondary school degree and college degree accounted for the highest levels of education with 30.6% and 31.5% of all respondents, respectively; Fourth, migrants who are office workers (26.8%), freelancers (18.4%) and ordinary workers (16.9%) rent the most houses. Fifth, the overall income level of renters is not high, as 50.5% earn an annual income below RMB 100,000.

3.2. The condition and characteristics of migrant housing

Data from the questionnaires indicated that the housing condition and characteristics of migrants' rental housing were as follows: First, the proportion of houses less than 70 square meters in size was the largest, reaching 72%; Second, the apartments rented by most migrants were relatively compact, with the highest

proportion, a total of 69.6%, composed of one- and two-bedroom apartments. Third, most of the rentals were in multistory residences without elevators (42.6%) or self-built houses in urban villages (28.3%). Fourth, the highest proportion of housing rented in 10-20 years is 35%. Fifth, most migrants, 53.6%, chose to rent in small-scale communities (less than 1,000 households).

3.3. Rental location choice characteristics of migrants in Guangzhou

Liwan, Yuexiu, Haizhu, Tianhe and Baiyun districts are located in the main urban area of Guangzhou, while Huangpu, Nansha and Panyu districts are strategic new development areas in Guangzhou. Most migrants reported choosing to live in the CBD area (Tianhe District) and the nearby Huangpu, Panyu and Haizhu districts, close to the employment center (**Figure 1**).

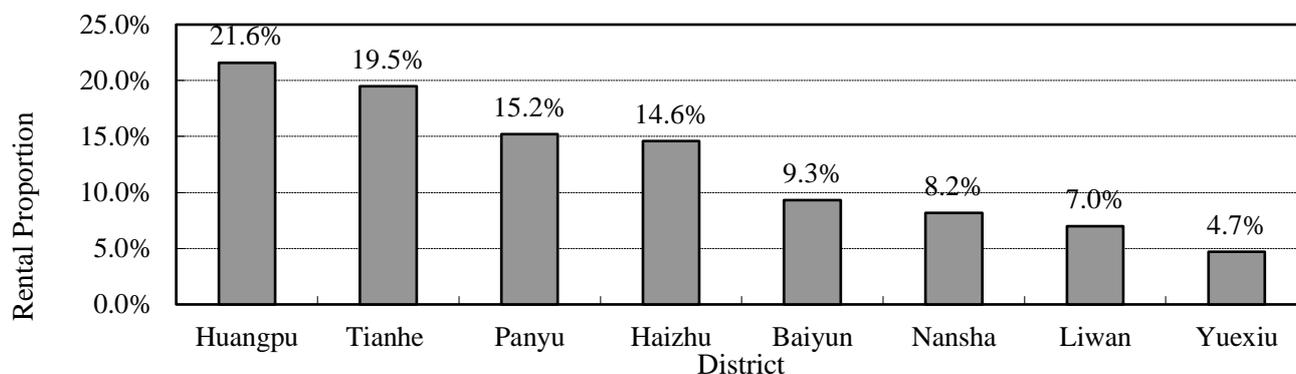


Figure 1. The proportion of districts selected by migrants to rent houses in Guangzhou

3.4. Reasons and tendency of rental location choice of migrants in Guangzhou

The survey asked a number of multiple-choice questions, responses are shown in **Table 1**. Most migrants, 59.2%, cited convenience to work as the most important reason for housing location. These responses reflect the work orientation of renting. The second most popular reason was proximity to transportation (subways) that made the tasks of daily life convenient, such as taking children to school or accessing large shopping centers/malls. These are all convenience factors. Thus, proximity to work, ease of taking children to school and access to transportation that makes the tasks of daily life convenient are core factors that determine the rental location choices of residents. Of course, there were also a few renters who considered the social environment, and 6.7% of them reported that the high level and good quality of the residents in the residential quarters are important factors for rental location choice.

Table 1. Questionnaire statistical analysis of the reasons for renters' housing choices

Reasons	Proportion
The house is convenient to work.	59.2%
The house has a subway, so it's convenient to travel.	30.0%
It's convenient for consumption and daily life.	29.7%
Kids go to school conveniently.	24.8%
There are large shopping centers/malls near the house.	21.9%
Although inconvenient, the housing prices or rents are low.	18.7%
The residential environment is good.	18.4%
The residents in the residential quarter are of high level and good quality.	6.7%
The residential quarter is equipped with high-quality educational resources.	5.5%
Others.	2.0%

4. Conclusion and discussion

A survey of 276 migrant renters in Guangzhou shows that migrants in Guangzhou mainly dwell in the CBD area (Tianhe District) and the Huangpu, Panyu and Haizhu districts near Tianhe District. The main reason for the rental choices of migrants in Guangzhou is the properties' convenience to their workplaces, which reflects the work orientation of renting houses. Second, travel is convenient due to nearby subways, and this makes it easier to run daily errands, transport children to school, and shop at large shopping centers/malls. The above five reasons can be summarized into three driving directions: "for the convenience of work," "for the convenience of children to go to school" and "for the convenience of consumption," which are all related to convenience. Thus, convenience is the primary consideration for migrants when they choose houses to rent. Therefore, from the three driving directions of residents' rental location choice, "for work" dominates.

The theoretical value of this research lies in clarifying the most important factors for the migrants' renting in China's megacities through the case study of Guangzhou. Future research directions include: first, the findings of this study will be verified from larger samples based on big data technology; second, more case cities are selected to compare with the findings of Guangzhou.

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Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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